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SUMMARY OF THESIS

This thesis deals with four main aspects of the Morte Darthur: 'Personal Identity', 'Revelation of Character', 'The Function of the Plot in Delineating Character', and 'Shifts of Focus'.

'Personal Identity': The idea of personal identity is based on a character's reputation and what others say about him. His name sometimes takes on a symbolic quality, becoming a tangible part of his identity. Because identity is so important, the negative aspects of it, disguises and mistaken identities, play a large part in Arthurian adventures. The idea of reality is developed in these episodes: appearance to a large extent is reality, although in the end a knight is responsible for his actions even when he is masquerading as someone else.

'Revelation of Character': Characters define themselves partly through their own actions and reasons for their actions. As in the previous section, characters are also partly defined by the impression they make on others. The character is 'revealed' rather than developed, for it is a rather static quality which exists changelessly. Rather than 'development' of character in the modern sense, there is a gradual revealing of what is already there. This view of the character emphasises his being and how he behaves using his free will. The action seems to originate within the character himself and our knowledge of him increases by the accumulation of his actions and by his and others' interpretation of his motives.

'The Function of the Plot in Delineating Character': This section sees the characters as instruments of the plot. The plot is an obstacle course over which the characters proceed from one fixed object to another. The actions of the characters are seen as originating in the plot, that is,

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the character is forced to make a decision or to react to external forces. The plot, by bringing some immediate problem upon a character, may illuminate elements of his personality. One kind of crisis for the character is the 'fork', in which he is forced to choose between two actions. Seen this way, the characters still do not 'develop', for their personalities are only revealed through their actions, and these personalities do not change. The plot may also be a series of thematic progressions in which situations are repeated with minor variations to produce a complex, almost musical texture.

'Shifts of Focus': These include verbal, visual, temporal, and spatial shifts of focus. The verbal shift is a change from direct to indirect speech, or vice versa. It may be used to emphasise important parts of a speech given in summary and may give the impression that it was all in direct speech. The sense of dimension and awareness is enhanced by 'over-hearing' snatches of conversations, as when a snippet of direct speech is inserted in a passage of indirect discourse. Conversations blend naturally with the surrounding narrative description so that the dialogue is not formally set out but rather unobtrusively introduced into the flow of the action. The visual shift is like the cinematographic technique of following a long-range shot with a close-up. The scene may change from the knights in a battle to the spectators and back again. The main action is commented upon and partly defined by the reactions of the on-lookers. Again there is an element of added awareness when the main scene is put into a larger context. The temporal and spatial shifts are also like modern film techniques: they are large jumps to completely different times and places. They, too, put the present action into a larger context. Future events are attached to present and past events; events in different places happen simultaneously. Characters have a solidity, for later, after the present time, they still have an existence somewhere. The sense of self-containedness and interrelatedness of the Arthurian world

stems both from the impression of simultaneity of action and from this idea that things happen at future times that are related to (if not always caused by) events in the present or past.

There is more an illusion of characterisation in Malory than real characterisation in the modern sense. Because so much emphasis is put on identity and recognition of an individual knight, the impression is given that real differences exist. Individual characters and events are seen to be part of a larger, infinite whole made of tradition and the 'French Book'. There is an attractive fragmentary quality in the Morte Darthur, implying that much more has happened which might have been reported, but escaped the boundaries of the book. The narrator is not so much an inventor as a chronicler.

CHARACTERISATION, IDENTITY, AND NARRATIVE STYLE
IN MALORY'S MORTE DARTHUR

By

SARAH ANNE LAWSON

Submitted for the PhD degree
at the University of Glasgow
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CONTENTS

	Page
Summary of Thesis	i
I. Personal Identity	1
II. Revelation of Character	38
III. The Function of the Plot in Delineating Character	62
Reality of Imperfection	64
Repetition of Situation and Theme:	
Closely Related Episodes	70
The Questing Beast	93
Incurable Diseases and Wounds	100
Suspicious Confirmed	111
The Bloody Bed	116
Guinevere's Rescues	119
'Forks': Conflict of Duties	137
Characterisation Through Crises: Lancelot	149
Arthur	154
Mark	162
Gareth	169
Gawain	176
Palomides	178
Conclusion	179
IV. Shifts of Focus	181
Verbal Shifts	182
Visual Shifts	202
Temporal and Spatial Shifts	221

Contents, continued

V. Conclusion	Page 232
Appendix A: The Problem of Unity in Malory	234
Appendix B: Some Symbols in the Old French <u>Queste del Saint Graal</u>	242
List of Abbreviations	248
List of Works Consulted	249

SUMMARY OF THESIS

This thesis deals with four main aspects of the Morte Darthur: 'Personal Identity', 'Revelation of Character', 'The Function of the Plot in Delineating Character', and 'Shifts of Focus'.

'Personal Identity': The idea of personal identity is based on a character's reputation and what others say about him. His name sometimes takes on a symbolic quality, becoming a tangible part of his identity. Because identity is so important, the negative aspects of it, disguises and mistaken identities, play a large part in Arthurian adventures. The idea of reality is developed in these episodes: appearance to a large extent is reality, although in the end a knight is responsible for his actions even when he is masquerading as someone else.

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I. PERSONAL IDENTITY

Central to a discussion of characterisation is the problem of identity: how it is regarded in the work and how it is used. In the Morte Darthur, three of the most remarkable facets of personal identity are the establishment of identity, the concept of 'reputation', and what I have loosely grouped under 'appearance and reality'. This last group involves disguises, mistaken identity, and the concealment and discovery of identity.

Much of the apparatus of establishing identity is a pedestrian affair of two knights exchanging their names when they meet in the forest. If a knight refuses to tell his name, he is obliged to fight his questioner. These refusals furnish a convenient motive for many otherwise motiveless battles. At other times when a battle has ended in something of a tie, the adversaries agree to stop and introduce themselves, thereby ending the scene tidily. In all of these instances there is the suggestion that one's name is something either to be proudly divulged or to be jealously guarded. Part of this spirit of identity occurs in Lancelot's meeting with Tarquin, who is hostile to Lancelot, although he does not know that Lancelot stands before him. Lancelot says:

'Now se I well,' seyde sir Launcelot, 'that suche a man
I myght be, I myght have pease; and suche a man I myghte be
that there sholde be mortall warre betwyxte us.'

(p. 191)¹

The immediate outcome of the encounter depends on Lancelot's being Lancelot. The implication, hardly stated more clearly anywhere else in

¹This and all other quotations and page numbers are taken from the Oxford Standard Authors edition of Malory's Works, ed. Eugène Vinaver (Oxford, 1966). Quotations do not include brackets or other devices used to indicate MSS collation.

2

Malory, is that parts of the plot may be dictated by the simple fact of a character's identity. The ceremonious introductions and demands to reveal one's name carry a sense of ritual. In Tristram's battle with Bleoberis over Segwarides' wife, Tristram already knows Bleoberis, but he asks him his name anyway, apparently as a matter of form (pp. 301-2). In another encounter, Gahevis, who can hardly help knowing who Lancelot is under the circumstances, asks him who he is (p. 192). For all their apparent banality, these introductions, when repeated by the same person, become pleasantly familiar. In the Tale of Sir Lancelot, the formula 'I am sir Launcelot du Lake, King Bannys son of Benwyke and verry knyght of the Table Rounde', or modifications of it, become a satisfying refrain. Sometimes these names merge strangely with the narrative, as in the case of Sir Tor, who is named 'The Knight that Went in Quest of the Knight with the Brachet' (p. 92). Such names as Cote Male Taile, The Knight With Two Swords, and The Knight of the Cart are allusions to a distinguishing adventure of a particular knight. Other names reflect some static quality, like Brauns Sans Pity or Alis la Belle Pellaron. Simple name changes, like the lady Maldisant's change to Beaupensant (p. 352) indicate a change in her relation to another character. Tristram's rather transparent attempt at disguise by calling himself Tramtrist is his own idea, unlike the previous example, and indicates some interesting ideas. When a character disguises himself it means either that he is so important that he would be immediately known if he appeared undisguised or mentioned his real name, or that the character he is impersonating is important enough to inspire impersonation. Here it is an indication of Tristram's fame that he must pose as someone else. One further effect of this name juggling is found in the Balin episode. Balin has just become The Knight With Two Swords, but Arthur does not know him by that name. When Arthur asks about him, Merlin describes Balin (p. 56). Here the problem of unknown identity provides an opportunity for outside description of a

character--the impression he makes on an observer. Merlin's description adds another dimension to Balin's character beyond the author's comments on him and Balin's own actions.²

On the basis of the importance of personal reputation in le Morte Darthur, if Malory were a modern writer critics would no doubt place him in an Existentialist tradition. Indeed, it is rather an Existentialist idea that underlies the secrecy of courtly love. In effect, if no one knows of the adultery, it is somehow not quite adultery. Part of a knight's greatness is that the public at large says that he is great. It figures into self-introductions as though it is a concrete virtue: 'My name ys sir Launcelot du Lake, that hath bene ryght well seyde off' (p. 655). When Arthur and three knights are outnumbered by the five kings at war with him, Kay promises to battle two of them. He kills them, and Guinevere, who is present, praises him and says, 'What lady that ye love and she love you nat agayne, she were gretly to blame. And amonge all ladyes . . . I shall bere your noble fame, for ye spake a grete worde and fulfylled hit worshipfully' (p. 95). This emphasis on telling others of a knight's exploits is striking in the episode in which Lancelot frees the ladies imprisoned in Tintagil. The ladies say, 'And we all pray you to telle us your name, that we may telle oure frendis who delyverde us oute of preson' (p. 196). One of the most common authorial comments on a knight is ' . . . he was nered one of the beste knyghtes lyvyng' (p. 132). (This particular remark is applied to Lohhalt, but the same is said of most other knights of any prominence). Knights are grouped together by reputation, especially Lancelot, Tristram, and Lamerok. Others come and go in this select echelon--like Palomides and Galahad--but Lancelot is nearly always the touchstone to whom others are compared.

²This device is described below, pp. 39-42.

The threat of a bad reputation is used against Bors twice in the same adventure in The Quest for the Holy Grail. A devil posing as a priest tells Bors not to accept a certain lady's love if he wants to be considered chaste, and if he does accept, Lancelot will die, 'and then shall men sey that thou arte a man-sleer, both of thy brothir sir Lyonell and of thy cousyn sir Launcelot . . .' (p. 694). Shortly afterward, devils disguised as ladies are about to jump from a tower in an effort to coerce Bors to submit to one of them. One lady says, 'And if ye suffir us thus to dye for so litill a thyng all ladys and jantillwomen woll sey you dishonoure' (p. 695). Apparently the principal way of influencing a knight is to appeal to his desire to be well thought of by others. However, the desire for a noble reputation can lead to one's destruction, symbolised by the appeals of these devils.

Balin's reputation has preceded him when he meets the disconsolate lover, Garnish of the Mount. At the mention of Balin's name he says, 'A, sir, I know you well inowghe: ye ar the Knyght with the Two Swardis, and the man of moste proues of youre hondis lyvyng' (p. 65). Numerous other encounters in the forest result in this sort of recognition scene. When Bleoberis meets Tristram he recounts some of the deeds for which Tristram is famous.

'Truly,' sayde sir Bleoberys, 'I am ryght glad of you, for ye ar he that slewe Marhalte the knyght honde for honde in the ilonde for the trwayge of Cornwayle. Also ye overcom sir Palomaydes, the good knyght, at the turnemente in Irelande where he bete sir Gawayne and his nine felowys.'

(p. 302)

Bleoberis mentions in his introduction that he is closely related to Lancelot. Tristram then tells him what he knows--what everyone knows--of Lancelot's reputation: ' . . . sir Launcelot ys called pereles of curtesy and of knyghthode . . .' (p. 302). Later Tristram recognises King Arthur immediately because Lancelot has told him that Arthur is

'a man of grete worshyp' (p. 552). King Arthur, in his turn, knows Tristram and Isode only by their reputations until he meets them. He tells Isode, 'Hit is many a day ago sytthyn I desyred fyrst to se you, for ye have bene praysed so fayre a lady' (p. 561). But later in the general decadence of the last days of the Round Table even the idea of personal reputation is perverted into slander. Arthur's subjects turn against him and support Mordred. ' . . . for than was the comyn voyce amonge them that with kynge Arthur was never othir lyff but warre and stryff, and with sir Mordrede was grete joy and blysse' (p. 861). Malory includes a capsule generalisation to reinforce the idea: 'And the moste party of all Inglonde hylde wyth sir Mordred, for the people were so new-fangill' (p. 862).

As in any narrative, disguises and mistaken identity may be used as a device to further the action. Parts of the Morte Darthur resemble the fabliau and the comedy of manners in the use of confused identity. Often there is the element of the practical joke. The first appearance of Merlin finds him dressed as a beggar (p. 3). Sometimes even Arthur does not recognise Merlin, as when he turns up dressed in a black sheep-skin carrying a bow and arrows in one hand and some wild geese in the other (p. 30). Arthur treats him like a churl until he discovers who the stranger is. When Merlin later appears to Arthur as a boy of fourteen and claims to know who Arthur's parents were, Arthur treats him brusquely (p. 34). Merlin leaves and immediately returns, this time disguised as an old man. Arthur, thinking the old man is wise, is more respectful toward him. Merlin tells him that the boy was telling the truth, 'and more he wolde a tolde you and ye wolde a suffirde hym' (p. 35). It is at this point that Merlin reveals the awful fact that Arthur has lain with his own sister and has begotten the person who will destroy him. In these cases of Merlin's disguises there is a strong element of playfulness. Arthur looks foolish when he finds he has belittled a stranger who has proved

to be Merlin, the omniscient magician. The main purpose of these little masquerades, besides comic relief, seems to be to show that Merlin moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform and that his methods baffle even Arthur, who is almost superhuman himself. The effect is to compare two orders of superhuman-ness. Merlin is shown to be the great adviser whose knowledge and prescience are so formidable as to make King Arthur himself look somewhat ordinary. At the same time, this playfulness--this popping up at odd times in an outlandish disguise--has the reverse effect of making Merlin seem more human. While he is undeniably the great infallible adviser, he is not distant and inaccessible; he has the familiar human quality of the benign practical joker.

Still concerning Merlin, when he meets Balin and Balan there is the usual exchange of enquiries (p. 55). There is a slightly hostile atmosphere when the two knights decline to say where they are going and Merlin refuses to tell who he is. Merlin, however, knows that the knights are riding to King Roins and tells them so. Balin immediately knows that the stranger is Merlin. This immediate recognition of Merlin tells us as well as anything could that Merlin's fame as a soothsayer has spread to the point where he is recognised even by people he casually happens across on the road. By telling them where they are going he has revealed his own identity as surely as if he had mentioned his name. Furthermore, as soon as they know who Merlin is, the tone of hostility changes completely. "A," seyde Balyn, "ye ar Merlion. We woll be ruled by youre counceyle" (p. 55).

Disguise, which is a kind of mistaken identity--a premeditated mistaken identity--is an important part of the story of 'Gawain, Ywain, and Marhalt'. Gawain and Pelleas exchange their armour as part of the plot for Gawain to win the love of Ettard for Pelleas (p. 123). Gawain admits he is not Pelleas and tells Ettard that he has killed her suitor.

There is the air of an aristocratic fabliau about the deception of Pelleas. With most of Malory's knights the reader is aware of their general motives and objectives. Pelleas and the reader are both tricked in this adventure of Gawain's, for we are expecting Gawain to arrange a love affair between Ettard and Pelleas, even when he seems to be trying to win her for himself. We are led to believe that he will finally persuade her to love Pelleas, or that he will require her to promise to fulfill an unknown request, which will be to become Pelleas' paramour. None of this happens. Gawain goes on enjoying the love of the lady and deceiving the trusting Pelleas.

The theme of disguise for sexual conquest blends with the mistaken-identity theme. The Round Table society has its very beginning in the deception of Igraine by Uther Pendragon disguised as her husband. Similarly, Arthur later sleeps with his sister, not knowing who she is. Lancelot is tricked into sleeping with Elaine, who he thinks is Guinevere. In these cases it serves to absolve Arthur and Lancelot of most of their guilt; if they were not aware of their offences, they cannot be held responsible.

One of Lancelot's abiding qualities is a penchant for attending a tournament incognito. When Lancelot agrees to help King Bagdemagus in his tournament against the king of North Gales, he arranges to fight accompanied by three other knights, all of them wearing unmarked armour. 'And thus shall I not be knowyn what maner a knyght I am,' says Lancelot (p. 187). It is unclear why Lancelot wants to hide his identity at this juncture. The only political reason for such a move would be an alliance between Arthur and the king of North Gales which Lancelot did not want to jeopardise. Nothing of that kind is involved, however. At this point Lancelot is still building his reputation, and is not the pre-eminent

Round Table knight that he is when he exchanges armour with Kay because no one would willingly fight him in his own armour (p. 198). His motive here is not, therefore, a desire to be challenged by knights who think he is weaker than he is. The situation is entirely unlike the haphazard search for adventures along the road; as a member of Bagdemagus' army Lancelot does not have to wait for someone to challenge him. Lancelot's decision to conceal his identity seems a bit whimsical on his part, and it is not the last instance of Lancelot's whimsicality. On other occasions Lancelot carries a covered shield (p. 427) or an unknown shield (p. 758) or even dresses as a Saracen (p. 785). Most of Lancelot's disguises or concealments of identity look like playful jokes.

The most slapstick of Lancelot's practical jokes involving disguises occurs at the tournament at Surluse (pp. 498-99). Lancelot is disguised as a maiden and takes Dinadan by surprise on the field. This is fitting, since Dinadan is the japer of the Round Table. The final touch of slapstick is that some kitchen knaves take Dinadan into the forest and dress him as a woman. The escapade serves its purpose of amusing the court; when Guinevere sees him, 'she lowghe, that she fell downe' (p. 499).

These repeated instances of Lancelot's playful disguises leave one unprepared for his final disguise. It is such a habit with Lancelot that at first we overlook the implication in the 'Fair Maid of Astolat' episode. There is something in it symptomatic of the inevitable condition of Round Table society. By this time the Round Table is degenerating; the Quest has come and gone and Lancelot has forgotten his pious resolutions. He disguises himself in the armour lent him by the baron of Astolat, and to add even more to the disguise he wears Elaine's token. The disguise is now practically foolproof, for Lancelot has never worn a lady's token before, not even Guinevere's. On many other occasions Lancelot has disguised himself and fought his brothers of the Round Table, but this time

Sir Bors severely wounds him. Lancelot might have remained unrecognised but Elaine shows his shield to Gawain and the secret is out (p. 768).

There are two kinds of implications in this episode. Lancelot, by trying to assume a new personality, has managed to betray both his fellow knights and Guinevere. Bors dealt Lancelot his wound entirely by accident; if he had known Lancelot's identity he would not have fought him. Lancelot has therefore forced Bors to break one of his vows of knighthood. Lancelot's offence is outrageous: he has willfully struck down numerous Round Table knights. He admits to Bors that 'I wolde with pryde have overcom you all' (p. 773). By wearing Elaine's sleeve he has alienated Guinevere, who is becoming more and more jealous anyway. Lancelot's disguise breaks down because, of course, he cannot really change his identity. Lancelot cannot escape being himself, just as he finds after the Quest that he cannot escape being human and weak. His good resolutions after the Quest are like another superficial disguise, which shortly breaks down when it is exposed to everyday life and to Guinevere.

Tristram also has occasion to disguise himself. At the tournament of the Castle of Maidens he carries a plain black shield, and there is also his masquerade in Ireland, where he poses as 'Trantrist'. A sinister note is struck when King Mark disguises himself to kill Tristram (p. 429). Even as the evil Mark journeys to Camelot to find Tristram, he is pursued by a knight who he thinks is Lancelot but who is really Arthur's fool, Dagonet. This situation is representative of the sense one often finds in the Morte Darthur that things are not entirely as they seem. A knight errant never knows whom or what he is going to meet in his wanderings, or whether the things and people encountered are what they appear to be on the surface.

Usually in these cases of identity juggling, the reader watches with the same knowledgeable point of view as the author. The character

may hide his own identity or be accidentally taken for someone else, but the reader knows the knight behind the mask. There are a few places, however, in which Malory presents a character in a different perspective. Sometimes there is a remarkable sense of distance and movement, as when a character approaches the foreground of activity and progresses from being vaguely described and therefore unrecognised to being identified by the author and recognised by the reader. One has the eerie impression of 'seeing' the character, first as an indistinct outline and then as a familiar figure, as he moves from the distance. The action of the Morte Darthur, so often like static tableaux in a tapestry, is given the tension of a changing, developing scene. Malory often stays in the background and does not intrude his personality into the action of the story, but at other times he is evident prowling about nearly within sight of his audience as he withholds information and then reveals who a mysterious figure really is. It is a curious effect to be both impressed by a realistic unfolding of a situation and aware at the same time of the machinations of the author.

When a character's identity is concealed, it may be by the character himself, by another character, or by the author. The first method of concealment is a commonplace of the book. Both Lancelot and Tristram, as well as other minor characters, steadfastly refuse to reveal their names on many occasions. Sometimes, as in the case of Gareth, it is a self-imposed obstacle in fulfilling one's duty or quest (p. 213). It is significant that the lady Linet, who asks for help from the Round Table and is so piqued that she is assigned 'Beaumains', is not given a name at first and refuses to tell her sister's name (p. 215). It is a complication of the theme: Gareth, of unknown name and family, goes to rescue a nameless lady and is accompanied by her nameless sister.

When La Cote Male Taile encounters Sir Plenorius (pp. 353-54) he tells him to go to a near-by bridge to fight a better knight than he (Cote Male Taile) is. The knight is Lancelot, but he declines to tell Plenorius. Why? It would seem that mentioning Lancelot's name might demoralise Plenorius and so be desirable. However, the reader knows who the knight at the bridge is; there is perhaps a certain amount of pleasure in seeing Plenorius going like a lamb to the slaughter, as it were.

In the course of King Mark's journey into England in search of Tristram, he meets Lamerok, who knocks him off his horse. Dinadan is present, and tells Mark that Lamerok is Sir Kay the Seneschal. Mark does not believe it, 'for he is muche bygger than sir Kay' (p. 431). It is harder to see the point of this inclusion. It could have turned into an amusing situation, except that Mark does not believe it for a minute. It is as though Dinadan is expected to produce a joke at every opportunity. In the dozens of cases in which a knight's identity is withheld, often with the near-formula 'I woll nat tell at this tyme', there seems to be no other reason for it than an effort to muddy the water with a substitute for genuine intrigue. A sense of mystery, if only ersatz mystery, pervades these encounters. It is a theme which blends in well with the major themes of the Norte Darthur. In the uncertainty of one's travels through the forest, one never knows whom or what one will encounter; every turn in the road yields another strange adventure. Unknown knights sometimes become known, but sometimes they do not.

An instance of a known character being presented as one of the flock of unnamed minor characters occurs when Brangwain comes searching for Tristram. The scene is a well where Tristram lies sleeping. The stranger approaches, identified only by the term 'damesell'. Only later does Malory casually mention in a parenthetical appositive who the lady is.

And so in the meanewhyle cam a damesell that had sought sir Trystram many wayes and dayes within thys londe. And whan she cam to the welle she loked uppon hym and had forgotyn hym as in remembraunce of sir Trystrames, but by hys horse she knew hym, that hyght Passe-Brevell, that had ben hys horse many yerys; for whan he was madde in the foreyste sir Fergus kepte hym. So thys lady, dame Brangwayne, abode styлле tylle he was awake.

(p. 384)

'Damesell' might mean that she was only one of the dozens of anonymous damsels asking for aid. We are prepared for that sort of scene, when suddenly Brangwain's real identity is revealed and the situation is changed completely. The effect on the reader is a sense of dynamism, a feeling that the scene is not simply a tableau. The figure changes from a shadowy 'damsel' to a familiar character who, since we know she is Isode's servant, carries with her connotations of the love of Tristram and Isode. Instead of expecting a plot development concerning an anonymous damsel probably asking a favour, the reader now knows the lady is associated with Isode, and for that reason the number of anticipated plot developments is sharply narrowed. This realisation, after the off-hand reference to Brangwain, shifts the meaning of the passage immediately preceding it, and shifts it abruptly enough that it is as though a blurred image has come into focus.

When Malory gradually reveals details of characterisation or identity, he sometimes does it in a strikingly off-hand way. In the 'Merlin' section of 'The Tale of King Arthur' word comes to the court that an unknown knight has set up a pavilion and killed another knight named Miles. Before Grifflet goes to challenge him, Merlin says, 'he ys one of the beste knyghtes of the worlde and the strengyst man of armys' (p. 37). The next development in the story of the mysterious knight is the scene in which Grifflet strikes the knight's hanging shield.

With that the knyght com oute of the pavilion and seyde,
'Fayre knyght, why smote ye downe my shyld?'

'Sir, for I wolde juste with you,' seyde Gryfflet.
 'Sir, hit ys bettir ye do nat,' seyde the kynge, 'for
 ye ar but yonge and late made knyght, and youre myght ys
 nat to myne.'

(p. 37)

A minor detail has been added that the strange knight is a king. A few pages later, after the defeat of Grifflet, Arthur challenges the stranger to battle. Except for the reference to the 'king', the stranger is always called 'the knyght'. Toward the end of the battle, when Arthur's sword has broken, this scene takes place:

Than seyde the knyght unto Arthure, 'Thou arte in my
 daungere, whethir me lyst to save the or sle the; and but
 thou yelde the to me as overcom and recreaunte, thou shalt dey.'
 'As for that,' seyde kynge Arthure, 'dethe ys wellcom
 to me whan hit commyth. But to yelde me unto the I woll nat!'
 And therewithall the kynge lepte unto kynge Pellynore,
 and toke hym by the myddyll, and overthrew hym, and raced of
 hys helme. So whan the knyght felte that, he was adradde,
 for he was a passynge bygge man of myght.

(p. 40)

Pellinore's name has been inserted into the narrative in such an off-hand way that the reader may suspect that he has missed a first reference to him. These casual revelations convey the impression that there is even more of the story than is told; that there are other things going on in other parts of the forest. This impression is reinforced when knights encounter one another on the road and come upon abbays, pavilions, castles, and chapels in the course of their wandering.

Before and after Lancelot's adventure at Tintagil he encounters strangers whose identities are discovered later. As he approaches the town and the castle of Tintagil, he kills a 'carle' who guards the bridge (p. 195). The only description of him is that he is a 'passyng foule carle' who strikes Lancelot's horse on the nose. Both Lancelot and the reader are enlightened when the villagers at the other end of the bridge say that the man was the porter of their castle (p. 195). The next major adventure, occurring after a short résumé of uneventful travels, begins with a knock on the gate of the castle where Lancelot is lodging. Since

his bedchamber is above the gate he awakens and looks out the window. The moonlight scene he sees is reported to the reader by an 'obtuse narrator' who knows no more about the scene than Lancelot does.

Whan sir launcelot herde this he arose up and loked oute at the wyndowe, and sygh by the moonelyght three knyghtes com rydyng aftir that one man, and all three laysshyng on hym at onys with swardys; and that one knyght turned on hem knyghtly agayne and defended hym. 'Truly,' seyde sir launcelot, 'yondir one knyght shall I helpe, for hit were shame for me to se three knyghtes on one, and yf he be there slayne I am partener of his deth.'

And therewith he toke his harneys and wente oute at a wyndowe by a shete downe to the four knyghtes. And than sir launcelot seyde on hyght, 'Turne you, knyghtis, unto me, and leve this feyghtyng with that knyght!' And than they three leffte sir Kay and turned unto sir launcelot . . .
(p. 197)

The reader approaches the strange knights, just as Lancelot does, and the anonymous knight is called Kay as though we have approached near enough to recognise him. The flat presentation of the scene without any indication of cause or effect emphasises its distance. When Lancelot arrives in their midst, the detail that Kay is one of these distant figures suggests a 'close-up' of the action.³

Other discoveries of identity are used for more pedestrian reasons. For example, in an encounter between Lancelot and Lamerok, Lamerok does not know who Lancelot is. Lamerok is with Sir Froll, who has fought Lancelot before and wants to fight him again, against the advice of Lamerok, who can see that the approaching knight is noble. After Lancelot overthrows Froll, Lamerok rides after him and they exchange introductions.

'Sir, my name is sir Lamerok de Galis.'

'And my name is sir Launcelot du lake.'

Than they putt up their swardys and kyssed hertely togydirs, and aythir made grete joy of other.

'Sir,' seyde sir Lameroke, 'and hit please you I woll do you servyse.'

'God deffende, sir, that ony of so noble a blood as ye be sholde do me servyse.' Than seyde sir launcelot, 'I am in a queste that I muste do myselff alone.'

'Now God spede you!' seyde sir Lameroke.

And so they departed.

(pp. 332-39)

³I have discussed this sort of visual movement below, pp. 205-7.

Of course this occurs in the chapter devoted to Lamerok, and one of the best ways of showing where Lamerok fits into the hierarchy of knighthood is to compare him directly to a known quantity like Lancelot. Lancelot, the greatest of all knights, was never more courteous; he seems almost in awe of Lamerok's blood line.

As I have mentioned illustrations of this theme of identity, I have given my interpretation of their purposes. There are a few other uses of the issue of personal identity which I will discuss further. Identity problems often involve matters of allegory, exposition, and irony. Most interesting of all is the curious game element, of which personal identity is a part.

In a general way, the whole situation of riding through the countryside meeting people who may or may not be who they appear to be is rich in symbolism. In The Quest of the Holy Grail the many dreams which are interpreted allegorically set the mood for the allegory of actual events. The knights meet persons who are not what they seem; damsels and religious figures are devils in disguise. They meet people who are symbolic of abstractions. An abbot explains some of Bors' adventures:

'Also, the lady for whom ye fought for. And kyng Anyauss, whych was lorde thereto, betokenyth Jesu Cryste, which ys Kyng of the worlde. And that ye fought with the champion for the lady, thus hit betokenyth: whan ye toke the batayle for the lady, by her shall ye undirstonde the law of oure Lord Jesu Cryst and Holy Chirche, and by the othir lady ye shall undirstonde the olde lawe and the fynde which all day warryth ayenst Holy Chirch; therefore ye dud youre batayle with ryght, for ye be Jesu Crystes knyght, therefore ye oughte to be defenders of Holy Chirche. And by the blak birde myght ye understande Holy Chirche whych seyth, "I am blacke," but he ys fayre. And by the whyght birde may men undirstonde the fynde, and I shall telle you how the swan ys whyght withoutefurth and blacke within: hit ys iprocesye, which ys withoute yalew or pale, and semyth withouteforth the servauntis of Jesu Cryste, but they be withinfurthe so horrible of fylth and synne, and begyle the worlde so evyll.'

(pp.696-97)

The familiar religious allegory underscores the dangers at every turning in the metaphorical forest: things are not only not what they seem, but may be exactly the opposite, with the worst consequences for one's soul. Even in the secular world when a knight is not on a holy quest, there is uncertainty and mystery in most encounters with others. The tension of the feeling is encouraged by the simple fact of armour, which hides a knight's personal appearance. Even when one thinks he recognises the armour--the exterior of the other person--it is quite possible that it is Lancelot, for instance, masquerading in Kay's armour.

Of course, not every problem of personal identity is related to such general themes. One reason for making an issue of identity is simply to introduce exposition. In the book of Sir Tristram, Tristram meets Lamerok on an island, and 'as sone as sir Trystrames sy hym he smyled uppon hym and knew hym well. But he knew nat sir Trystrams' (p. 333). Tristram nevertheless claims not to know Lamerok and asks his name. When Lamerok tells him, Tristram admits that he knew him before, and they begin reminiscing. The value of their conversation is that it presents material already familiar to the reader, but in a different light. In the previous section of the book, the episode of Tristram's battle with Lamerok and Lamerok's subsequent revenge is presented with comments by the main figures. In the original episode Tristram explains why he will not fight Lamerok on foot: Lamerok is tired, and although Mark required Tristram to fight him, he has fulfilled his duty by knocking Lamerok's horse down (pp. 325-26). Now that scene is reiterated and Tristram explains again:

'Sir, that was nat for no feare that I had of you, but me shamed at that tyme to have more ado with you, for as me semed ye had inowe ado. But, sir, vete you well, for my kyndenesse ye put many ladyes to a repreff whan ye sent the horne from Morgan le Fay unto kynge Marke. And hit sholde have gone to kynge Arthure, whereas ye dud that in dispyte of me.'

(p. 334)

So far, there is nothing really new in this recollection of a past event. However, Lamerok's defence of himself after this reproach from Tristram reveals a secondary motive for sending the magic horn (which adulteresses cannot drink from) to Mark's court. His original remark at the time of the action was:

'Now shalt thou bere this horne,' seyde sir Lamerok,
'to kyng Marke, othir chose to dye. For in the dyspyte
of sir Trystrames thou shalt bere hit hym, that horne,
and sey that I sente hit hym for to assay his lady, and
yf she be trew he shall preve her.'

(p. 327)

Now when Tristram reminds him of his revenge, Lamerok says:

'Well,' seyde he, 'and hit were to do agayne, so wolde
I do, for I had lever stryff and debate felle in kyng Markys
courte rether than in kyng Arthurs courte, for the honour
of bothe courtes be nat lyke.'

(p. 334)

The difference between Lamerok's two reasons for the action adds a dimension to his character. (Something is always added to the personality of a fictional character when we are made to stop and think about his motives.) He has given two different, but not incompatible, reasons for his action. He does not deny that he originally did it for revenge, but now that he and Tristram are about to be reconciled, he stresses the other reason for which he would still do it. Besides adding complexity to Lamerok's character, his speech serves to give a non-authorial opinion of the relationship between Mark's and Arthur's courts. Arthur's court is far above Mark's; its honour should be protected. The sinister note is that its honour has to be protected.

The oddest of these exchanges of introductions are those in which the knights already know each other. Tristram has sought out Bleoberis to challenge his right to the lady he has carried off. Bleoberis interrupts their battle to ask who his assailant is. After Tristram identifies himself, Bleoberis recognises him and recapitulates his famous exploits:

'Truly,' seyde sir Bleoberys, 'I am ryght glad of you, for ye ar he that slewe Marhalte the knyght honde for honde in the ilonde for the trwayge of Cornwayle. Also ye overcom sir Palomydes, the good knyght, at the turnemente in Irelande where he bete sir Gawayne and his nine felowys.'

(p. 302)

Now Tristram asks Bleoberis who he is. His request is the more striking since he has purposely followed Bleoberis to challenge him. Bleoberis is given a chance to recite his own blood line. His special point of pride is that his uncle is Lancelot. Both then praise Lancelot, and Tristram declines to fight any more 'for the grete love I have to sir Launcelot' (p. 302). The scene serves to help strengthen the continuity of the story by the reference to Tristram's past exploits. It is one of the many instances in the Book of Tristram in which Lancelot is mentioned and praised. He is repeatedly brought into the action, perhaps to show that his reputation has reached such an exalted place in the general imagination that he is constantly spoken of in Cornwall (a foreign kingdom), and his example pervades the concept of chivalry. His influence spreads even to places where he is very indirectly involved, like this battle between Tristram and Bleoberis, in which the thought of Lancelot's nobility and his relationship to Bleoberis causes Tristram to stop the fight. Tristram's courtesy toward Lancelot, even in this indirect way, reflects on his own character. Through this seemingly ordinary exchange of introductions something has been added to three figures: Tristram, Bleoberis, and Lancelot. Tristram's past accomplishments are recalled, and he reacts in an honourable, knightly way to the invocation of Lancelot; Bleoberis is related to Lancelot, and he responds courteously to Tristram's offer to stop fighting; Lancelot is shown to be highly respected.

There is not so much subtle interest in the similar episode of Lancelot's battle with Tarquin. Lancelot finds Tarquin riding with a wounded Gaheris slung across his saddle and challenges him to battle (p. 190). Tarquin interrupts the battle to ask who Lancelot is and promises to be

his friend, so long as he is not the detested Lancelot of the Round Table. When Lancelot tells him, the battle goes on with renewed fervour, and Lancelot finally kills Tarquin. After the battle Lancelot speaks to Gaheris, who does not know him, even though (a) Lancelot has recognised him, (b) they are brother Round Table knights, and (c) Lancelot has just revealed his identity to Tarquin, presumably in Gaheris' hearing. Gaheris' 'But fayre sir . . . I pray you telle me your name' (p. 192) is only a straight line to introduce an expository speech from Lancelot. He states his relationship to Gaheris (in terms of loyalty to Gawain) and describes Tarquin's castle, where Round Table knights are held prisoners.

'Sir, my name is sir Launcelot du Lake that ought to helpe you of ryght for kynge Arthurs sake, and in especiall for my lorde sir Gawayne his sake, youre owne brother. And whan that ye com within yondir maner, I am sure ye shall fynde there many knyghtes of the Rounde Table; for I have sene many of their shyldys that I know hongys on yondir tre.'

(p. 192)

He goes on to describe the shields and to ask Gaheris to tell the knights in the castle to meet him at Pentecost. The only purpose of Gaheris' question seems to be to give Lancelot the opportunity to stress his friendship with Gaheris and his brother, Gawain. The other remarks about the shields and the prisoners could have been made, whatever Gaheris' gambit might have been.

The question of identity lends itself naturally to irony. Tarquin's speech to Lancelot in this episode is typical of a common sort of scene in which someone criticises another knight while unknowingly in his presence. Tarquin wants to reconcile himself with his adversary unless he happens to be Lancelot. Then follows the reason he hates Lancelot and the revenge he has taken so far, told with an interestingly self-conscious wickedness:

'Thou art the byggyst man that ever I mette withall, and the beste-brethed, and as lyke one knyght that I hate abovyn all other knyghtes . . . his name is sir Launcelot

de Lake, for he slowe my brothir sir Carados at the
 Dolerous Towre And for sir Launcelottis sake
 I have slayne an hondred good knyghtes, and as many I
 have mayned all uttirly, that they myght never aftir helpe
 themself, and many have dyed in preson.'

(p. 191)

Tristram's visit to Ireland and the necessity to conceal his identity provide a rich opportunity for irony. No sooner does he arrive than King Angwish confides to him the sad tale of the defeat of Marhalt, the king's champion, not knowing that it was his guest who killed him. Tristram is often involved in ironic identity mix-ups. At a tournament Persides speaks to Tristram of a grudge he holds against Tristram. Tristram's tongue is in his cheek in this encounter:

'A,' sayde sir Trystram, 'now I undirstonde that ye
 hate sir Trystram. What deme you? That sir Trystram ys
 nat able to withstonde youre malyce?'

'Yes,' seyde sir Persydes, 'I know well that sir
 Trystram ys a noble knyght and a mucche bettir knyght than
 I am, yet I shall nat owghe hym my good wyll.'

(p. 385)

Persides' determination to be wicked is reminiscent of Tarquin's speech. Both speeches reveal the kind of philosophy of character common in morality plays, in which characters so often 'explain' themselves with a detached viewpoint more suited to the role of narrator. If a figure is wicked, it is not left to a capricious audience to find it out; the figure tells them he is wicked.

One encounter between Tristram and his rival Palomides takes place in a typically strange way. At the time of the tournament at the Castle of Maidens, Dame Brangwain hears an odd noise in the forest and sends her squire to investigate. He returns with word of 'a knyght bounden tyll a tre, cryng as he had bene woode' (p. 393). She in turn tells Tristram about it, and finally Tristram himself goes to see about the strange goings-on. Only when Tristram hears the knight lamenting and calling himself by name do we learn that it is Sir Palomides. In his frenzy Palomides (no longer bound to the tree) hurls his sword into a

fountain. He is jumping into the fountain to get his sword back when Tristram restrains him. This scene is a perfect comic prelude to Palomydes' speech to Tristram, whom he does not recognise. The violent chagrin of throwing away his sword and immediately going to fetch it again introduces a speech nearly tearful with disappointment:

'Alas!' seyde sir Palomydes, 'I may never wyn worship where sir Trystram ys, for ever where he ys and I be, there gete I no worshyp. And yf he be away, for the moste party I have the gre, onles that sir launcelot be there, othir ellis sir Lamerok.' Than sir Palomydes sayde, 'Onys in Irelande sir Trystram put me to the wors, and anothir tyme in Cornwayle and in other placis in thys londe.'

'What wolde ye do,' seyde sir Trystram, 'and ye had sir Trystram?'

'I wolde fyght with hym,' seyde sir Palomydes, 'and ease my harte uppon hym. And yet, to say the sothe, sir Trystram ys the jantylyste knyght in thys worlde lyvyng.'

(p. 394)

Palomydes' comic sorrow at always being bested by Tristram would be amusing, whomever he confided in, but the comedy is doubled by Tristram's being his confidant. The dramatic irony continues as Tristram invites Palomydes to his tournament pavilion and later meets him on the field, all without Palomydes' discovering his identity. Palomydes has a genius for letting Tristram slip through his fingers, and it is just as well for Palomydes. Sometime after this episode Tristram and Palomydes are lodged at the same castle.

And full well knew sir Trystram hym, but he sayde but lytill. . . . and allwayes whan sir Palomydes saw sir Trystram he wolde beholde hym full mervaylously, and ever hym semed that he had sene hym. Than wolde he sey unto sir Dynadan,

'And ever I may mete with sir Trystram, he shall nat escape myne hondis.'

'I mervayle,' seyde sir Dynadan, 'that ye do boste behynde sir Trystram so, for hit ys but late that he was in youre hondys and ye in hys hondis. Why wolde ye nat holde hym what ye had hym? For I saw myselff tyme or thryse that ye gate but lytyll worship of sir Trystram.'

Than was sir Palomydes ashamed.

(pp. 400-1)

Besides searching for his Questing Beast, Palomides spends enough time looking for Tristram that finally it is a familiar pattern. This beating the bushes for Tristram, often as not in the presence of Tristram incognito, becomes one of Palomides' motifs. It is good comedy, but there is also the hint of a burlesque quest in searching for someone who is under one's nose.

Tristram has his own little joke with a knight who lodges him. They discuss various famous knights and disagree over their relative prowess. After they have mentioned several knights:

'Sir, why name ye nat sir Trystram?' sayde hys oste.
 'For I accompte hym as good a knyght as ony of them'
 'I knowe nat sir Trystram,' seyde sir Trystram.
 (p. 415)

The irony is emphasised by having this exchange come at the end of the conversation between Tristram and his host. The repetition of Tristram's name in the last line quite forcefully emphasises his joke.

Again when Tristram is lodged with three other knights and they revile Cornish knights in front of him, the irony is used to deflate the braggadocios. Tristram's behaviour when Tor, Brandiles, and Kay are speaking is described in a remarkably vivid and succinct way:

And as they sate at hir souper, thes four knyghtes, three
 of them spake all the shame by Cornysh knyghtes that coude
 be seyde. Sir Trystramys harde all that they seyde, and
 seyde but lytyll, but he thought the more. But at that
 tyme he discoverde nat hys name.

(p. 363)

Tristram defeats them roundly in jousts the following day. As they ride after Tristram to ask his name, the suspense is considerable; the knights have spoken strongly against Cornish knights and they are about to learn that Tristram is one. But they are delighted to meet him. When he modestly discounts their praise, Kay appeals to the authority of Tristram's reputation. 'And ye be sir Trystrams, ye ar the man called now moste of proues excepte sir Launcelot . . .' (p. 364). Kay's speech again illustrates the importance of reputation and the opinion of others.

When Lamerok innocently tells a Cornish knight that the King of Cornwall is 'the shamfullist knyght of a kynge that is now lyvyng, for he is a grete enemy to all good knyghtes' (p. 431), only the reader knows that this knight is King Mark himself. Much of the impact of the long speech of Lamerok's is nothing overtly expressed in the narrative but is a result of the reader's double perspective. We know that Lamerok is expressing the common opinion of King Mark and that he is unaware that Mark stands before him. He knows by his speech, however, that the knight is Cornish. It subtly draws our attention to the fact that the speech on the page is actually being spoken and heard. Mark's response to the diatribe against the king of Cornwall might pass for modesty and nobility if he were not such a notorious coward. "'I have nat ado in this mater," seyde kynge Marke, "neyther noughte woll I speke thereof"' (p. 431). His answer sounds like a cowardly evasion of the facts, but Lamerok comments, 'Well seyde'. From Lamerok's point of view Mark's words could be an expression of nobility and unwillingness to discuss the petty affair of the ignominious king. Lamerok's response serves to underscore the difference between his view of the situation and ours: we know the stranger is Mark and that he is a coward; he sees him as only a knight from Cornwall. Lamerok, therefore, puts the more favourable interpretation on Mark's words.

Accolon also speaks to Arthur in a similar vein. It is the scene in which Accolon has tried to kill Arthur with the stolen Excalibur. He does not know that his opponent is Arthur, but he readily admits to the stranger that he plans to kill the king; since he is dying he candidly reveals Morgan's plot.

' . . . ye shall undirstonde that kynge Arthur ys the man in the worlde that she hatyth moste, because he is moste of worship and of prouesse of ony of hir bloode. Also she lovyth me oute of mesure as paramour, and I hir agayne. And if she myght bryng hit aboute to sle Arthure by hir crauftis, she wolde sle hir husbonde kynge Uryence lyghtly. And than had she devysed to have me kynge in this londe and so to reigne, and she to be my quene.'

Again there is the Pardoner-like confession of outrageous wickedness. The difference in Arthur's reply from Mark's shows something of their opposite characters.

'Well,' seyde kyng Arthure, 'I fele by you ye wolde have bene kyng of this londe, yett hit had be grete damage to have destroyed your lorde,' seyde Arthur.

(p. 106)

There is no suggestion of petulance in Arthur's speech. He does not speak from a personal point of view, but speaks rather with a regal detachment of the grave ethical wrong. The misunderstanding of identity is solved in this passage:

'A, Accolon,' seyde kyng Arthure, 'now y let the wete that I am kyng Arthure that thou haste done grete damage to.'

Whan Accolon herd that he cryed on-lowde, 'Fayre swete lorde, have mercy on me, for I knew you nat.'

'A, sir Accolon,' seyde kyng Arthur, 'mercy thou shalt have because I fele be thy wordis at this time thou knewest me nat . . .'

(pp. 106-7)

Arthur is merciful to his dying enemy and puts most of the blame for the plot on Morgan. Accolon's plea for mercy sounds genuine. After the candid announcement of treachery in his previous speech, his 'Fayre swete lorde' sounds like the cry of a Judas who regrets his betrayal.

Where Dinadan is concerned, the great 'japer' of the Round Table, questions of identity usually take on the atmosphere of practical jokes. Two such incidents occur close enough together that they can be considered thematically related; it is as though the first is a precedent and a complement for the second. Dinadan, who professes not to be a courtly lover, is happy to part company with the unknown knight (Tristram) who has apparently brought him bad luck. This exchange occurs as they separate:

'Well,' seyde sir Trystram, 'peraventure I cowde tell you tydynges of sir Trystram.'

'Godde save me,' seyde sir Dynadan, 'from thy felyshyp! For sir Trystram were mykyll the warre and he were in thy company.'

(p. 513)

This is an obvious, pedestrian kind of irony; the joke is on Dinadan. Very shortly after that, Tristram tells Isode of Dinadan's aversion to courtly love, and Tristram hides as Isode invites Dinadan to Joyous Gard. They have an amusing interview, in which they tease one another about their divergent attitudes toward love. The conversation begins:

'For sothe, madame, I seke after sir Trystram, the
good knyght, for hit was tolde me that he was in this contrey.'
'Hit may well be,' seyde La Beall Isode, 'but I am nat
ware of hym.'

(p. 515)

While before Tristram has offered to tell Dinadan of Sir Tristram, now Dinadan speaks of Tristram to Isode, who pretends to have no knowledge of his whereabouts, although he is hiding in her castle. The two situations are similar enough, especially since they concern the same two principal characters, and they are close enough together in the narrative that there is a distinct thematic echo, which redeems the first incident of much of its banality.

Dinadan's greatest coup, however, is his elaborate trickery in the 'King Mark' section of The Book of Sir Tristram de Lyones. He has been riding with Mark, whom he thoroughly dislikes, when he sees six Round Table knights and rides forward to attack them in the hope that Mark will then be forced to fight one of them. Naturally the cowardly Mark flees. Dinadan then begins his involved deceptions. He greets his fellow knights and tells them that Mark is a cowardly Cornish knight whose name he does not know. When Dinadan, the six knights, and Mark are later lodged at the same castle, Mark asks Dinadan who the leader of the knights is, and 'For to feare hym sir Dynadan seyde hit was sir Launcelot' (p. 437) and describes the shield Lancelot bears. Again we are told it is a joke: 'All this he seyde to feare kynge Marke, for sir Launcelot was nat in the felyshyp' (p. 437).⁴ The reader sees the deception evolving only as

⁴Eugène Vinaver suggests that Malory did not like the Dinadan he found in his French sources and tried to delete him (Malory, Oxford, 1929, pp. 67-68). However, I do not get the impression that Malory disapproves of Dinadan's joking or that 'he has no sympathy with anything that reveals a critical attitude toward his favourite ideal' (p. 67).

quickly as Dinadan forms the several parts of it. The reference to the shield fits like a mortised tenon into the next part of the prank. We do not know the significance of the shield until Dinadan tells his fellows:

'I have tolde the Cornyshe knyght that here is sir Launcelot,
and the Cornyshe knyght asked me what shylde he bare, and
I tolde hym that he bare the same shylde that sir Mordred
beryth.'

(p. 437)

Mordred thinks of the next step. He is wounded anyway, and has Dagonet, the king's fool, wear his armour and shield and ride after Mark. The knights all watch in hilarity as the terrified Mark flees, chased for miles through the forest by Dagonet carrying Mordred's shield, which Mark thinks is Lancelot's.

This is an example of a sophisticated kind of comedy: farcical but yet intellectual. The humour is not principally in the action, but in the involuted, entirely verbal scheme of trickery. We laugh at Mark's headlong flight through the woods chased by a court fool, but our laughter is largely caused by our knowledge that Mark thinks Dagonet is Lancelot because he carries Mordred's shield, which Mark thinks is Lancelot's shield. The complexity alone is funny. The comedy would not be so rich if, for example, Mordred were cut out of the plot; if Lancelot himself gave his own shield to Dagonet. The whole imbroglio would be less complex by one figure, and the comedy rather ordinary by comparison.

Dinadan's joke is the height of ironic comedy caused by uncertain identity. There is also in the Morte Darthur a scene in which the irony is strikingly understated. Tristram is required by Morgan le Fay to carry a certain shield to Arthur's tournament at the Roche Dure. The shield is 'gouldes with a kynge and a quene therein paynted, and a knyght stondynge aboven them with hys one foote standynge uppon the kynges hede and the othir uppon the quenys hede' (p. 413), representing Lancelot and his unnatural position over both Arthur and Guinevere. Morgan hopes that

Arthur will recognise the symbolism. Indeed, both Arthur and Guinevere are uneasy at the sight of it. Tristram's identity is unknown, and Arthur wonders who the great knight can be.

And ever the kyng behylde sir Tristram that ded so
mervaylous dedis of armys that he wondred sore what knyght
hit myght be, and well he wyste hit was nat sir Launcelot.
(p. 416)

The understatement at the end of this sentence is staggering. This shield with the message which finally destroys the Round Table is not likely to be carried by the person whose crime it exposes.

Another way of looking at the question of uncertain identity is to see it as part of a structure of games. Two general elements in the Morte Darthur (or any romance) suggest a game-like quality. They are the framework of rules pervading the society and the movement of the characters against a stationary background. The fixed, often arbitrary, rules of chivalric society give an impression of some such game as 'forfeits' or 'truth or consequences'. Sometimes a service is demanded (a healing dish of blood) or a name, or a choice is presented (e.g. go to prison or be someone's paramour).⁵ The literal movement--riding on horseback or sailing in a ship--and the encountering of various parts of the environment--other knights, chapels, abbeys, castles, pavilions, damsels, hermits, etc.--recall a genre of board game that is still popular. The game elements in Malory are a manifestation of a certain 'play mentality'.⁶

There are games of obligation; often, but not always, a knight's identity is in question as part of the 'game'. The formula for the

⁵See below, pp. 137-49.

⁶Johann Huizinga has called the chivalrous life a 'play-idealization par excellence'. See Homo Ludens: a Study of the Play-Element in Culture, trans. R.F.C. Hull, International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction (London, 1949), pp. 180-81.

exchange of names and its variations has affinities with game patterns.

A asks B's name; B will tell only if A first tells his name. Or B tells first, and then A is obliged to tell his name. Alexander the Orphan's variation is quite unchivalrous, but recognisably in the tradition:

'Now, sir knyght,' seyde sir Malegryne, 'holde thyne honde a whyle, and telle me what thou arte.'

'That woll I nat,' seyde sir Alysaunder, 'but yf me lyst well. But tell me thy name, and why thou kepyste thys contrey, other ellys thou shalt dye of my hondis.'

(p. 478)

A lady asks Gawain's name with the motiveless, surrealistic logic of romance. "'What ys youre name?" seyde the lady, "for ye muste telle or ye passe"' (p. 80). Gawain promptly tells her, apparently without wondering why he is obliged to. In striking proximity to that is the beginning of Tor's adventure, in which a dwarf abruptly stops him and gives as his reason, 'For thou shalt nat passe thys way but if thou juste withe yondir knyghtes of the pavilions' (p. 81).

Sir Lancelot is given a game-like choice when the four queens who have captured him tell him to choose one of them, 'whyche that thou wolte have to thy peramour, other ellys to dye in this preson' (p. 184). One of the most game-like of these confrontations is the following peremptory announcement when Gawain, Ywain, and Marhalt meet three damsels:

'We be here,' seyde the damesels, 'for this cause: if we may se ony of arraunte knyghtes to teche hem unto stronge adventures. And ye be three knyghtes adventures and we be three damesels, and therefore eche one of you muste chose one of us; and whan ye have done so, we woll lede you unto three hyghewayes, and there eche of you shall chose a way and his damesell with hym. And this day twelve moneth ye muste mete here agayne, and God sende you the lyves, and thereto ye muste plyght your trouth.'

(p. 118)

Propositions like this, which resemble nothing so much as the rules of a game, are a valuable way of advancing the plot. When certain obligations are established, there is a tension in the action which counter-

acts much of the aimlessness of knight-errantry.⁷ It is interesting that in these last two examples and in others, the rules are set down by ladies, the traditional arbiters of knightly behaviour. Damsels are often the agents for directing knights toward any 'adventures' in the neighbourhood, as though they were stationary objects. A damsel directs Lancelot to Tarquin, who has imprisoned sixty-four Round Table knights. When she has given him the outline of this 'adventure', the damsel extracts a promise from him that is in the tradition of the courts of love: 'But whan ye have done that journey, ye shall promyse me, as ye ar a trew knyght, for to go and helpe me and other damesels that ar dystressed dayly with a false knyght' (p. 189).

The game that might be called 'The Custom of the Castle' has several forms. There is the castle whose lady requires a dishful of blood from 'a clene mayde and a kynges doughter' (p. 62) to heal her. Balin's companion fails to heal the lady, but later Percival's sister accomplishes it, although dying in the process. Balin and Balan kill each other as a result of this 'custom' game. The lady of the castle says, 'Knyghte with the Two Suerdys, ye must have adoo and juste with a knyght hereby that kepeth an iland, for ther may no man passe this way but he must juste or he passe' (p. 67). The knight is Balin's brother, Balan. As before, it is the 'chyef lady of the castel' (p. 67) who decrees Balin's obligation. The most complicated variety of this 'game' takes place at the Castle Pleure, to which Tristram and Isode come.

But anone as sir Trystrames was within the castell
they were takyn presoners, for the custom of that castell
was suche that who that rode by that castell and brought
ony lady wyth hym he muste nedys fyght with the lorde that
hyght Brewmour. And yf hit so were that Brewmor wan the

⁷See below, pp. 83-84 for another side to the game-obligation.

fyde, than sholde the knyght straunger and his lady be put to deth, what that ever they were. And yf hit were so that the straunge knyght wan the fyld of sir Brawnor, than sholde he dye and hys lady bothe.

(p. 312)

There is still another complication, which is somewhat contradictory to this explanation of the custom. It is explained to Tristram in prison.

'... whan a knyght comyth here he muste nedis fyght with oure lorde, and he that is the wayker muste lose his hede. And whan that is done, if his lady that he bryngyth be fowler than is oure lordys wyff, she muste lose hir hede. And yf she be fayrer preved than is oure lady, than shall the lady of this castell lose her hede.'

(p. 312)

The arbitrary and complacent way in which the procedure is explained makes it sound more than ever like a game.

In a larger way, most of the action in the Morte Darthur is prompted by the game motif of encountering obstacles and progressing (often by means of guides) from one obstacle to another. What are the quests (or the Quest) but game obligations? The quests of Gawain, Tor, and Pellinore, for a hart, a lady, and two knights are undertaken in a spirit of game logic. This triple quest is remarkable for another reason: it illustrates the peculiar quality of the romance landscape. It is perhaps too facile to press the comparison of literature and graphic art, but so often in Malory there is a sense of plot progression that is very much like the static panels of action on a tapestry. Usually the protagonist moves against a static background and encounters the damsels and pavilions and so forth as though they were permanent parts of the scenery. The persons a knight meets are usually standing by the road or riding toward him or sometimes acting out a tableau, like Lady Weeping Over Slain Lover. If we speculate on their existence outside the narrative, we can only imagine these persons forever frozen in their one act of standing, riding, or weeping.⁸ Occasionally there is a reversal of the pattern and the pro-

⁸See also below, pp. 34-35.

tagonist passively watches a series of events. In 'Torre and Pellinor' the Round Table knights are sitting down to Arthur's wedding feast when 'Merlion wente to all the knyghtes of the Round Table and bade hem sitte styll, "that none of you remeve, for ye shall se a straunge and a mer-vailous adventure"' (p. 76). Then the performance begins. There is a veritable linear procession as a white hart runs around the table, followed by a white brachet, followed by thirty pairs of black hounds. The hart knocks a knight down, 'And therewith the knyght arose and toke up the brachet, and so wente forthe oute of the halle and toke hys horse and rode hys way with the brachett' (p. 76). Since the whole situation is so extraordinary, we scarcely pause to wonder why a knight who is about to eat a meal should ride away with a brachet, the reason apparently following in some way from his being knocked over by the hart which the brachet was chasing. Now a lady arrives and claims that this knight has stolen her brachet. Finally a knight rides up and takes the lady away by force.

Arthur is content to leave it at that, but Merlin tells him there is more to be done. His explanation is a tantalising suggestion of the romance concept of adventure.

'Nay,' seyde Merlion, 'ye may nat leve hit so, thys adventure, so lyghtly, for thes adventures muste by brought to an ende, other ellis hit will be disworshyp to you and to youre feste.'

(p. 76)

An adventure is seemingly a finite thing with a clearly defined beginning and end, and there is an implicit, strict code of conduct regarding it. There is a feeling for completeness; a distaste for loose ends. It is essential that all of the elements of this dream-like sequence be found again and brought back to Camelot. The reason for it--if it is proper to look for a reason--is that these things, having appeared briefly and in a certain aura of mystery (Who is the lady? Who is the knight? Why

did he kidnap her?) challenge the company to find them again. It is typical of this sort of 'play' that literal objects take on a symbolic meaning, like a trophy of some sort. At the first appearance the knights were only spectators; now they are challenged to capture the hart, the lady, and the two knights, to have control over them, to take an active part in the adventure instead of only watching it. It is exactly this motive that causes the knights later to begin their disastrous Quest for the Grail.

Merlin's manner of charging the knights with their duty resembles nothing so much as a treasure hunt.

. . . he lette calle sir Gawayne, for he muste brynge agayne the whyght herte.

'Also, sir, ye muste lette call sir Torre, for he muste brynge agayne the brachette and the knyght, other ellis sle hym. Also lette calle kyng Pellynor, for he muste brynge agayne the lady and the knyght, other ellis sle hym, and thes three knyghtes shall do mervayles adventures or they com agayne.'

(p. 76)

The irony of Merlin's insistence on carrying out this adventure is apparent later. The abducted lady is Nineve, who later causes Merlin's downfall.

When a knight asks where adventures are, he could as easily be asking where a stationary object is. Gawain asks his host such a question in this remarkable scene:

. . . sir Gawayne asked the knyght if he knewe of any adventures.

'I shall shewe you to-morne,' sayde the knyght, 'mervelos adventures.'

So on the morne they rode all in same to the foreste of adventures tyll they com to a launde, and thereby they founde a crosse. And as they stood and hoked, there cam by them the fayreste knyght and the semelyest man that ever they sawe.

(p. 119)

The concepts of time and space are clearly indicated in this suggestion about 'adventure'. Gawain's question implies that adventures are things to be purposely encountered and known of ahead of time. The host's reply

implies that at a given time one can go to a certain place and find an 'adventure', as though it were something growing in the ground.⁹ They ride to a specific place at exactly the right time to see a knight, who is then attacked by ten other knights. He defeats them all, but allows them to take him prisoner and carry him away. As Gawain, his damsel, and the host discuss the knight and whether Gawain should help him, another scene is enacted. A dwarf and a knight dispute over who should have a lady. Finally they ask the by-stander, Gawain, to mediate. Gawain instructs the lady to go with the one she prefers. She chooses the dwarf and they ride away. The game element is particularly strong here, with the blend of charades and legal theorising.

The next 'adventure' to confront the three observers is two knights who challenge Gawain. While he jousts against one, the other invites the damsel to ride away with him. At last Gawain and his opponent 'accord', and they go to lodge together, leaving Gawain's previous host. One quite noticeable thing about this series of adventures is that Gawain becomes progressively more involved in them. He is entirely a spectator in the first one; in the second he is asked to mediate the dispute; in the third he is in the thick of the action. After Gawain rejoins the stream of activity after the passive interlude, the narrative movement continues with his progress to another place, where the meaning of the first, enigmatic scene is explained to him. In the beginning, Gawain is separate from his background, as though it were painted on a moving screen behind him, but in the course of the three adventures, he again becomes merged with it and then moves with it.¹⁰

⁹Erich Auerbach speaks of adventures which 'present themselves to the knight as if from the end of an assembly-line' (*Mimesis: the Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask [Princeton, 1953], p. 135). He adds that 'although they commonly crop up without any rational connection, one after another, in a long series, we must be careful not to be misled by the modern value of the term adventure, to think of them as purely "accidental"'.

¹⁰Similarly, a spectator changes from passive observer to participant, above, p. 30, when the knight leaves the hall with the brachet and so becomes part of the scene.

Sir Ector asks very nearly the same question of a stranger that Gawain does at the beginning of his adventures. Sir Ector asks a 'foster', 'doste thou know this contrey or any adventures that bene nyghe here honde?' (p. 181). The foster tells him of a basin hanging on a tree; he should strike it to 'hyre new tydynges'; he strikes it and a knight appears to challenge him to battle. In this scene the 'adventure' is a fixed, literal thing: the basin on the tree, which may be used to start an adventure. It seems symbolic of the physicality of adventures; it is an instance in which an adventure really is 'part of the landscape'. This inquiry for adventures approaches a formula. Lancelot also uses it: "'Fayre damesel," seyde sir Launcelot, "know ye in this contrey any adventures nere hande?"' (p. 189). She leads him to a tree on which hangs a basin; he beats it and Tarquin comes to fight him.

Another of Lancelot's adventures is an example of the stationary quality of things encountered. He rides into a low country

. . . and before hym he sawe a longe brydge, and three pavylyons stood thereon, of sylke and sendell of dyverse hew. And withoute the pavylyons hynge three whyght shyldys on trounceouns of sperys, and grete longe sperys stood upryght by the pavylyons, and at every pavylyon dore stoode three freysh knyghtes.

(p. 198)

The striking thing about this encounter is not the pavilions or the shields, but the knights. There are three knights arranged very symmetrically and neatly at the doors of each of three pavilions. There is hardly another scene in the Morte Darthur which so strongly suggests a painted backdrop. The knights, like so many persons encountered in wandering, have no existence outside their relationship to Lancelot.¹¹ They are motionless at the doors of their pavilions until Lancelot rides past.

¹¹This idea is mentioned by Erich Auerbach in connection with the host who shelters a knight-errant. 'The host's real calling, the only meaning of his living where he does, seems to be that he should offer knightly hospitality to knights in quest of adventure' (Mimesis, p. 135).

They interact briefly with him and are commanded to go to Camelot at Whitsun. If we think of the idea of a future time in relation to the narrative, we easily conceive of Lancelot filling the interval with more adventures and general errantry. These knights, however, have no function but to stand in one spot and to challenge Lancelot as he passes. We can hardly imagine them doing anything else but returning to their pavilions to stand until Whitsun, when they will somehow transport themselves to Camelot. They are simply part of the backdrop against which Lancelot moves.

In spite of being mere background figures, all these characters--the knights, the scenes watched passively by Gawain, the damsels and hermits encountered on the road--enrich the narrative by suggesting that as the protagonist moves from adventure to adventure, there are an infinite number of other available adventures. There are perhaps other damsels and hermits standing at their posts in the forest whom no one ever encounters.¹²

'Game elements' also include the legalistic play of the 'courts of love'. Gawain's arbitration, mentioned above, between the knight and the dwarf is an example of the application of legal forms to questions of love. In the 'Isode the Fair' section of Tristram there is the remarkable affair of Segwarides, his wife, her lover, and her kidnapper. Bleoberis rides off with Segwarides' wife, and Segwarides follows to rescue her. Tristram, her lover, explains that he will refrain from going to rescue her until her husband has had a chance. In due time word comes to Mark's court that Bleoberis has overcome Segwarides, and Tristram takes up the chase. The encounter begins in the expected way with Tristram challenging Bleoberis. They fight until they pause to introduce themselves, and it develops that Bleoberis is willing to let the lady decide which of them

¹²See also below, pp. 223-24 and 230-1 for another aspect of a reality outside the Morte Darthur.

she wants to go with. Tristram accepts confidently. The lady, however, explains that she had thought that Tristram loved her,

'But whan thou sawyste this knyghte lede me away thou madist no chere to rescow me, but suffirdyst my lorde sir Segwarydes to ryde after me. But untyll that tyme I wente ye had loved me. And therefore now I forsake the and never to love the more.'

(p. 302)

Bleoberis, the kidnapper, then gives his opinion:

'Ye ar in the blame, for I hyre by this ladyes wordis that she trusted you abovyn all erthely knyghtes, and, as she seyth, ye have dysseyved hir. Therefore wate you well, there may no man holde that woll away, and rathir than ye sholde hertely be displesed with me, I wolde ye had her, and she wolde abyde with you.'

(p. 303)

What began as a simple case of chivalric abduction has ended as a drawing-room discussion of ethics. The lady then restates her case against Tristram and asks that her captor take her to the abbey where her wounded husband lies. Bleoberis politely offers to let Tristram escort her back to her husband, but he declines, saying that he will be more careful whom he loves in the future.

The lady's decision is the critical one; it is she who pronounces on the relative positions of the husband and the lover when a lady is to be rescued. She overrules Tristram's defence that he would have come immediately to save her if her husband had not been at court. The curious thing about the scene is that the kidnapper, Bleoberis, readily joins the discussion and actually reproaches Tristram for not hurrying to rescue Segwarides' wife. It is at this point that the spirit of the scene moves from the forest to the drawing-room.

To see the play element in this case, we can compare it to the slightly later scene in the same section in which a problem is referred to a panel of judges. Tristram fights Blamour as Angwish's champion. When Tristram defeats him, Blamour begs him to kill him so that he may die with honour.

Tristram would rather be merciful and so asks Angwish and the other kings to decide what should be done. Angwish recommends mercy, but Bleoberis agrees with his brother, Blamour. The kings, however, decide in favour of mercy, and everyone is reconciled. In this scene the emphasis is not placed so heavily on abstract ethics. The issue is ethics, but it is a specific case involving chivalric behaviour toward a conquered enemy in a trial by combat. The whole episode begins as a legal case, complete with judges and a trial. After the verdict has been decided in favour of Angwish, there is still the matter of the proper relationship between the two champions. There is a better reason for this legal discussion than for the one concerning Segwarides' wife, because the one is a public occasion and the other is basically a private event. Private as it is, it nevertheless involves a stringent code of rules, and this formal legal framework for an essentially private situation constitutes the game principle. However, there is a thematic link between these two legal episodes. They occur close together in the narrative, and Tristram (and Bleoberis) figures in both of them. At the second one there is a slight but pleasant sense of *déjà vu*, but the theme is changed enough to avoid a sense of repetition.¹³

In the *Morte Darthur* the concept of personal identity is often strikingly complex and even 'modern'. There are both an awareness of the dichotomy of appearance and reality (as in the disguises and mistaken identities) and a suggestion that appearance is reality (as in reputation as a definition of character). By investigating the idea of personal identity we become more aware of such divergent sides of Malory's art as comedy, plot development, and characterisation. Although figures can be undistinguished and colourless at first glance, there is extraordinary richness in the question of personal identity and its ramifications.

¹³There is a full discussion of this device of recurring situations below, pp. 70-136.

II. REVELATION OF CHARACTER

Because there is little real development of character in Malory, the personages of the Morte Darthur are revealed either through their own motives or through elements of the plot which force them to act in a certain way. These differences in the origin of action are not entirely mutually exclusive, but they are useful as indications of emphasis. The relationship between character and plot will be dealt with in the next section. In this section I shall discuss actions originating inside the characters, as it were, rather than outside. Characterisation may be expressed by the character himself, by others, or by the authorial voice. Authorial comment is usually a matter of routine praise for good knights and condemnation for bad knights. A character's behaviour is an obvious medium of character revelation, but even more revealing is the reaction of other characters to his behaviour.¹ Perhaps most interesting of all is the 'obtuse observer' technique, by which a scene is described by a character who does not understand what he is describing. In some of these cases the reader knows more than the observer, but not always.

In The Noble Tale of Arthur and Lucius the reader is already familiar with the Round Table, but Lucius' messengers have only just seen it, and report with great awe to their emperor. 'And of all the soveraynes that we sawe ever he is the royallyst kynge that lyvyth on erthe, for we sawe on Newerys day at his Rounde Table nine kyngis, and the fayryst felyship of knyghtes ar with hym that durys on lyve . . . ' (p. 140). It is always useful to show how a (to the reader) familiar character or situation affects a stranger to the scene. The reader has a more complex

¹This is similar to the ideas discussed in 'Personal Identity', in which external impressions help to define a character.

impression of the situation because he has been exposed to it longer and has seen more sides of it. By presenting another view, superficial and immediate, the author can show two depths of description at once. Something like this device occurs in 'La Cote Male Tayle' when Neroveus describes to Lancelot a rumour he has heard. La Cote Male Taile and his damsel have been taken prisoners at the castle Pendragon when the narrative changes to Lancelot's encounter with Neroveus.

. . . and than sir Neroveus tolde sir Launcelot that he sholde nat go by the Castell of Pendragon, 'for there ys a lorde, a myghty knyght, and many myghty knyghtes with hym, and thys nyght I harde sey that they toke a knyght presonere that rode with a damesell, and they sey he ys a knyght of the Rounde Table.'

(p. 349)

The two stylistic effects of this passage are the reader's recognition of an incident and the suggestion of the pervasiveness of the rumour. 'Thys nyght' must mean the night before, which was on the day of the capture. The news has therefore travelled quickly, and presumably not only to Neroveus' ears. Malory suggests that there is perhaps a network of gossip extending from the castle Pendragon to a number of shadowy, unnamed persons whispering in the forest. There is a vague 'they' who are interested in the castle of Pendragon and the fact that a knight of the Round Table has been taken prisoner with his damsel. These intriguing offstage characters relay the message to Neroveus and finally to Lancelot, who hastens to the castle Pendragon to free all the prisoners.

Descriptions by one person and an interpretation by someone else are a common device. The obvious application of it is the identification of someone by his shield. A damsel speaks to Tristram of a mad knight she has met in the forest.

'What bare he in hys shylda?' seyde sir Trystram.
'Sir, hit was endented with whyght and blacke,'
seyde the damesell.
'A,' seyde sir Trystram, 'that was Palamydes, the
good knyght.'

(p. 400)

Mark reluctantly recognises Tristram when Gaheris tells him of the exploits of an unknown knight at one of Arthur's tournaments.

'But there was one knyght that ded mervaylously three dayes, and he bare a blacke shyld, and on all the knyghtes that ever y saw he preved the beste knyght.'

'That was,' seyde kyng Marke, 'sir Launcelot, other ellis sir Palomydes the paynym.'

'Not so,' seyde sir Gaheris, 'for they were both of the contrary party agaynste the knyght with the blacke shyld.'

'Than was hit sir Trystram de Lyones,' seyde the kyng. And therewithall he smote downe hys hede . . .

(pp. 404-5)

In this case the shield is not one associated with Tristram, and so Mark does not recognise it by itself. His words suggest that he hopes the best knight will not have been Tristram, and guesses that the best knight was either of two other outstanding knights. But finally he knows that if the strange knight is neither Lancelot nor Palomides it must be Tristram. Tristram's black shield is a form of disguise, for he has had this one 'ordayned' specially: 'a blacke shyld with none other remembraunce therein' (p. 389). Tristram's exploits have been recounted in 'The Maidens' Castle', and when Gaheris reports the tournament to Mark at the beginning of 'The Round Table' the reader already knows about Tristram's black shield. Gaheris seems not to know who the strange knight was, although he was one of the many knights defeated by Tristram at the tournament (p. 397). Gaheris does not respond to Mark's statement, 'Than was hit sir Trystram de Lyones'. It is one of the many artful ambiguities in Malory that we do not know Gaheris' motives. His motive may be to avoid telling Mark about Tristram's victories or he may genuinely not know that the knight with the black shield was Tristram.

At the tournament at Lonezep the authorial voice tells the reader who the knights are when they are described only by their armour and horses. Lancelot speaks to Arthur about their opponents:

'Sir,' seyde sir Launcelot, 'I wold counter wyth the grene knyght uppon the blacke horse.' (That was sir Trystram.) 'And my cousyn sir Bleoberys shall macche the grene knyght uppon the whyght horse.' (That was sir Palomydes.) 'And my brother sir Ector shall macche wyth the grene knyght uppon the dunne horse.' (That was sir Gareth.)

'Than muste I,' seyde kyng Arthur, 'have ado with the grene knyght uppon the gresylde horse,' and that was sir Dynadan.

(p. 543)

There is a double perspective here as the omniscient author interprets his characters' remarks. It is worth noting that he only interprets them and does not change them; he might have either allowed his characters to explain the identity of their adversaries or presented the whole scene in indirect discourse and so combined his characters' knowledge with his own. But he keeps the two sets of knowledge separate and creates the sense of two separate levels of awareness.

After a description of an unknown knight, partly from Lionel's point of view and partly from the author's, we are told almost as an afterthought that the strange knight is Sir Tarquin (pp. 180-82).

And in the meanwhyle com there three knyghtes rydyng, as faste fleyng as they myght ryde, and there folowed hem three but one knyght. And whan sir Lyonell hym sawe, he thought he sawe never so grete a knyght nother so well-faryng a man and well appareyld unto all ryghtes. So within a whyle this stronge knyght had overtakyn one of the three knyghtes, and there he smote hym to the colde erth, that he lay styll; and than he rode unto the secunde knyght and smote hym so that man and horse felle downe. And so streyte unto the thirde knyght, and smote hym behynde his horse ars a spere-lengthe; and than he alyght downe and rayned his horse on the brydyll and bounde all three knyghtes faste with the raynes of their owne brydelys.

Whan sir Lyonell had sene hym do thus, he thought to assay hym and made hym redy, and pryvally he toke his horse and thought nat for to awake sir Launcelot, and so mounted uppon his hors and overtoke the strong knyght.

(pp. 180-81)

Malory skillfully manoeuvres the narrative from the authorial point of view to the point of view of a character in the scene. The first sentence is fairly straightforward and objective, but the second brings Lionel into the scene and continues the narration in a very subjective way.

But that sentence is only a momentary intrusion, for the narrative continues in the objective authorial voice. When Lionel begins to act, the scene is again treated from his point of view. When Ector encounters this 'strong knyght' his identity is revealed.

And therewith he russhed his horse on sir Ector and caught hym undir his ryght arme and bare hym clene oute of the sadyll, and so rode with hym away into his castell and threw hym downe in myddyll of the floure. The name of this knyghte was sir Tarquyn.

(p. 182)

In the ensuing conversation between Ector and Tarquin, the narrative style reverts to that in which nothing seems to be hidden from the reader.

Tristram is in a similar observer role when he watches a battle:

Than they rode togydirs a grete pace untyll they cam to a lityll turret in a castell, and undirnethe that castel they saw a knyght stondynge uppon foote fyghtyng with two knyghtes. And so sir Trystramys behelde them. And at the laste thes two knyghtes smote downe that one knyght, and one of hem unlaced hys helme, and the lady Aunowre gate kynges Arthurs swerde in her honde to have strykyn of his hede.

(p. 365)

Tristram has been warned earlier that King Arthur is in trouble, but in the description of the scene, Arthur is simply an anonymous knight seen from a distance. The reader, in fact, has no way of knowing whether it is Arthur or whether this battle is to be a chance encounter as Tristram and the Lady of the Lake journey to find Arthur. The surprising thing about this scene is the lady Aunore, who appears literally out of nowhere. We have been told that she is a 'grete sorseres' and is planning to slay King Arthur (p. 364), but she is not mentioned in the setting-out of the scene under the castle wall. When she abruptly appears at the critical moment, it gives the impression of some sort of magic appearance.

Another device in the Morte Darthur is to describe the reaction of onlookers as a means of describing or commenting on the main action. Tristram's bravery and 'caryage' when he leaves to fight Marhalt so touch the people of Cornwall that all the onlookers weep to see him go (pp. 283-84).

During countless battles the emotions of spectators are a gauge of the fortunes of the hero. In Gareth there is a complex interplay of audience and combatants.²

Arthur's character, which might be expected to be as peerless as his knights often claim, has faults. When Arthur steps down as the presiding figure of the Round Table and joins the knights in the field he loses much of his aura. After watching Tristram defeat all comers at the tournament at the Roche Dure, Arthur challenges him but is defeated. He then demands Tristram's name but is refused.

'Than shall ye and I do batayle togydir.'

'Why', seyde sir Trystram, 'woll ye do batayle with me but yf I telle you my name? For sothe, that lytyll nedyth you. And ye were a man of worshyp ye wolde nat have ado with me, for ye have sene me this day have had grete travayle. And therefore ye ar no valyaunte knyght to aske batayle of me, consyderynge my grete travayle.'

(p. 417)

In the following battle Tristram wounds Arthur, who then admits his error:

'We have now as we have deservyd, for thorowe oure owne orgulyté we demaunded batayle of you, and yet youre name we know nat' (pp. 417-18).

Arthur is clearly at fault and admits it. The emphasis is on Tristram's valour and stamina, of course, but it seems odd that he should establish them at Arthur's expense. Arthur is guilty of another breach of the knightly ethic, again, significantly, in the Book of Tristram. Against Lancelot's advice Arthur approaches Isode suddenly to see for himself her reputed beauty. Arthur's answer to Lancelot's discreet suggestion not to go too near Isode and her escorting knights is curt: "As for that," seyde kynge Arthure, "I woll se her, for I take no forse whom I gryave" (p. 550). Palomides rebukes him strongly:

'Thou uncurteyse knyght, what sekyst thou here? For thou art uncurteyse to com uppon a lady thus suddeynly. Therefore wythdrawe the!'

²See below, pp. 202-10.

But kynge Arthure toke none hede of sir Palomydes wordys, but ever he loked styll upon quene Isode. Than was sir Palomydes wrothe, and therewith he toke a speare and cam hurtelynge upon kynge Arthure and smote hym downe with a speare, a grete falle.

(p. 550)

This scene is merely a device for suggesting Isode's beauty (and for providing a motive for the later conflict), but again Arthur's character is sacrificed. He emerges a thoughtless, arrogant boor, and not a very good fighter. This effect is somewhat softened when Tristram rebukes Palomides, but he seems more impressed with Lancelot's fame and its reflection on Arthur than with the greatness of Arthur himself. He recognises Arthur only by his companion:

Anone sir Trystram undirstood by hys persone and by his knyghtly wordis hit was sir Launcelot du Lake, and truly sir Trystram demed that hit was kynge Arthure that sir Palomydes had smyttyn downe.

(p. 551)

Tristram's rebuke curiously mirrors Arthur's supposed offence:

'So God me helpe,' seyde sir Trystram unto sir Palomydes, 'ye ded nat worshypfully whan ye smote downe that knyght so suddeynly as ye ded. And wyte you well ye ded youreselff grete shame, for the knyghtes cam hyddir of there jantylnes to se a fayre lady, and that ys every good knyghtes parte to beholde a fayre lady . . .'

(p. 551)

The suddenness of Arthur's approach to Isode is answered by the suddenness of Palomides' attack. Tristram goes on to praise Arthur, but there is some doubt left in the reader's mind because of Arthur's original action and the fact that Lancelot foresaw the possible result and warned him against it.

If there is an occasional doubt cast on Arthur's character, Mark's character suffers from nothing but doubt. In a battle of the sort which in Malory is often fought to the 'uttirmoste' this exchange takes place:

'Knyght, what chere? Mesemyth ye have nyghe youre fylle of fyghtynge. Hit were pyté to do you ony more harme, for ye ar but a meane knyght. Therefore I gyff you leve to go

where ye lyst.'

'Gramercy,' seyde kynge Marke, 'for ye and I be no
macchis.'

(p. 432)

Soon after, Mark and Trian break their spears on one another, but Mark refuses Trian's offer of another joust: 'Than sir Tryan sente kyng Marke another speare to juste more, but in no wyse he wolde nat juste no more' (p. 433).

Other knights know either by experience or by hearsay of Mark's wickedness. Berluse accuses Mark of having killed his (Berluse's) father and ends his denunciation:

'For hit is pyté that ever ye sholde by in the company of good knyghtes, for ye ar the moste vylaunch knyght of a kynge that is now lyvyng, for ye ar a dystroyer of good knyghtes, and all that ye do is but by treson.'

Than was kynge Marke sore ashamyd and seyde but lytyll agayne. But whan sir Lameroke and sir Dynadan wyste that he was kynge Marke they were sory of his felyshyp.

(p. 433)

Dinadan also speaks frankly to Mark: '. . . I se by you ye ar full of cowardyse, and ye ar also a murtherar, and that is the grettyst shame that ony knyght may have, for nevyr had knyght murtherer worshyp, nother never shall have' (p. 435). Both Mark and Dinadan overhear Palomides addressing an apostrophe to Isode, which ends:

'And the falsyst knyght and kynge of the worlde is your husbnde, and the moste cowarde and full of treson is youre lorde kynge Marke. And alas! so beawteuous a lady and pereles of all othir sholde be matched with the moste vylaunch knyght of the worlde!'

(p. 441)

Through this kind of universal public opinion and through the occasional demonstration of the truth of it, Mark is shown as a thoroughly unpleasant and treacherous person. For the modern reader it may be slightly disconcerting that Mark's character (like most others in Malory) is so static, for his personality never changes or develops. His uniform wickedness, however, is revealed in various ways. What little variety there is in

his character is expressed through these different manifestations of the same limited idea.

Lancelot, too, is static for much of the Morte Darthur. His chivalric excellence is a commonplace, and he is usually recognisable immediately because of his qualities. In one scene he is not recognised at first, but the process by which the strange knights come to suspect his identity suggests something of his effect on casual observers. After having spent the night in a lodging with Kay, Lancelot departs early in the morning wearing Kay's armour. Lancelot's actions are described, but his motives are not given. 'And sir Launcelot toke sir Kayes armoure and his shyld and armed hym; and so he wente to the stable and sadyld his horse, and toke his leve of his oste and departed' (p. 198). Kay, however, interprets Lancelot's action and sets the scene for Lancelot's encounter with the strange knights.

'Now, be my fayth, I know welle that he woll greve som of the courte of kyng Arthure, for on hym knyghtes woll be bolde and deme that hit is I, and that woll begyle them. And bycause of his armoure and shyld I am sure I shall ryde in pease.'
(p. 198)

When Lancelot silently passes three knights, they 'knew hym and seyde hit was the proude sir Kay . . . '(p. 199). One rides after Lancelot to challenge him and is quickly unhorsed. 'And whan he was at the erthe his brethyrn seyde, 'Yondir knyght is nat sir Kay, for he is far bygger than he' (p. 199). One of the two remaining brothers, Raynold, suggesting a rescue attempt, says, 'For payne of deth, we all shall have worke inow to macche that knyght; for ever mesemyth by his persone hit is sir Launcelot other sir Trystrams other sir Pelleas, the good knyght' (p. 199). The reactions are all apparently based on the fall that Lancelot has given Gawtere, the brother who first challenged him. After the other brothers challenge Lancelot and are defeated, Lancelot warns Raynold not to attack him again because he does not want to kill him.

'Gramercy,' seyde sir Raynolde, 'of your goodnesse, and I dare say as for me and my bretherne, we wold nat be loth to yelde us unto you, with that we know youre name; for welie we know ye ar not sir Kay.'

(p. 200)

Lancelot instructs them to yield themselves to Guinevere on the next Whitsunday, and to say that Kay sent them, but he never tells them his real identity. He seems to imply that he is really Kay, but from their previous remarks we may assume that the three brothers are not fooled. The shield and armour that fooled them at first are ignored after they see the stronger evidence of Lancelot's prowess. They never learn who he is, but in a way that does not matter. They have identified him as one of a small group of the best knights, and they have included Lancelot in that group. Interestingly, even the great Lancelot is not so easily identifiable that he can be distinguished from the other knights of the first rank.

Lancelot is again a kind of touchstone of chivalry when a damsel asks Tristram if he is Lancelot. She has heard of his prowess in smiting down Palomides, and believes that only Lancelot would be capable of it (p. 291). When Mark hears of the exploits of a knight with a black shield, he guesses that the knight must be either Lancelot or Palomides (cf. above, p. 40). He asserts his guess with some confidence, and when told the knight was neither of those, he knows (correctly) that it must have been Tristram.

It is one thing to find inferior knights classing their betters together, but even the superior knights feel a sense of hierarchy among themselves. This sense usually takes the form of a flattering reference and shows a mutual admiration and recognition of worth. Lancelot observes Tristram in a tournament and speaks admiringly of his skill in battle.

'A! mercy Jesu!' seyde sir Launcelot, 'syth the firste tyme that ever I bare armys saw I never one knyght do so mervaylous dedys of armys. And if I sholde,' seyde sir Launcelot to hymselff, 'sette uppon thys knyght now, I ded shame to myselff.'

(p. 391)

This incident is balanced neatly by Tristram's observations soon afterward when he sees Lancelot and his kinsmen badly outnumbered but fighting valiantly.

'Now, Jesu,' seyde sir Trystram, 'well may he be called valyaunte and full of proues that hath such a sorte of noble knyghtes unto hys kynne. And full lyke ys he to be a noble-man that ys their leder and governoure.'

He mente hit by sir Launcelot du Lake.

(p. 392)

Tristram's observations, too, are his own private thoughts and therefore may be taken as unquestionably sincere.

After Tristram goes into exile in England, Mark follows him to try to kill him. He asks an anonymous knight where he can find Tristram and what is known of him, and the knight is full of news. Tristram is at Camelot, he says, and continues:

'Wete you well,' seyde that knyght, 'ye shall fynde sir Trystram there for a man of worshyp moste that is now lyvyng, for thorow his proues he wan the turnement at the Castell of Maydyns that stondyth by the Roche Dure. And sytthen he hath wonne wyth his hondys thirty knyghtes that were men of grete honoure. And the laste batayle that ever he ded he fought with sir Launcelot, and that was a mervaylus batayle. And by love and not by force sir Launcelotte brought sir Trystram to the courte. And of hym kynge Arthure made passynge grete joy, and so made hym knyght of the Table Rounde, and his seate is in the same place where sir Marhalte the good knyghtes seate was.'

(p. 429)

Mark's informant is so unimportant that his name is not given; there is not even a token name given to this knight as there often is to other minor characters in Malory. Tristram's fame is so universal, this scene suggests, that any random knight whom Mark might encounter could tell him in considerable detail the whereabouts and qualities of Tristram. Much the same information is given some time later when Dinadan and Palomides are discussing Tristram.

'So God me helpe,' seyde sir Dynadan, 'that same day mette sir Launcelot and sir Trystram at the same grave of stone, and there was the moste myghtyeste batayle that ever

was sene in this londe betwyxte two knyghtes, for they fought more than fyve owres, and there they bothe bled so muche blood that all men mervayled that ever they myght endure hit. And so by bothe their assentys they were made frendys and sworne brethirne for ever, and no man cowde juge the bettir knyght. And now is sir Trystram made a knyght of the Rounde Table, and he syttyth in the syege of the noble knyght sir Marhalte.'

(p. 445)

One might expect the members of the inner court circle to have a more detailed knowledge of the situation than the anonymous knight on the road, but the difference seems to be one of emphasis rather than of knowledge. Everyone knows the salient facts: the battle with Lancelot, the later reconciliation and friendship, his membership of the Round Table. Dinadan chooses to emphasise the epic quality of the battle,³ while the anonymous knight has given a more general account of Tristram's recent career. Dinadan and Palomydes go on to compare Tristram and Lancelot rather as though they were racehorses.

'Be my hede,' seyde sir Palomydes, 'sir Trystram ys farre bygger than is sir Launcelot, and the hardyer knyght.'

'Sir, have ye assayde them bothe?' seyde sir Dynadan.

'I have sene sir Trystramys myght,' seyde sir Palomydes, 'but never sir Launcelot, to my wyttynge, but at the fountayne where lay sir Launcelot on slepe. And there with one speare he snote downe sir Trystram and me,' seyde sir Palomydes. 'But at that tyme they knewe nat, but afterwarde.'

'Now, fayre knyght,' seyde sir Dynadan, 'as for sir Launcelot and sir Trystram, lette them be, for the warre of them wolle nat be lyghtly macchid of no knyghtes that I knowe lyvyng.'

(p. 445)

In other places in the Morte Darthur conversations are often concerned with this kind of chivalric gossip, but this is one of the more protracted discussions. One of the important devices in the Malorian (or romance) narrative is to establish a hierarchy and then add to it (as when a new knight is seen to be equal to the great figures who are already established) and define it (as in these comparisons and balancings of one knight against another).

³This battle is prophesied much earlier by Merlin (p. 54). See also below, pp. 221-22.

The story of Gareth is a story of character.⁴ The tale begins with Gareth as an unknown knight and describes him from several perspectives: his objective appearance, his genealogy, the impression he makes on others, his actions, his defence of himself against the damsel's insults, and finally her change of heart. As he purposely begins his career as a kitchen knave, the tale is a study of overcoming a reputation and apparently low social status by the actions associated with a much higher social status. There is a pattern of hiding the identity, establishing the identity, hiding it again, and establishing it again. By hiding his identity, Gareth, like Lancelot (pp. 46-47, above), sets up an obstacle to be overcome. Their identity consists, in Lancelot's case, of past glories and in Gareth's case of only a noble lineage. For both of them the heroisms of the moment are also an element of their identity, but since that identity is hidden, the new elements remain in a vacuum, not applicable to the accumulated larger identity. In the tale of Gareth especially, it is clear that the lady does not know how to regard Gareth's actions; she is unsure of the context in which they belong. If Gareth is a kitchen knave, what does his skill in battle mean? Can it be that he is a kitchen knave who knows the arts of battle, or are these arts incompatible with his being a kitchen knave? If the two elements are incompatible, which one is the genuine element of Gareth's character? When Lancelot, on the other hand, denies his real identity he does not substitute a false one; he does not force the observer to be prejudiced against him. Lancelot repudiates his own reputation in order to establish it all over again. It is like a test of his prowess to see if his reputation is still valid; he has been a great knight partly because of his reputation, but disguised, he is a great knight regardless of his reputation. Gareth's denial of his identity cancels only his noble lineage, for he has not performed

⁴I have discussed Gareth more fully below, pp. 169-76.

any chivalrous deeds yet. The knowledge of his nobility would prejudice observers in his favour, but prejudiced against him, they require a great deal of proof that he is worthy to be a Round Table knight.

The circumstances of the plot and narrative make Sir Gareth of Orkeney an exposition of the tension between real and apparent qualities of character. There is a simple structure of a hero figure; figures set against him, like Kay and Linet; figures well disposed toward him, like Gawain, Lancelot, and Arthur; and other figures who form a judgment of him according to their own experience of him and to what Linet and others say about him. The beginning of Gareth's career in Arthur's court is described like this. First, he arrives at court:

Ryght so com into the halle two men well besayne and
rychely, and uppon their sholdyrs there lened the goodlyest
yonge man and the fayreste that ever they all sawe. And
he was large and longe and brode in the shuldyrs, well-
vysaged, and the largyste and the fayreste handis that
ever man sye. But he fared as he myght nat go nothir
bere hymself but yf he lened uppon their shuldyrs.

(p. 212)

When he speaks to Arthur he 'pullyd hym abak and easyly stretched streyghte upryght' (p. 212). His apparent lameness is never explained and is seemingly a foreshadowing of his later habit of pretence. This authorial description of Gareth's first appearance at court agrees with Arthur's intuition about Gareth: ' . . . myne herte gyvyth me to the gretly, that thou arte com of men of worshyp, and gretly my conceyte fayleth me but thou shalt preve a man of ryght grete worshyp' (p. 213). Gareth's modest request only for food supplies the motive for Kay's hostility to him:

' . . . I undirtake he is a vylayne borne, and never woll make man, for and he had be com of jantyllmen, he wolde have axed horse and armour, but as he is, so he askyth' (p. 213). Kay's surmise introduces the idea of Gareth's low birth, and the damsel who taunts him takes her opinion of him from Kay and from his own admission (p. 215) that he has been Arthur's kitchen knave.

Since the reader always knows Gareth's true identity, it comes as no surprise that he can throw farther than anyone else (p. 214). In the adventures as he travels to Linet's castle Gareth proves himself again and again, even in the delicate matter of Persant's daughter, whose offer to lie with him Gareth politely declines (p. 231). Gareth's behaviour gradually defines his identity more than his supposed lowly origins, and first his opponents and finally the lady come to understand his real nobility. After the battle with the Red Knight, Gareth's characterisation enters a new phase. His nobility has been established and now the story of his prowess is passed from person to person.

The first to begin spreading Gareth's new reputation is the Red Knight, who is required to go to Arthur's court. His expository function as the bringer-of-knowledge to the court is made clear in the passage showing him presenting himself to Arthur's knights.

. . . and there he tolde opynly how he was overcom and by whom, and also he tolde all the batayles frome the begynnyng to the endyng.

(p. 241)

It is not impossible that the Red Knight knows about Beaumain's battles; after their battle the two knights and their entourages were together for ten days. But the principal reason for his visit to court is to ask mercy of Lancelot and Gawain 'for the evyll wylle he hath had ayenst them' (p. 241). He does that, but he also lapses into a description of Beaumain's achievements. This provokes admiring comments from Arthur and Gawain, but Lancelot reveals that he has known all along the identity of the young man whom he himself knighted.⁵

The lady whom Gareth has rescued sends him away for a twelvemonth, but later this seems to be part of a ploy to find out his name and ancestry. She then sends her brother, Gringamore, to steal Gareth's dwarf, who can

⁵The journeys of the Red Knight to Arthur's court are discussed below, pp. 228-29.

tell them 'of what kynrede he is com of' (p. 243). This episode seems to be a way of allowing Linet, Liones, and Gringamore to find out who Gareth is without his having to tell them. This is part of the 'reputation' idea: others spread information about the hero without the hero's knowledge. When Gareth comes to Gringamore's castle to demand his dwarf back, he falls in love with Liones, whom he does not recognise. This episode shows that the love between Gareth and the lady is not dependent on their recognition of each other, but springs from some deeper communion. She pledges to love him when she knows him only as 'Beaumains' (p. 242) and now he loves the lady, not recognising her as Liones. It is also at this point that the facts of his identity catch up with the facts of his actions. For a puzzled onlooker like Linet, the divergent factors of Gareth's character at last make sense: he is noble and he acts nobly.

'Truly, madam,' seyde Lynet unto hir sistir, 'well may he be a kyngys son, for he hath many good tacchis: for he is curtyese and mylde, and the moste sufferynge man that ever I mette withall.'

(p. 244)

After the episode of the menacing knight whose head Linet magically restores after Gareth has cut it off, the scene changes to Arthur's court. The Round Table knights are still in the dark about the identity of Beaumains, and now we see how they learn of it. This scene overlaps strangely with the earlier version of the Red Knight's visit to court (above, p. 52). The description of the feast of Pentecost expands the details given earlier by showing the procession of defeated knights--Red, Blue, and Green--and their vassals, all yielding to Arthur in the name of Beaumains (p. 250). Next enters the Red Knight of the Red Landes with his five hundred retainers.

'Sir,' he seyde, 'I am called the Rede Knyght of the Rede Laundis, but my name is sir Ironsyde; and sir, wete you well, hydir I am sente unto you frome a knyght that is called sir Bewmaynes, for he wanne me in playne batayle hande for hande, and so ded never knyght but he that ever

had the bettir of me this twenty wyntir. And I am
 commaunded to yelde me to you at your wyll.'

(p. 250)

The other knights have also been identified by their names---Partholipe, Perimones, and Persant of Inde. They, like Gareth, have been fighting under a nom de guerre, and when they surrender to Arthur they reveal their réal names. (Or rather the narrator does, in the case of the other three knights.) To complement this revelation of name, the Queen of Orkney enters the hall, asking what has become of her son, Gareth. It is quickly revealed that the strange kitchen knave-knight is Gareth.

The Queen of Orkney brings a distinctly new perspective to the scene, for she mysteriously knows some details of Gareth's sojourn at court, but nothing of his recent adventures.

'Where have ye done my yonge son, sir Gareth? For he
 was here amongyst you a twelve-monthe, and ye made a
 kychyn knave of hym, the whyche is shame to you all.

(p. 252)

The queen and her brother, Arthur, reconstruct a view of Gareth's conduct which includes items new to the reader, like Arthur's own description of Gareth's stay at court.

'Fayre sistir,' seyde kynge Arthure, 'ye shall ryght
 well wete that I knew hym nat, nother no more dud sir
 Gawayne, nothir his brætherne Also, sistir,
 mesemyth ye myght have done me to wete of his comynge,
 and than, if I had nat done well to hym, ye myght have
 blamed me. For whan he com to this courte he cam
 lenyng uppon too mennys sholdyrs as though he myght
 nat have gone. . . . And many in this courte mervayled
 that he desyred his systynaunce for a twelve-monthe,
 and thereby we demed many of us that he was nat com
 oute of a noble house.'

'Sir,' seyde the quene of Orkenay unto kynge
 Arthure her brother, 'wete you well that I sente hym
 unto you ryght well armed and horsed and worshypfully
 besene of his body, and golde and sylver plenté to spende.'

(pp. 252-53)

The queen brings the new information of how Gareth left home. Their speeches give the impression of truth being discovered by their comparisons of their separate points of view. One of those unexplained matters in

Malory is how the queen knows of Gareth's treatment at court. Gareth also inexplicably knows that the Round Table court will try to find him (p. 246). The difference is that he is anticipating what the court will probably do, while his mother knows what has gone before. The importance of her seeming clairvoyance is that it suggests she has magic powers (in other parts of Malory the Queen of Orkney, Morgause, is a 'good' sorceress). It also suggests that Gareth's story is widely known and invites the reader to imagine some intermediate figure telling the queen about her son.

Again the detail of Gareth's apparent lameness comes up, seemingly one reason Arthur did not recognise him. It is hard to see where this detail fits into Arthur's speech; it seems to be cited as a reason for not recognising Gareth or even suspecting that he was noble. If it was a physical defect, it would not accord very well with the knightly ideal of physical strength and perfection, but he 'recovers' from this lameness as he stands before Arthur (p. 212).

There is a neat summary of Gareth's reputation when, at the tournament, Tristram asks Ironside who the outstanding knight is (p. 261). This is the simple device of the hero being described to a newcomer. The effect is to show that even Gareth's former enemy praises him. The reader has by now become accustomed to Gareth's skill in battle, and the contrast between this quality of the familiar character and his first impression on a newcomer adds a freshness and a new perspective to the already known material.

After the tournament Gareth rides randomly until he comes to a castle, where he asks to lodge. He reveals his identity to the lady of the castle the next morning as he is about to leave.

'Truly madam,' he seyde, 'my name is sir Gareth of Orkeney, and som men call me Bewmaynes.'

Then knew she well hit was the same knyght that faught for dame Lyonesse.

(p. 265)

This is another example of the curious randomness in Malory. The lady of the castle is not identified; the castle is given no name; it is simply a place Gareth comes upon 'by fortune' after a ride through a forest. It could be any castle or any lady. But even this nameless representative of Other People knows of Gareth and his role as champion of the lady Liones. The implication is that anyone at any castle knows who Gareth is, so great is his fame. There is some irony in his identification of himself as 'Bewmaynes', since that name has been the cause of so much misunderstanding of his character.

Dinadan is unique among Malory's knights. He is a Sancho Panza before Cervantes; he is a bourgeois figure among the nobility, a duck to the falcons in the Round Table 'Parliament'. He is a strange intrusion from the 'real world' into the Arthurian fantasy, a reminder of the other, everyday world in which falling off a horse hurts. By placing the realist Dinadan in this heroic setting Malory undercuts the heroism slightly and anticipates any urge a reader might have to scoff at it. When Tristram, accompanied only by Dinadan, wants to attack thirty knights, Dinadan hangs back, shocked at the idea of having to take on fifteen of them himself (p. 377). He offers to use Tristram's Cornish shield so that opponents will avoid him because of supposed Cornish cowardliness, but Tristram threatens to kill him unless he stays with him: 'For I desyre no more of the but answere one knyght. And yf thy harte woll nat serve the, stonde by and loke uppon!' (p. 377). Dinadan reluctantly agrees: 'Sir,' seyde sir Dynadan, 'I woll promyse you to looke uppon and to do what I may to save myselff, but I wolde I had nat mette with you' (p. 378). Dinadan nevertheless does 'passyng welle' in the ensuing conflict. This is the ambiguity of his character: for all his hanging back and apparent cowardice, Dinadan is a respectable member of Arthur's court and can acquit himself well in battle. He may comment on the foolishness of that society, but he is still a part of it. For this reason he merely

undercuts it instead of making it seem ridiculous. If Dinadan were not a knight but a merchant or someone else completely outside the Arthurian hierarchy, parts of Tristram would degenerate into parody and satire. But because Dinadan's disparaging comments are made from inside the society and because he himself is committed to that society, his point of view is gently mocking rather than iconoclastic.

When Tristram wants to plunge into battle again, Dinadan objects. "In the devyls name," seyde sir Dynadan, "cam I into youre company!" (p. 379). When he is unhorsed by Palomides, one expects him to continue the battle with his sword, but 'that wolde nat sir Dynadan, for he was sore brused of that falle that sir Palomaydes gaff hym' (p. 379). Dinadan's complaints are a grudging compliment to Tristram. The best knights in the Arthurian world are, by Dinadan's definition, the maddest.

'And I may curse the tyme that ever I sye you, for in all the worlde ar nat such two knyghtes that ar so wood as ys sir Launcelot and ye, sir Trystram! For onys I felle in the felyshyp of sir Launcelot as I have done now with you, and he sette me so a worke that a quarter of a yere I kept my bedde. Jesu deffende me,' seyde sir Dynadan, 'frome such two knyghtys, and specially frome youre felyshyp.'
(pp.379-80)

For Dinadan the chivalric ethic means being knocked off one's horse and spending much of one's time recuperating. However, in his role as competent knight of the Round Table he generously offers to defend the wounded Tristram against Palomides.

'Sir Trystram, my lorde, ye ar so sore wounded that ye may nat have ado with hym. Therefore I woll ryde agaynste hym and do to hym what I may, and yf I be slayne ye may pray for my soule. And so in the meanewhyle ye may withdraw you and go into the castell or into the foreyste, that he shall nat mete with you.'

(p. 397)

In a parody of the scene in which Tristram wants to take on several knights and Dinadan hangs back, Dinadan seems anxious to attack six knights and King Mark flees in the opposite direction (p. 436). It is all a

practical joke, however, for Dinadan recognises them as six Round Table friends. Even though Dinadan might not have been quite so brave if the knights had been enemies, Mark's abject terror contrasts with Dinadan's final agreement to do battle.

Dinadan is surely the only knight ever to refuse flatly an offer to joust. The pattern of the challenge to joust is repeated endlessly throughout Malory: two knights meet by chance, one challenges the other to fight and/or to tell his name, they clash together and finally part, inexplicably friends and unwounded. Dinadan encounters a knight who '[makes] hym redy for to juste' (p. 452).

'Nat so,' seyde sir Dynadan, 'for I have no wyll to juste.'
 'Wyth me shall ye juste,' seyde the knyght, 'or that
 ye passe this way.'
 'Sir, whether aske you justys of love othir of hate?'
 The knyghte answerde and seyde,
 'Wyte you well I aske hit for loove and nat of hate.'
 'Hit may well be,' seyde sir Dynadan, 'but ye proffyr
 me harde love whan ye wolde juste with me wyth an harde
 speare! But, fayre knyght,' seyde sir Dynadan, 'syttyn
 ye woll juste with me, mete wyth me in the courte of
 kyng Arthure, and there I shall juste wyth you.'
 'Well,' seyde the knyght, 'syttyn ye woll not juste
 wyth me, I pray you tell me your name.'
 'Sir knyght, my name ys sir Dynadan.'
 'A, sir,' seyde that knyght 'full well knowe I you for
 a good knyght and a jantyll, and wyte you well, sir, I love
 you hertyly.'
 'That shall here be no justys,' seyde syr Dynadan,
 'betwyxte us.'
 So they departed.

(pp. 452-53)

In spite of Dinadan's breach of knightly etiquette, this anonymous knight respects Dinadan and knows him by reputation. It sometimes seems in Malory that certain characters are innately admirable or disreputable regardless of what they do. In these cases certain qualities of personality (not always expressed, but assumed) outweigh a mere matter of questionable behaviour. Because Dinadan is a noble knight and an amiable fellow, his eccentricities are tolerated. Indeed, he is probably the most popular knight of the Round Table (popularity, that is, as opposed to the feelings of awe and reverence that the greater knights inspire in the others).

Dinadan can turn his hand to minstrelsy--or if that seems too unchivalrous, he acts as the 'writer and composer' for a professional minstrel (pp. 464 and 471). The lay he composes is a strong attack on Mark--more malicious than comic, apparently, although we are never told the exact words of the lay. We know only that the hearers of the lay, like Tristram (p. 471), find it very daring, and that the harper wonders 'dare I synge this songe afore kynge Marke?' (p. 471). Just as onlookers' reactions help define the characters in Malory, so the hearers' reactions define the lay.⁶ After a tournament Dinadan feasts with King Bagdemagus:

Ryght so cam in sir Dynadan and mocked and japed wyth
kynge Bagdemagus, that all knyghtes lowghe at hym, for
he was a fyne japer and lovyng unto all good knyghtes.
(p. 490)

If the knights are in their element in strange forests or in the lists at tournaments, Dinadan comes into his own around the dinner table. We see Dinadan joking gracefully at the table again during the tournament at Surluse (pp. 497-98). Lancelot acknowledges Dinadan's special function as meal-time japer when he says, 'God forbode that ever we mete but hit be at a dysshe of mete!' (p. 498).

An authorial comment which shows the two sides of Dinadan occurs during this same tournament at Surluse.

Then they blew to justys. And in cam sir Dynadan and mette with sir Geryne, a good knyght, and he threw hym downe over his horse crouper. And sir Dynadan overthrew four knyghtes mo, and there he dede grete dedis of armys, for he was a good knyght. But he was a grete skoffer and a gaper, and the meryste knyght amonge felyship that was. that tyme lyvyng: and he loved every good knyght and every good knyght loved hym.

(p. 495)

This is a rather flat, prosaic expression of his character, for he is one of the most complex and attractive of the minor characters in Malory.

⁶This method of description at one remove seems to me to be analogous to the effect in painting achieved when a source of light is not seen directly, but its reflection illuminates objects in the scene. A candle shaded by the hand casts light on the face and so suggests the source of light without showing it.

In Dinadan's encounter with the anonymous knight (pp. 452-53), the other knight expresses only respect for Dinadan, but in a similar conversation with Isode (similar because he refuses to fight) his companion shows some understanding of his eccentricity. Isode speaks of Bleoberis, who fought three knights for a lady's honour; she then asks Dinadan if he will fight three knights for her.

Than sir Dynadan seyde,
 'I shall sey you ye be as fayre a lady as evir I sawe
 ony, and much fayrer than is my lady quene Gwenyver, but
 wyte you well, at one worde, I woll nat fyght for you
 wyth three knyghtes, Jesu me defende!'

Than Isode lowghe, and had a good game at hym. So
 he had all the chyre that she myght make hym, and there
 he lay all that nyght.

(p. 516)

It seems clear that Dinadan has his tongue in his cheek. Isode wants him to fight with 'three knyghtes that doth [her] wronge' (p. 516), but because of her reaction to his refusal, we see that her hostile knights are most likely hypothetical. Before Dinadan arrives at her castle Tristram has described him to her as 'the beste bourder and japer that I know, and a noble knyght of his hondis, and the beste felawe that I know, and all good knyghtis lovyth his felyship' (p. 515).⁷

Dinadan plays his role of the cautious knight when he is found asleep during a tournament. Dinadan sees Tristram's battered armour and expresses relief that he was not involved in the same battle (p. 555). After the knights are unarmed at the tournament at Lonezep there is 'myry talkynge' (p. 561). Dinadan again makes comic capital out of his supposed disinclination to fight.

'Be God, that may I repente,' seyde sir Dynadan, 'for
 thys unhappy sir Trystram brought us to this turnemente,
 and many grete buffettys he hath caused us to have!'

Than the kynge and sir Launcelot lowghe, that
 unnethe they myght sytte.

(p. 562)

⁷It is tempting to think that 'bourder' (a japer) and 'bound' (a table) are related, for Dinadan jokes at the table. However, according to the OED the stems of the words have completely different etymologies.

None of his companions takes Dinadan's posturing very seriously. If we had any doubts about how his remarks are to be taken, those doubts are completely cleared up by the laughter of his companions.

Whether the characters in Malory are observed and discussed by other characters, speak for themselves, or are seen acting, the revelation of their personalities suggests that we are getting acquainted with characters who have always existed changelessly. Their characters do not 'develop' in the usual meaning of the word; it is our knowledge of them that develops. By reiterating the reputation of a character, Malory shows how others regard him. Even after we know something about a character, a stranger may be introduced who gives his first impression of the character, and so broadens the reader's view of the familiar figure. Or similarly, a newcomer may provide an excuse for another established character to comment on or describe briefly a character, giving a résumé of the familiar figure. This view of the character emphasises his being: what he is, what he does with his free will, how he behaves under normal circumstances. In the next section I shall deal with character revelation as it is determined by the outside forces (that is, the structure of the plot) working on a character.

III. THE FUNCTION OF THE PLOT IN DELINEATING CHARACTER

In medieval romance perhaps more than in other forms of fiction the realisation of the characters depends largely on the plot. (Chrétien and his school of psychological portrayal are exceptions.) As I have shown before, the identity of a character is often conceived in terms of his actions; the knight is known by his adventures. The plot becomes a kind of obstacle course on which the figures proceed from one fixed object to another--a castle, an abbey, a chapel, a pavillion. Even the 'adventures' are not quite the abstract experiences the modern reader might assume. They are spoken of as though they were concrete trophies of the knight's prowess and not merely passing moments bounded by time. Sir Gawain, when he parts from Ywain and Marhalt rides north 'tyll that he com to a fayre maner where dwelled an olde knyght and a good householder' (pp. 118-19). The riding is of no narrative interest, but the encounters are. The riding is, in fact, only a way of separating the encounters. Then Gawain asks this knight 'if he knewe of any aventures' (p. 119), exactly as though an adventure were a permanent natural feature.

'I shall shewe you to-morne,' seyde the knyght, 'mervelos adventures.'

So on the morne they rode all in same to the foreste of adventures tyll they com to a launde, and thereby they founde a crosse. And as they stood and hoked, there cam by them the fayreste knyght and the semelyest man that ever they sawe.

(p. 119)

The new knight then enacts an 'adventure' which Gawain and his host watch. The number of 'things encountered' in this short episode demonstrates the linear movement. Sir Gawain first encounters the 'maner', then he and his host encounter a 'launde' and a 'crosse'. So far they

have moved and their 'things encountered' have been stationary, but now when they stop the next 'thing encountered' is quite logically a moving object. As they stand watching, several more persons approach and instead of being the 'meeters' they become the 'met'.

Adventures, in the sense of accomplished action, are part of a character's identification. Bleoberis recognises Tristram and recites a litany of his exploits.

'Truly,' seyde sir Bleoberys, 'I am ryght glad of you, for ye ar he that slewe Marhalte the knyght honde for honde in the ilonde for the trewayge of Cornwayle. Also ye overcom sir Palomydes, the good knyght, at the turnemente in Irelande where he bete sir Gawayne and his nine fellowys.'

(p. 302)

Many knights are known by their past achievements or their present quests, but probably the most consistent is Palomides, who is usually pursuing Tristram or the Questing Beast.

The plot, however, is more than the various adventures of the knights. In discussing the relationship between characterisation and plot I intend to consider the plot in several lights. Besides a linear series of adventures, the plot can also be a non-linear thematic progression. In discussing the non-linear movement of the plot I shall consider the repetition of themes and situations. These repetitions juxtapose two or more different episodes by repeating in the second some elements of the first. Finally, conflicts and crises act upon a knight to distinguish him from other knights. At a basic level this is true because anything that happens to a knight distinguishes him from other knights to whom it did not happen. If Gareth battles the Red Knight of the Red Landes, he is set apart from all other knights who did not. However, on a more sophisticated level the conflicts and crises have a more subtle effect on the portrayal of a character. We cannot expect the effect to be the same as that in modern fiction in which many facets of character may be revealed through a person's decisions and actions. But by putting a character in a trying

situation and showing the motives for his behaviour the romance narrator can show a portion of the mental and emotional processes of his protagonist. Even if a knight's reaction to a challenging situation seems not very revealing, the accumulation of these reactions inevitably forms much of the reader's impression of him. At the time of each reaction the reader may have an impression of the reality of the character, for there is a sense of reality in making choices and considering consequences.

Reality of Imperfection

Although one of the most striking characteristics of the Arthurian plot is its artificiality, there are moments of surprising realism. One kind of vivid reality is achieved by what may be called the 'reality of imperfection'. It is a reality of loose ends, the reality of human life. When Gareth arrives at the castle of the Lady Liones he does not see her immediately, although she is sitting at a window and Linet points her out to him (p. 237). If it were only a matter of narrating events Gareth would see the lady at once, for she is of prime importance in the plot. But human perception and mistakes in perception are the essence of reality. In the ideal world of most Arthurian action the only mistakes are the contrived misunderstandings of identity: unknown knights and misled lovers. The episode of the death of the Maid of Astolat is typically artificial, yet it also contains an incident of remarkable realism and pathos. The Maid gives her brother and father detailed instructions about her funeral barge, even to the details of which hand to put her letter in and of the very practical device of shaping the warm dead hand around the letter until rigor mortis freezes it in place: 'And whyle my body ys hote lat thys lettir be put in my ryght honde, and my honde bounde faste to the letter untyll that I be colde' (p. 779). But in spite of these exact preparations and the eerie tone of her instructions, the outcome of the plan is sharply realistic.

And whan she was dede the corse and the bedde all
was lad the nexte way unto the Temmys, and there a man
and the corse, and all thyng as she had devised, was
put in the Temmys. And so the man stirred the bargett
unto Westmyenster, and there hit rubbed and rolled too
and fro a grete whyle or ony man aspyed hit.

(p. 780)

The scene which has been set so carefully is in danger of going to waste until Arthur and Guinevere finally see it from a window. After the high melancholy of the funeral instructions there is a tinge of the ludicrous about this scene, in which the unfortunate boatman is obliged to wait until he is noticed.¹ In both the Old French Mort Artu and the Middle English Le Morte Arthur the barge is seen from a window and there is no mention of the way the barge arrived. Besides a reality of incident, this passage illustrates a stylistic reality in two different ways. First there is almost a suggestion of chronicle style, as if the events were written as they happened and not as they were invented. The unseen trick of fate of the barge not being noticed at first is not important to the plot and has the appearance of a minor detail of truth being added in the interest of completeness. Second, the phrasing of 'there hit rubbed and rolled too and fro' deftly expresses the rocking of a moored boat without saying explicitly that the boatman tied up the barget. The alliterating r's and the two 'ands' suggest the rhythm of the waves washing against the boat and pier. By picking out this one small detail of the whole process of arriving at Westminster Malory creates a sharp sense of the realness of the event and of the boat. This short scene illustrates three principles of reality: the impressionistic realism of faulty

¹Sir Herbert Read uses this episode to illustrate his contention that 'the last refinement of all great writing is the selection and isolation of significant detail; and no one is more triumphant in this sense than Malory'. Of this passage he says '... we see how a detail noted almost casually in the very last clause can inform the whole narrative with appropriate desolation and melancholy'. (In The Sense of Glory: Essays in Criticism [Cambridge, 1929], p. 34.) Alain Renouir speaks of 'selective illumination' of details in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, as when the knights in the hall kick at the Green Knight's head; 'the picture of the feat desperately kicking away the loathsome object renders the barons' horror far more realistic than any account of their feelings could ever hope to do'. ('Descriptive Technique in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', Orbis Litterarum, tome XIII, fasc. 3-4 (1958), p. 130.)

perception, the chronicle-like suggestion of truth in small, 'irrelevant' details, and the poetic use of language to suggest rather than to state an action.

This scene contrasts sharply with the cliché situation of the magic boat which carries its cargo unerringly without a pilot or comes straight to the hero waiting on the shore. Another cliché situation, especially in the Grail romances, is the omniscient passer-by. The hero meets someone casually who has had nothing to do with the story until then, and the newcomer mysteriously knows everything about the hero and his internal condition without being told. This device may be used to some purpose, however, as it is in 'The Knight with the Two Swords'. As Balin approaches the castle where he is to die an old man meets him, saying:

'Balyn le Saveage, thow passyst thy bandes to come this waye, therfor torne ageyne and it will availle the,' and he vanysshed away anone.

(p. 67)

As he draws still closer a maiden tells him:

'O, knyght Balyn, why have ye lefte your owne sheld? Allas! ye have put yourself in grete daunger, for by your sheld ye shold have ben knowen. It is grete pyté of yow as ever was of knyght, for of thy prowessse and hardynes thou hast no felawe lyvyng.'

(p. 67)

Certainly the old man, who 'vanysshed away', is supernatural, and Laura Hibbard Loomis believes them both to be supernatural, mainly because of their knowledge of Balin's name. She finds it 'an effective dramatic touch which adds to, rather than lessens, the sense of ill-boding mystery'.²

This device usually has no such artistic effect and is merely an excuse for a long expository speech. A reversal of the cliché would be

²Laura A. Hibbard, 'Malory's Book of Balin' in Medieval Studies in Memory of Gertrude Shoemaker Loomis, ed. Laura A. Hibbard (Paris and New York, 1927), p. 193.

refreshing in itself even without the bonus of the sense of reality in a later scene in 'The Knight with the Two Swords'. At the climax of the story when the brothers have mistakenly killed each other, there comes the cliché situation of inscribing the tomb. Usually when a knight is killed and buried, someone present knows all the appropriate facts to write on the tomb. But the lady at whose castle the battle takes place does not know the background of the knights, and Merlin has to come the next day to have the tomb inscribed properly. Besides the very realistic lack of information on the lady's part, there is again the chronicle-like concern for detail and the resulting impression of truth:

Thenne anone Balan dyed, but Balyn dyed not tyl the
mydnyghte after. And so were they buryed bothe, and the
lady lete make a mensyon of Balan how he was ther slayne
by his broders handes, but she knewe not Balyns name.

(p. 69)

The fastidious distinction between the two times of death is particularly chronicle-like, and the lady's imperfect knowledge is just as would be expected naturally. Further reality is suggested by the fact that the task is not avoided completely but is attempted: that is, the lady fulfills Balan's dying wish by writing as much of an epitaph as she can, imperfect though it is. In this case the 'imperfection' involved is lack of knowledge rather than some error in perception.

Another example of uncertainty as a suggestion of reality occurs when the barons gather in London hoping for a sign to indicate who their king should be. They hear a Christmas mass after which the sword and anvil appear in the churchyard. Of this church Malory says: 'Soo in the grettest chirch of London--whether it were Powlis or not the Frensshe booke maketh no mencyon--alle the estates were longe or day in the chirche for to praye' (p. 7). The suggestion that it may have been St. Paul's but that the author cannot be sure leaves us with the feeling that the source has been copied meticulously, even in its faults; it seems apparent

that no untrue claims have been made by a zealous redactor. By contrast, the church where Arthur and Guinevere are married is named specifically, again giving the impression of veracity. 'Than was thys feste made redy, and the kynge was wedded at Camelot unto dame Gwennyvere in the chirche of Seynte Stephyns with grete solempnit  ' (p. 76). Here the particulars of the wedding--not only at Camelot but at a certain St. Stephen's Church--have a chronicle-like ring.⁵ It is interesting that realism can be suggested by the two seemingly opposite devices of exact detail and casual vagueness.

At the All Hallows' tournament in 'The Fair Maid of Astolat' the objective authorial report of the tournament is by no means omniscient. There are unexplained irregularities.

Also sir Gareth, as the boke seyth, ded that day grete dedis of armys, for he smote downe and pulled downe thirty knyghtes; but whan he had done that dedis he taryed nat, but so departed, and therefore he loste hys pryse. And sir Palamydes ded grete dedis of armys that day, for he smote downe twenty knyghtes; but he departed suddeynly, and men demed that he and sir Gareth rode togyders to som maner adventures.

(p. 776)

There is no narrative necessity for Gareth to leave: in any case the scene changes from the tournament to Bors' meeting with Lancelot at the hermitage where he is recovering from wounds. Palamides is of no great importance in these last books. This uncertainty in the report fulfills several purposes, however. It provides for a variation on the common and often hackneyed theme of the tournament. It is unusual for the winner not to claim his prize, and by allowing it to go to the next best knights, more combatants may 'win worship'. In this tournament there is room for four heroes: Gawain and Bors share the prize for smiting twenty knights each and because 'they began first and lengist endured' (p. 776), and

⁵Jean Frappier calls this church 'une sorte de mus  e de la l  gende arthurienne' and notes its prominent part in *La Mort Artu*. In *  tude sur 'La Mort le roi Artu'*, (Geneva and Paris, 1961), p. 36.

Gareth and Palomides have won unofficial honour in spite of leaving the tournament early. Finally, the scene adds an atmospheric touch by suggesting that in this Arthurian world not everything is known or perceived. No one knows why Gareth and Palomides depart or where they are going; they only assume that they are riding together. In reporting the tournament to Lancelot, Bors says:

'Sir, thereof we mervayled all,' seyde sir Bors, 'for but if hit were you, other the noble knyght sir Trystram, other the good knyght sir Lamorak de Galis, I saw never knyght bere so many knyghtes and smyte downe in so litill a whyle as ded sir Gareth. And anone as he was gone we all wyst nat where he becom.'

(p. 777)

The disappearance of the two knights might in other circumstances serve as an excuse to begin a quest for them. The other knights at the tournament do not search for their fellows, as far as we know, at least. Indeed, they may search for them, but that is outside the story, just as Gareth and Palomides' adventure is outside the story. Somewhat like a chronicle, which must be selective in the events it relates, the Arthurian story is a series of events picked out of a larger background, and if two knights leave the narrative scene abruptly, we may be sure that they are still actively adventuring, whether or not the narrator follows them.

In the episode of Gawain's death in the Mort Artu (but not in Malory or in the metrical Le Morte Arthur) his body is taken from Dover to Camelot by way of the castle of Belo  , where the lady of the castle delivers a hysterical tirade proclaiming her love for the dead Gawain. When she declares in front of all the knights that she loves only Gawain and will never love anyone else, her husband stabs her. Now she exults at dying for the love of Gawain and requests that her body be buried with his. However, the knights' stunned reaction to this murder prevents them from hearing what the lady says.

Li chevalier n'entendent pas granment a ce que la dame dit,
car trop sont dolent que ele est einsi morte par tel
mesaventure . . .⁴

In the midst of this melodramatic scene we are reminded of the perception of sound. In spite of the stylised lamentations there is reality in the scarcely heard speech of the lady. Another dimension is added to the scene. There are two points of view: that of the omniscient narrator who knows what the lady said and that of the knights who do not hear her.

Repetition of Situation and Theme: Closely Related Episodes

There are specific themes which turn up from time to time in Malory, such as the Incurable Disease, and there are very general, all-pervasive themes like the Quest and Unnatural Violence (i.e. killing one's relative or friend). These repetitions, even when they occur fairly far apart, contribute something to each other's meaning by showing different examples of the same idea. However, the most obvious (but nevertheless the most satisfying) use of repetition is two closely related episodes--or two parts of the same episode--the first of which illuminates or foreshadows the second. Because these come so close together they seem to be conscious artistic devices and not simply romance motifs which may be common to many romances. (In discussions of 'originality' perhaps it is more valid to speak of artistic devices v. romance motifs than of Malory v. his sources. The latter approach implies ignoring that part of the narrative which is effective in literary terms but can be traced to another author. For my summary of this controversy see Appendix A.) For Eugène Vinaver Tristan's death scene is an example of the 'suggestive value of parallel situations, in the skillful repetition "in reverse" which is accompanied here by a significant change of key and a darkening of tone'.⁵ Less

⁴La Mort le roi Artu, ed. Jean Frappier (Paris and Geneva, 1964), p. 223.

⁵'King Arthur's Sword or the Making of a Medieval Romance', BRL, XL (1958), p. 524.

important in its bearing on Malory, this episode nevertheless illustrates a general principle which is applicable to Malory. Both the theme of the boat and the theme of the Incurable Wound are present in this episode, for 'when Tristan, dying of a poisoned wound, is waiting for Iseult's white sail to appear on the stormy sea, our minds go back to his journey in a rudderless boat to Ireland where he saw Iseult for the first time and she healed the wound inflicted on him by Morholt, a wound which she alone could heal'.⁶ Malory omits Tristram's death, although he includes Tristram's marriage with Isode le Blanche Mains, an echo of name which compares Tristram's celibate marriage with the second Isode with his passionate relationship with the first one, both of them kings' daughters. This repetition draws the sets of characters together: Tristram goes to Brittany to be healed of a wound just as he has gone to Ireland to be healed; Howell's daughter is named Isode, like the daughter of Angwish. (There is a parallel to his first journey to Cornwall in that both Mark and Howell are relatives of Tristram's. He is Mark's sweostorsunu, and Howell is the father of his stepmother [p. 278]. They are maternal relatives, but do not elucidate the difference between Tristram's mother and stepmother, for the good mother has a wicked brother and the wicked stepmother has a good father.) The similarities having been established, the differences then carry the meaning by showing an alternative to the relationships of the characters in Ireland. Tristram fights for King Howell instead of fighting as a champion against King Angwish. Isode le Blanche Mains is available to Tristram, whereas La Belle Isode was betrothed to King Mark. However, it is the legally unattainable Isode who inspires Tristram's passion and not the one whom he marries.

This interplay of like situations is evident with Lancelot and the two Blaines. In the Tristram section Lancelot begets Galahad on Elaine,

⁶Vinaver, 'King Arthur's Sword or the Making of a Medieval Romance', p. 524.

but in spite of the honour of being Galahad's father Lancelot is irate at having been tricked into sleeping with Elaine. Lancelot finally forgives her and she remains faithful to him, refusing the suit of Bromel la Pleche (pp. 586-87). Again after the birth of Galahad, Lancelot believes he is being taken to Guinevere's chamber but ends up sleeping with Elaine. This time Guinevere, in the next room, hears him talking in his sleep and coughs to waken him. Now Lancelot realises his error and goes mad and leaps from the window. The deception was necessary the first time in order to beget Galahad, but there is no narrative reason for the second deception (unless Lancelot's madness is considered essential). Lancelot's hysteria is understandable after the recent episode of his first deception by Elaine. The shame of the original trick was overwhelming, and the second time it happens he is driven into a fit of madness. Sometime later after the Grail Quest, Lancelot stays at the castle of a baron whose daughter is named Elaine. In the similar situation at the castle of King Pelleas he was deceived by the daughter of his host; this Elaine, however, approaches him openly with her request of marriage. When he declines, she suggests Lancelot be her paramour. He recoils at the idea, largely because of the injustice to his hosts, Elaine's father and brother, and offers to pay her dowry when she marries. She rejects this idea and concludes in a matter-of-fact way that she will have to die for his love. The great difference in this later scene is the openness of the lady in making her proposals. Lancelot's firm refusal in this scene was denied to him when he was tricked by the first Elaine. His insistence on chastity is all the more meaningful now after his unavoidable unfaithfulness to Guinevere. He seems flattered by the attentions of Elaine of Astolat and offers to reward her, but he is only incensed and finally insane as a result of the intrigues of Elaine of Corbin. Furthermore, the quest for the Grail has come and gone, and Lancelot may be all the more insistent on chastity because of this purifying experience.

There is some irony here, for the result of his pre-Quest 'impurity' was the Grail Knight himself.

Arthur's meeting with Guinevere is foreshadowed subtly by another love affair immediately before the meeting (pp. 30-31). Lionors, the daughter of Earl Sanam, comes to pay homage to Arthur after his battle against the eleven kings. They fall in love, Arthur 'has ado with her', and begets Borre. That is the last we hear of Lionors. Arthur is then called away to Camilard to defend King Lodegrance. After that successful war Arthur meets another noble lady, Guinevere, and falls in love with her. The two encounters are so close together and so similar in many respects that they make comparison inevitable. It is probably no great coincidence that both events happen in the euphoria after a successful battle and that both ladies are specifically noble. However, these and the incest with Morgan are practically the only amorous encounters King Arthur ever has. The important points here are that the first was brief, quickly forgotten, but fruitful. The second is permanent and legal, but apparently not destined to produce any offspring. Contrasted to both of these is Arthur's incestuous relationship with his half-sister (p. 32). This relationship is also fruitful, like the first, but the progeny is the evil Mordred instead of Borre, the good Round Table knight. The encounter with Lionors, while not really virtuous, is not condemned either, but Arthur's incest is shameful and causes his destruction. Against both of these stands his marriage, which is completely respectable but conversely is partly responsible for his downfall in the end.

Sometimes the arrangement of parallel situations can be likened only to musical progressions. After Arthur's affair with Morgan he has a disturbing dream about strange animals:

But thus was the dreame of Arthure: hym thought there was com
into hys londe gryffens and serpentis, and hym thought they
brente and sloughe all the people in the londe; and than he

thought he fought with them and they dud hym grete harme
and wounded hym full sore, but at the laste he slew hem.
(p. 33)

To help him forget the dream Arthur goes hunting and chases a hart, but rides his horse to death in the process. A yeoman goes to get Arthur another horse.

So the kynge saw the herte unboked and hys horse dede,
he sette hym downe by a fowntayne, and there he felle downe
in grete thought.

(p. 33)

There is an alternation between Arthur's dreaminess and strange unco-operative animals. He dreams about the strange animals that he overcomes and then chases an animal which escapes because he has inadvertently killed the animal that was carrying him. As he sits pensively by the well the bizarre Questing Beast comes to drink.

And therewith the beeste departed with a grete noyse, whereof
the kynge had grete mervayle. And so he was in a grete
thought, and therewith he felle on slepe.

Ryght so there com a knyght on foote unto Arthure, and
seyde, 'Knyght full of thought and slepy, telle me if thou
saw any stronge beeste passe thys way.'

'Such one saw I,' seyde kynge Arthure, 'that ys paste
nye two myle. What wolde ye with that beeste?' seyde Arthure.

'Sir, I have folowed that beste longe and kylde myne
horse, so wolde God I had another to folow my queste.'

(p. 33)

Again there is a combination of an odd beast and Arthur's pensiveness; his drowsiness and pensiveness are evident to the approaching knight. Then to complement Arthur's dead horse, the new knight has also ridden his horse to death. (That the beast 'ys paste nye two myle' I take to be a measuring of time by distance: the beast has been gone long enough to have covered two miles.)⁷ Arthur offers to take up the quest himself, but the strange knight, now identified as King Pellinore, replies that he alone must chase it, for the quest 'shall never be encheved but by me

⁷Time is a measure of distance again when Segvarides' wife speaks in fear of her husband. See below, p. 116.

other by my nexte kynne' (p. 34). For all the sound of a fiat, Pellinore is mistaken for we are told by way of identification of Pellinore: 'Whos name was kynge Pellynor that tyme folowed the questynge beste, and afftir hys dethe sir Palomydes folowed hit' (pp. 33-34). Someone comes with a horse for Arthur and Pellinore rides away on it, with only a rather feeble challenge from Arthur. The scene ends neatly (and another one immediately begins) with: 'Thenne the kyng sat in a study and bade hys men fecche another horse as faste as they myght' (p. 34). The scene ends as it began with a thoughtful Arthur waiting for another horse. The atmosphere continues into the next incident, which involves Merlin's shape-shifting. The tone of it has already been set by the eerie dream and the fantastic Questing Beast. In only a short scene there is a density of patterns: one horse ridden to death and another sent for; another de-horsed knight who appropriates the new horse; a second horse sent for. A dream of fantastic animals finally overcome; the reality of the Questing Beast, always chased but never caught. Arthur in various stages of sleep or pensiveness.

Unlike that density of patterns, the theme of messengers asking tribute occurs at intervals, culminating in the war with Lucius. The first set of messengers from Rome appear only very briefly in the middle of a larger episode. Arthur has wounded Grifflet, who fortunately recovers, for Arthur regrets having wounded a good knight. The messengers come and go, and the combined anger at the messengers and regret for Grifflet compel Arthur to ride out of the city the next day. The request of the Romans and Arthur's answer are presented like this:

Ryght so com into the courte twelve knyghtes that were aged men, whiche com frome the Emperoure of Rome. And they asked of Arthure trwage for hys realme, othir ellis the Emperour wolde destroy hym and all hys londe.

'Well,' seyde kynge Arthure, 'ye ar messyngers: therefore ye may sey what ye woll, othir ellis ye sholde dye therefore. But thys ys myne answer: I oughe the Emperour no trewage, nother none woll I yelde hym, but

on a fayre fylde I shall yelde hym my trwage, that shall
 be with a sherpe spere othir ellis with a sherpe swerde.
 And that shall nat be longe, by my fadirs soule Uther!
 (p. 38)

Nothing seems to come of this encounter; there is no immediate Roman invasion. It is only a suggestion of hostile forces outside Arthur's realm and of the later war against Lucius, who is not even named in this first incident. The second challenge to the young Arthur comes from King Roins of North Wales, whose messenger says:

that kynge Royns had discomfite and overcom eleven kyngis,
 and every of them dud hym omage. And that was thus to
 sey they gaff theire beardes clene flayne off, as much
 as was bearde; wherefore the messyngere com for kynge
 Arthures berde. For kynge Royns had purfilde a mantell
 with kynges berdis, and there lacked one place of the
 mantell; wherefore he sente for hys bearde, othir ellis
 he wolde entir into his londis and brenne and sle, and
 nevir leve tylle he hathe the hede and the bearde bothe.

'Well,' seyde Arthure, 'thou haste seyde thy message,
 the whych ys the moste orgulus and lewdiste message that
 evir man had isente unto a kynge. Also thou mayste se my
 bearde ys full yonge yet to make off a purphile. But
 telle thou thy kynge thus, that I owghe hym none homage
 ne none of myne elders; but or hit be longe to, he shall
 do me omage on bothe his knees, other ellis he shall lese
 hys hede, by the fayth of my body! For thys ys the moste
 shamefullyste message that ever y herde speke off. I have
 aspyed thy kynge never yette mette with worshipfull man.
 But telle hym I woll have hys hede withoute he do me omage.'
 (pp. 43-44)

Even in the Arthurian world there is something unreal and playful about this 'homage' and about Arthur's remark that his beard is not suitable anyway. Although the reasons for wanting the beard--in effect, Roins lacks only one for a complete set--are frivolous, the resulting war has serious consequences, for the Dolorous Stroke and the Lot-Pellinore feud have their beginnings here. In both cases Arthur's attitude toward the messengers themselves is tolerant. He tells the Roman messengers that since they are messengers they are obliged to say their message regardless of its content. However, Arthur involves Roins's messenger in the message by remarking on the insolence of the message and by making the direct appeal to the messenger: 'Also thou mayste se my bearde ys full yonge yet to make off a purphile'.

Finally when the messengers come with Lucius' ultimatum the identification of the messengers with the message is very close. Terrified by Arthur's glare, the messengers kneel and one of them says, 'Crowned kynge, myssedo no messyngers, for we be com at his commaundement, as scrvytures sholde' (p. 136). Now it is the messengers who state the case for tolerance. The conditions of the tribute contain an appeal to precedent and the usual threat, and Arthur's attitude is restrained.

'Sir,' seyde one of the senatoures, 'so Cryste me helpe, I was so aferde whan I loked in thy face that myne herte wolde nat serve for to sey my message. But sytthen hit is my wylle for to sey myne erande, the gretis welle Lucius, the Emperour of Roome, and commaundis the uppon payne that woll falle to sende hym the trwage of this realme that thy fadir Uther Pendragon payde, other ellys he woll bereve the all thy realmys that thou waldyst, and thou as rebelle, not knowynge hym as thy soverayne, withholdest and reteynest, contrary to the statutes and decrees maade by the noble and worthy Julius Cezar, conquerour of this realme.'

'Thow seyste well,' seyde Arthure, 'but for all thy bryn wordys I woll nat be to over-hasty, and therefore thou and thy felowys shall abyde here seven dayes'

(p. 136)

In relation to the two previous episodes concerning truage this one seems by far the most serious. In retrospect Roins's silly request for Arthur's beard seems all the more a burlesque of the truage ultimatum. The first and third are related through the obvious fact that both feature messengers from Rome. The first time Arthur dismisses them sharply, saying he owes the emperor nothing. But now the messengers claim there is a long precedence. There is a legalistic ring about the speech of the messenger. Arthur seems to make a conscious effort to be civil to the Romans in spite of their 'bryn wordys'. Arthur even defends them against some hot-headed young knights, who

wold have ronne on them to have slayne them, sayenge that it was a rebuke to alle the knyghtes there being present to suffre them to saye so to the kynge. And anone the kynge commaunded that none of them upon payne of deth to myssaye them ne doo them any harme.

(p. 137)

While the other messengers have been dismissed quickly and peremptorily, these are given a rather uneasy safe-conduct to stay: 'And thoughe they have greved me and my courte, yet we muste remembir on oure worshep' (p. 137). Arthur confers at length with his Round Table members and sends the messengers back with the news that he will invade Rome with all his forces. Elaborate plans are made for their safe passage to the coast, but they must travel as quickly as they can. The somewhat grudging care shown to the messengers and the space devoted to the episode show the importance of this conflict with the Roman emperor. These messengers are even shown going back to Rome and delivering Arthur's letters to Lucius. Their remarks contain new exposition about Arthur's motives for attacking the emperor and for the first time a description of Arthur's court as it appeared to them.

'For he seyth ye have occupyed the Empyre with grete wronge,
for all his trew auncettryes sauff his fadir Uther were
Emperoures of Rome.

'And of all the soveraynes that we sawe ever he is
the royallyst kynge that lyvyth on erthe'

(p. 140)

This is the most natural way to change the scene to Rome without using some sort of 'now leve we Arthure and turn to Lucius' convention. The idea of messengers is carried still further by showing Lucius sending his 'messyngers of wyse olde knyghtes' (p. 140) to all his subject lands. There is another link between the Roins episode and this when Lucius' messengers go 'frome Nero unto Nazareth' (p. 141). Roins's brother, Nero, battles Arthur in the engagement in which Lot is killed (pp. 56-58).

The three encounters with messengers demonstrate a definite progression from the first, which seems so unimportant that it only interrupts but does not break Arthur's train of thought; to the second, which rouses Arthur's wrath and introduces a war with serious repercussions; to the third, which sets the scene for Arthur's epic war against the Romans, after which his realm reaches its greatest extent and Arthur is emperor.

A short, simple kind of repetition of situation is the reversal.

Arthur saves Merlin from three churls and shortly afterwards Merlin saves Arthur from an opponent.

And than was he ware of thre chorlys chasyng Merlion and wolde have slayne hym. Than the kynge rode unto them and bade hem: 'Fle, chorlis!' Than they fered sore whan they sawe a knyght com, and fledde.

'A, Merlion!' seyde Arthure, 'here haddist thou be slayne for all thy crafftis, had nat I bene.'

'Nay,' seyde Merlyon, 'nat so, for I cowde a saved myselffe and I had wolde. But thou arte more nere thy deth than I am, for thou goste to thy dethe warde, and God be nat thy frende.'

(pp. 38-39)

There is nothing especially heroic about Arthur's action, for churls are not worth the attention of a king, and they apparently do not recognise him anyway. Merlin is probably right in saying that he could have saved himself, but nevertheless he had not done it yet and was allowing them to chase him; there is a touch of petulance about his reply. His last sentence seems unnecessarily melancholy, for Merlin's downfall, if not death, comes before Arthur's. This may be a reference to Merlin's position as something of a longaevus, a fairy person with a longer than human life-span.⁸ Soon afterward Arthur is at the mercy of a knight (identified as King Pellinore) and Merlin intervenes.

And therewithall com Merlion and seyde, 'Knyght, holde thy honde, for and thou sle that knyght thou puttyst thys realme in the gretteste damage that evir was realme: for thys knyght ys a man of more worshyp than thou wotist off.'

'Why, what ys he?' seyde the knyght.

'For hit ys kynge Arthure,' seyde Merlyon.

Than wolde he have slayne hym for drede of hys wratthe, and so he lyffte up hys swerde. And therewith Merlion caste an inchauntemente on the knyght, that he felle to the erthe in a grete slepe. Than Merlion toke up kynge Arthure and rode forthe on the knyghtes horse.

(pp. 40-41)

The pattern is exactly opposite when the knight, Arthur, intervenes between non-knights and then Merlin, a non-knight, intervenes between battling

⁸See C.S. Lewis, The Discarded Image: an Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature (Cambridge, 1967), p. 130.

knights. In both cases the intervention makes the attackers afraid, but it is the sight of a knight approaching that frightens the churls and the knowledge that Arthur is his opponent that frightens Pellinore. This fear has the wrong effect on Pellinore, who wants to kill Arthur rather than face his anger. Merlin then uses magic to defeat him, as he hinted he could when Arthur saved him. Again there is an ominous note for Arthur. When he fears Merlin has killed Pellinore, Merlin says, ' . . . he ys holier than ye: he ys but on slepe and woll awake within thys owre' (p. 41). As Arthur had said when he saved Merlin that he would have been slain 'had nat I bene', Merlin repeats the idea by saying to Arthur, 'Now here had ye be slayne had I nat bene' (p. 41). Arthur's rescue by Merlin may be seen as necessary because Arthur must break his sword so that Merlin can take him to the Lady of the Lake for Excalibur.⁹ It also allows Merlin the opportunity to prophesy the future of King Pellinore and to say, complementing the previous suggestions of Arthur's downfall, 'And he shall telle you the name of youre owne son begotyn of youre syster, that shall be the destruccion of all thys realme' (p. 41). Merlin's rescue by Arthur is only an incident in the narrative with no importance in itself and no repercussions. If Arthur's rescue by Merlin is the more essential rescue to the plot, then Merlin's rescue by Arthur is added to prefigure it, making a rounded, symmetrical effect. The two rescues balance each other just as, in a much larger way, the receiving and relinquishing of Excalibur in the lake balance each other.

Episodes concerned with a quest of any kind are naturally important in relation to the later Grail Quest.¹⁰ It is particularly interesting

⁹See Eugène Vinaver, 'King Arthur's Sword or the Making of a Medieval Romance', *BJRL*, XL (1958), p. 523. The author of the *Suite du Merlin* reconciled the sword-in-stone beginning with the sword-in-lake ending by having Arthur break the first sword and receive a second from the lake.

¹⁰In a general way, the quest itself is a reverse repetition--an imitation but with conscious differences--of ordinary chivalric adventures.

that some of the minor quests in Malory are connected with penance, just as the larger Quest ends with the penance of the unsuccessful knights, especially Lancelot. In Gawain's first adventure, undertaken at Arthur's wedding feast, he inadvertently slays a lady. As a part of this adventure another knight slays two of Gawain's greyhounds. Both of them return to court in penance with the bodies of those they have wrongly slain. A white hart, the object of Gawain's quest, runs into a castle where Gawain and Gaheris corner it with greyhounds and kill it. The knight of that castle then comes on the scene, kills two greyhounds, and chases the rest out. He laments the death of his white hart, telling Gawain that his lady gave it to him. In the ensuing battle Gawain ignores the knight's plea for mercy.

But sir Gawayne wolde no mercy have, but unlaced hys helme to have strekyn of hys hede. Ryght so com hys lady oute of a chambir and felle over hym, and so he smote of hir hede by myssefortune.

(p. 79)

Now Gawain has not only killed the white hart, but the lady who gave it to the knight. These two actions balance each other, but the killing of the hart is also balanced by the killing of the greyhounds; Gawain and the knight both kill animals belonging to the other. As a variation on the theme, the lady issues out of the chamber at the climax of the battle, just as this knight previously has come from the same chamber at the killing of the hart.

Chastened by the accidental death of the lady, Gawain allows the knight to live, but requires him to go to King Arthur.

. . . he swore to go unto kynge Arthure, and he [Gawain] made hym to bere the one grehownde before hym on hys horse and the other behynde hym.

(p. 79)

There is even a suggestion of balance in this simple detail of the position of the greyhounds on the horse. Soon after the knight's departure, four knights ride up, who know all that has just happened. The four attack

Gawain and Gaheris in revenge for the dead lady. But at a crucial point in the battle another group of four intervenes:

And as they sholde have bene slayne, there com four
fayre ladyes and besought the knyghtes of grace for sir
Gawayne. And goodly at the requeste of thes ladyes they
gaff sir Gawayne and Gaherys their lyves and made them
to yelde them as presoners.

(p. 80)

When one of the ladies learns of Gawain's royal lineage, she obtains his release. His departure is a repetition of the journey of the knight who killed the greyhounds.

So they gaff hym leve and toke hym the hartes hede with hym
because hit was in the queste. And than they delyverde hym
undir thys promyse, that he sholde bere the dede lady with
hym on thys maner: the hede of her was hanged aboute hys
necke, and the hole body of hir before hym on hys horse mane.

(p. 81)

Gawain rides penitentially to Camelot with a corpse just as the knight has gone with the bodies of the greyhounds. The careful mention of the position of the corpse on the horse complements the description of the knight's greyhounds. When Gawain arrives at Camelot, however, nothing is said about the knight who presumably preceeded him there. The repetitions, which have balanced each other like parentheses during the story of Gawain's quest for the hart, are dropped in the final scene at Camelot, as though the narrative had been divided into two thematic strands and was reunited in the finale.

The idea of carrying a body or a head of someone one has killed occurs not long afterward in the adventure of Pellinore, which is in the same larger framework of the quests originating at the marriage feast in 'Forre and Pellinor'. Pellinore feels responsible for a lady's death because he could have helped her and her wounded knight. He was bent on another quest at the time, however, and did not stop. In despair the lady killed herself, and now returning to the scene with another lady Pellinore sees her remains, a lion having eaten all but the head. The

lady requires him to take the head to King Arthur. It is always a conqueror or other outside person who actively requires the action, seemingly as punishment. It is a kind of geis, 'a cross or burden of some kind imposed verbally upon one person by another person'.¹¹ This theme comes soon enough after Gawain's experience that reverberations from it colour Pellinore's obligation. The subtle distinction in Pellinore's case is that, while he feels somewhat responsible for the lady's death, he did not kill her outright and does not feel completely responsible for her suicide. Even when Guinevere reproves him, he maintains: '. . . ye were gretely to blame and ye wolde nat save youre owne lyff and ye myght' (p. 90). R.L. Davies supports Pellinore's claim to be not technically responsible.¹² Pellinore's geis to take the head to Arthur seems largely a device to get Pellinore back to Camelot to tell his story. In the group of three adventures of the knights Gawain, Tor, and Pellinore, only the first and last have this theme. Tor's adventure, however, has several characteristics common to the others. All concern mercy, if we consider Pellinore's failure to stop and help the lady as a failure of mercy. Just as Gawain is blamed for not showing mercy to the knight and thereby killing his lady accidentally, and as Pellinore is blamed, Tor is asked to avenge the death of a knight who was shown no mercy. The lady explains to Tor:

' . . . he slew myne owne brothir before myne yghen that was a bettir knyght than he, and he had had grace; and I kneled halfe an oere before hym in the myre for to sauff my brothirs lyff that had done hym no damage, but fought with hym by adventure of armys, and so for all that I coude do he strake of hys hede.'

(p. 84)

¹¹ John Revell Reinhard, The Survival of Geis in Medieval Romance (Halle, 1939), p. 299. Although the geis is of Celtic origin, I think it should not necessarily be considered a folklore influence on written romance. It is an attitude or romance convention rather than a direct influence.

¹² 'Was Pellynor Unworthy?' NQ, CCII (1957), p. 370.

Like Gawain, this knight has not granted mercy to someone who asked it, and has beheaded someone. Gawain's variation on this theme was that he beheaded the lady by mistake. Now the recreant knight, Abellius, asks mercy himself and is refused and Tor beheads him. There are an unusual number of beheadings in these three episodes. Beheadings are not unusual in Malory, but when they are part of a complex of themes occurring close together, they gain a significance that they would not have individually.

Of these three questing knights, only Tor returns to Camelot with his honour intact; both Gawain and Pellinore end their quests successfully, but on a penitent note. This inevitably suggests the three Grail knights, Bors, Percival, and Galahad, all of whom have a measure of success in the Quest, but only one, Galahad, is completely successful. Both quests begin as a response to a strange sight in Arthur's hall. In Sir Launcelot du Lake an oddly similar event takes place. Lancelot is protecting a lady from Pedivere, who nevertheless 'swapped of the ladyes hede' (p. 207) when Lancelot was not looking. Lancelot then requires him to ride with the head and body to Guinevere. Guinevere imposes a geis on Pedivere: that he go to Rome to ask penance of the Pope, 'And ye shall nevyr rest one night thereas ye do another, and ye go to ony bedde the dede body shall lye with you (p. 208).¹³ Pedivere is under the geis of first Lancelot and then Guinevere (and even the Pope's penance will be a kind of geis). The repetition of the geis is an organic development, for one leads directly to another, which leads to the final geis-imposer, the Pope.

The Incurable Disease or Wound is a frequent motif and is a part of the large complex of themes surrounding the Maimed King. In 'The Knight with the Two Swords' a series of three wounds culminates with the scene set for the future Grail adventure. Balin and a damsel are captured

¹³The prohibition of resting two nights in the same place is a common geis (Reinhard, pp. 308 and 322).

at a castle where the custom requires the lady to bleed 'of hir bloode a sylver dysshefull' (p. 62) for the lady of the castle 'was syke and had leyne many yeres, and she myght nat be hole but yf she had bloode in a sylver dysshe full, of a clene mayde and a kynges doughter' (p. 62). The damsel's blood fails to heal the lady, and there is a shift forward in time--something of an authorial prophecy--to the Grail Quest:

And as hit tellith after in the SANKGREALL that sir Percivall his syster holpe that lady with hir blood, whereof she was dede.

(p. 62)

Soon after Balin encounters a very similar situation where he lodges for the night. His host explains:

'I was but late at a justynge and there I justed with a knyght that ys brothir unto kyng Pellam, and twyse I smote hym downe. And than he promysed to quyte me on my beste frende. And so he wounded thus my son that can nat be hole tylle I have of that knyghtes bloode.'

(p. 62)

This echoes the curative-blood geis of only a few lines before, and it also has a very important narrative function. It like the earlier case, is connected to the Grail story, for Pellam is the Grail King, and to find his brother, Garlon, Balin goes to a great feast at Pellam's court. It is there that Balin inflicts the Dolorous Stroke. Balin goes to seek Garlon in revenge for other wrongs and promises to give his host 'parte of his bloode to hele youre sonne withall' (p. 62). It is highly ironic that the killing of Garlon for this healing blood precipitates the battle with Pellam, who then

lay so many yerys sore wounded, and myght never be hole tylle that Galaad the Hawte Prynce heled hym in the queste of the Sankgreall. For in that place was parte of the bloode of oure Lorde Jesu Cryste, which Joseph off Aramathy brought into thys londe. And there hymself lay in that ryche bedde. And that was the spere whych Longous smote oure Lorde with to the herte. And kyng Pellam was nyghe of Joseph his kynne, and that was the moste worshipfullist man on lyve in tho dayes, and grete

pitte hit was of hys hurte, for thorow that stroke hit
turned to grete dole, tray and tene.

(pp. 64-65)

There is a steady mounting of importance in this series of wounds, but all of them are overtly connected with the Grail. In spite of the consistent link with the Grail, there is nevertheless a progression from the periphery of the Grail situation to its centre: (1) the lady's wound is healed much later by Percival's sister during the Quest, but it has little to do with the Quest itself; (2) the revenge on Garlon furnishes the motive leading to the cataclysmic Dolorous Stroke and is therefore indirectly but importantly connected with the Grail; (3) the wounding of Pellam supplies the reason behind the Quest. In the quest for Garlon's blood the only motive is the common one of needing the blood of the person who inflicted the wound; in the other two the emphasis is on the blood of a person of special virtue. The progression is an ascending one in every way. The episodes increase in length and detail and in importance to the Grail adventure.

Toward the end of 'Torre and Pellinor' Pellinore overhears a plot to poison King Arthur. Not long afterward comes 'Arthur and Accolon', which concerns Morgan's attempt to kill Arthur, though not by poison. The midnight conversation Pellinore overhears is this:

'Be my hede,' seyde the other, 'there have I bene and aspied the courte of kynge Arthure, and there ys such a felyshyp that they may never be brokyn, and well-nyghe all the world holdith with Arthure, for there ys the floure of chevalry. And now for thys cause am I rydyng into the Northe: to telle ouré chyfftaynes of the felyship that ys withholdyn with kynge Arthure.'

'As for that,' seyde the othir knyght, 'I have brought a remedy with me that ys the grettist boysen that ever ye herde speke off. And to Camelot wold I with hit, for we have a frende ryght nyghe the kynge, well cheryshed, that shall poysen kynge Arthure, for so hath he promysed ouré chyfftaynes, and receyved grete gyfftis for to do hit.'

(p. 89)

These two figures who meet briefly and anonymously at night in Pellinore's hearing are embodied points of view. The situation as it is dramatised

here is that Arthur is loved by some and hated by others. The most significant point of the dialogue, however, is that treachery inside the Round Table court threatens Arthur. This plot probably has nothing to do with Morgan, but is perhaps all the more sinister for its suggestion that other forces are at work against Arthur besides the notoriously evil Morgan. The link between this plot and Morgan's is the 'frende ryght nyghe the kynge, well cheryshed'. Arthur says of Morgan: 'God knowyth I have honoured hir and worshipped hir more than all my kyn, and more have I trusted hir than my wyff and all my kyn aftir' (p. 107). Morgan repays Arthur's trust by giving Excalibur to his enemy and giving him a substitute sword. The foreshadowing of the conversation is concerned not only with a plot to kill Arthur, but with the treachery of someone near him.¹⁴ The connection between the two is thematic but not narrative. The suggestion of the conversation is of treachery and assassination, but it relates to no specific future event.¹⁵ No more is said of this knight and his poison, and it leaves one with the feeling that this is not an isolated event; that there are similar plots afoot, this one being discovered only because Pellinore overheard it. There are in other parts of the forest unheard plots. Morgan's treason in 'Arthur and Accolon' does not depend for exposition on the earlier conversation, but this conversation suggests a context for Morgan's plot. In that way reverber-

¹⁴One critic points out that while Morgan's attempt is futile, 'the significant fact remains that her action represents the first attempt made against the person of Arthur himself'. Morgan 'represents the first indications of dissension within the society itself' (Henry Grady Morgan, 'The Role of Morgan le Fay in Malory's Morte Darthur', Southern Quarterly, II [1964], p. 154.)

¹⁵This scene is found unsatisfactory by one critic because it is an 'unresolved digression'. 'Pellinore's reaction is not mentioned, nor is the matter ever referred to again.' (Evelyn Leigh Giffland, 'Plot, Character, Theme: a Critical Study of Malory's Works', unpub. diss. (Denver, 1964), p. 21. I do not believe this is a valid criticism. The very lack of resolution is a valuable artistic device.

ations from the earlier event contribute to the later one, as though of the various plots only Morgan's almost succeeds.

In Sir Launcelot du lake among Lancelot's encounters in the forest are two battles with Tarquin and Perris de Forest Savage. Lancelot rescues Gaheis from Tarquin and after a long battle kills him. Almost immediately Lancelot is told by his damsel: 'here by this way haunts a knyght that dystressis all ladyes and jantywomen, and at the leste he robbyth them other lyeth by hem' (p. 193). The damsel acts as a decoy and when the highwayman waylays her, Lancelot quickly kills him. The two events are then tied together by the lady, who says:

'... lyke as Terquyn wacched to dystresse good knyghtes,
so dud this knyght attende to destroy and dystresse ladyes,
damesels and jantywomen; and his name was sir Perys de
Foreste Savage.'

(p. 194)

These two unpleasant knights represent all sorts of brigands: those who attack knights and those who attack ladies. Lancelot's two battles symbolise his opposition to all evil knights and his defence of all virtuous knights and ladies. This balanced set of two presents a micro-cosmic summary of Lancelot's chivalric behaviour.

Lancelot's next adventure begins when he rides across a bridge and is challenged by a 'passyng foule carle'¹⁶ with a club. Lancelot kills him, but on reaching the village at the end of the bridge he finds that the carl was the chief porter of the local castle. The villagers seem distraught, for

'... all peple, men and women, cryed on sir Launcelot and sayde, 'Sir knyght, a worse dede duddyst thou never for thyself, for thou haste slayne the cheyff porter of oure castell.'

¹⁶This and all other quotations in this paragraph are from p. 195 in the text.

Lancelot rides unimpeded into the castle and has a reception similar to that in the village. Again people warn him: 'So he looked aboute hym and sye muche pople in dorys and in wyndowys that sayde, "Fayre knyghte, thou arte unhappy to com here!"' Next, two giants attack him 'with two horryble clubbys in their hondys'. Lancelot kills the giants and frees the prisoners in the castle. He kills all three--the carl and the two giants--with the same speed and decisiveness: he apparently uses only three strokes. They are described, in order:

Than sir Launcelot drew his swerde and put the stroke abacke,
and clave his hede unto the pappys.

Sir Launcelot put his shyld before hym and put the stroke
away of that one gyaunte, and with hys swerde he clave his
hede in sundir.

. . . sir Launcelot . . . smote hym on the shuldir and clave
hym to the navyll.

The villagers' warning is ambiguous. There is a sense of outraged proprietorship in 'oure castell', but the key to the meaning is 'for thyself'. They are only warning him of his own danger, not their anger. The second warning makes this clearer with the emphasis on Lancelot's condition and the friendly greeting. The carl with his club has prefigured the giants. All of them are outside chivalry because of social class and because (or 'therefore') they fight with clubs.¹⁷ Lancelot deals with them in the most fitting way, without conversation, without exchanged courtesies, without chivalric refinements. There may be some relationship between this adventure and the previous one when he defeats a knight who harmed ladies and a knight who harmed other knights. Here he vanquishes enemies other than chivalric ones: the low-class churl and the monstrous giants, thus including in his battles all possible kinds of enemies.

¹⁷The impression in medieval romance is that giants are monsters and are always the natural enemies of knights. They are classed together with animals in 'The Healing of Sir Urry', in which Sir Severause 'had never corayge nor grete luste to do batayle ayenste no man but if hit were ayenste gyauntis and ayenste dragons and wylde bestis' (p. 311).

In Tristram there are two overlapping triangles occurring within a short space. In the first, Tristram and Mark love Segwarides' wife.

. . . there befelle a jolesy and an unkyndenesse betwyxle kyng Marke and sir Trystrames, for they loved bothe one lady, and she was an erlys wyff that hyght sir Segwarydes. And this lady loved sir Trystrames passyngly well, and he loved hir agayne, for she was a passyng fayre lady and that aspyed sir Trystrames well. Than kyng Marke undirstode that and was jeluse, for kyng Marke loved hir passyngly welle.

(p. 295)

This triangle obviously prefigures the great one in which Isode is the lady. Mark and his henchmen ambush Tristram on his way to an assignation with the lady; the violence of Mark's later jealousy comes as no surprise. When Segwarides first discovers his wife's affair with Tristram he rides after him and challenges him to battle, but is soundly defeated. Both before and after the tryst with the lady Tristram is obliged to fight jealous lovers--Mark and Segwarides. Segwarides at least is fighting legitimately to avenge his loss of honour, but Mark is merely treacherous in attacking Tristram without warning at night. Besides paving the way for the central theme of Tristram, this triangle prefigures the kidnapping of Segwarides' wife by Bleoberis, when these three are brought together again, but in a slightly different pattern. Segwarides again tries to avoid dishonour and save his wife, but Bleoberis defeats him. Now however, Tristram is allied with Segwarides against the interloper and battles Bleoberis himself. This battle degenerates into a discussion of etiquette and Bleoberis is persuaded to deliver the lady to her husband. The effect of this turn of events is that Tristram battles his lady's kidnapper but loses her to her husband, who is not even present. This is an odd turn compared with the earlier situation, in which Tristram fought for the lady against both another lover and her husband. Mark's role in this second episode is an indirect one; he is responsible for allowing Bleoberis to ask a boon and then to ride off with the lady of his choice.

As Tristram rides from Mark's court to seek Bleoberis, he meets two Round Table Knights who belittle Cornish knights.

'For hit is seldom seyne,' seyde sir Sagramoure, 'that ye Cornysse knyghtes bene valyaunte men in arrys, for within thes two oures there mette with us one of your Cornysse knyghtes, and grete wordys he spake, and anone with lytyll myght he was leyde to the erthe.'

(p. 299)

He defeats them both and rides on to overtake Bleoberis, having told the two knights, Sagramour and Dodinas, 'I muste have ado wyth one of your felawys. His name is sir Bleoberys de Ganys' (p. 300). This seems to be a device of delay and suspense. It allows Tristram to wreak vicarious revenge on Bleoberis' 'felawys' and brings up the notorious cowardice of Cornish knights. This notoriety is soon echoed by Bleoberis when Tristram challenges him.

'Abyde', he seyde, 'knyght of Arthures courte! Brynge agayne that lady or delyver hir to me!'

'I woll do neyther nother,' seyde sir Bleoberys, 'for I drede no Cornysse knyght so sore that me lyste to delyver her.'

'Why,' seyde sir Trystrames, 'may nat a Cornysse knyght do as well as another knyght? Yes, the same day two knyghtes of youre courte wythin this three myle mette with me, and or ever we departed they founde a Cornysse knyght good inowe for them both.'

(p. 301)

The link between Tristram's two encounters is further strengthened by the similarity of the boasts. Sagramour and Dodinas have met a Cornish knight whom they defeated; Tristram then defeats them and boasts of it to Bleoberis. The repetition and contrast involved in this minor incident is surprisingly complex. The themes of boasting, of taunting, and of the relative prowess of Cornish and Round Table knights are interwoven like this: two Round Table knights boast to a Cornish knight of having defeated a Cornish knight; Tristram defeats them and when taunted with the reputation of Cornish knights by a Round Table knight, boasts that he has beaten two Round Table knights. The incident of two knights defeating one is repeated in reverse (and with more honour) by one knight defeating two.

Dinadan is used as a foil to Mark and also as a medium for contrasting Mark to Tristram. Although the comparisons are not accomplished inside one short episode like the other repetitions I have discussed in this section, the elements of the comparisons follow closely enough to give an unmistakable impression of deliberate dédoublement. Dinadan's reputation is established in scenes like this in 'Tristram's Madness and Exile' when Tristram suggests to Dinadan that they challenge thirty knights:

Than seyde sir Dynadan,
 'What woll ye do? Hit ys nat for us to fyght with thirty
 knyghtes, and wyte you well I woll nat thereoff! As to
 macche o knyght, two or three ys inow and they be men, but
 for to matche fiftene knyghtes, that I woll never undirtake.'
 'Py for shamel' seyde sir Trystram, 'do but youre partel'
 'Nay,' seyde sir Dynadan, 'I woll nat thereoff but iff
 ye woll lende me your shyldes. For ye bere a shyldes of
 Cornwayle, and for the cowardyse that ys named to the knyghtes
 of Cornwayle by youre shyldys ye bene ever forborne.'

(p. 377)

Dinadan accompanies Tristram in several adventures and usually complains of Tristram's foolhardiness ('But ye fare . . . as a man that were oute of hys wynde that wold caste hymselff away' [p. 379]) and professes his own disinclination to fight. However, Dinadan can rise to the occasion. When a lady asks him to avenge her honour against the infamous Breuns Sans Pity, Dinadan replies gallantly: 'Lat hym com! . . . And bycause of honoure of all women I woll do my parte' (p. 411). When fighting is unavoidable Dinadan usually acquits himself respectably. By the 'King Mark' section Dinadan is established as an amiable knight who will fight if he must but would much rather avoid conflict. Just as he has accompanied Tristram on several adventures before, he now accompanies King Mark. The relationship between Dinadan and his companion is completely reversed. Instead of being dragged into frays and generally playing Sancho Panza to Tristram's Quixote, Dinadan himself is now the brave one contrasted to the cringing Mark. Sometimes Dinadan can play both parts when he himself prefers not to fight but goads Mark to:

'Now,' seyde sir Dynadan unto kyng Marke, 'yondir ar too bretherne, that one byght Alyne an' that other byght Tryan, that woll juste with ony that passyth this passayge. Now profyr yourself,' seyde sir Dynadan unto kyng Marke, 'for ever ye be leyde to the erthe.'

(p. 432)

Finally the situation is exactly reversed and it is Dinadan who has no fear of being outnumbered and his companion who hangs back.

'Lo!' seyde sir Dynadan, 'yondir ar knyghtes arraunte that woll juste with us.'

'God forbede,' seyde kyng Marke, 'for they be six, and we but two.'

'As for that,' seyde sir Dynadan, 'lat us nat spare, for I woll assay the formyst.'

And therewith he made hym redy. Whan kyng Marke sawe hym do so, as faste as sir Dynadan rode towardis them, kyng Marke rode frowarde them with all his mayneall mayne.

(p. 436)

It ends as a joke, however, for Dinadan has recognised the six knights as Round Table friends. The abrupt revelation that the six are friendly knights has two narrative purposes. It allows Dinadan to begin a series of practical jokes on Mark and even on his six friends, from whom he conceals Mark's identity. It shows Dinadan's character to be consistent after all; he only seems to be brave enough to challenge six strange knights. Nevertheless the analogy is presented that if Dinadan is cowardly, Mark is that much more cowardly. Dinadan is to Tristram as Mark is to Dinadan.

Repetition of Situation and Theme: The Questing Beast

Any one of the several quests in Melory reflects in some way the great Quest for the Grail. There is often a search for another knight, as when Lancelot proposes this quest vow for Tristram: 'Here we ar ten knyghtes that woll swere uppon thys booke never to reste one nyght where we reste another thys twelve-month, untill that we fynde sir Trystram' (p. 401). This vow is the classic formula of the self-imposed geis.¹⁸

¹⁸Reinhard, p. 317.

The quest may also be the sort of treasure hunt that Merlin prescribes at Arthur's wedding feast (p. 76) in which something that has once been seen must be found again and returned to court. This is exactly the idea behind the Quest for the Grail. The quest for the Questing Beast is different from the various individual quests because of its continuousness. In the other quests, the knight is eventually found, or the mysterious manifestation at court is found and returned to court. The Questing Beast adventure is the only one which is so conspicuously fruitless. Certain knights--Pellinore and then Palomides--are foreordained to pursue it. After Pellinore's death the search for the Questing Beast becomes Palomides' leitmotif. Tristram sees the Questing Beast and knows that Palomides must be near:

And than sir Trystram alyght and put of his helme to drynke
of that burbely welle, and ryght so he harde and sawe the
Questynge Beste comynge towarde the welle. So whan sir
Trystram saw that beste he put on his helme, for he demed
he sholde hyre of sir Palomydes; for that beste was hys queste.
(p. 507)

Tristram has just been chasing a hart, and it is only one of the many situations which seem familiar in one way or another. This is an echo, like a DeQuincey Dream Fugue, of the scene discussed above (pp. 74-75) in which Arthur pauses at a well after chasing a hart. He sees the Questing Beast and later speaks with Pellinore, who is seeking the Beast. In both scenes it is stressed that this quest belongs to one specific person: first Pellinore and then Palomides. It is even more a personal quest than the others because of the element of destiny. No real reason is ever given for the quest of the Beast: neither of the knights has apparently seen it and vowed to find it again; they are simply perpetually searching for it. Any original meaning of the Beast as an allegorical figure¹⁹ has disappeared, but it is still symbolic in its unattainability.

¹⁹See William A. Nitze, 'The Beste Glatissant in Arthurian Romance', ZRFh, LVI (1936), pp. 409-18, especially pp. 412-13.

The solitary and personal quest of the Beast reminds one of R.W. Southern's distinction between epic and romance, for in this quest Palomides must 'seek the enemy in solitude'.²⁰ Arthur briefly tries to interfere and chase it himself (p. 34), but the quest emphatically belongs to Pellinore (or Palomides). One critic says, 'If the Questing Beast had been merely a strange creature, seen from time to time by the knights errant, much of its fascination would have been diminished . . . In the *Boron cycle* and, though to a lesser degree, in the *prose Tristan*, the Beast is part of a definite adventure. It is perpetually pursued and must be killed before the adventure is achieved.'²¹ Palomides and his quest for the Questing Beast bring up several interesting points related to the expression of personal identity and to the Quest for the Grail and even to 'Quest-ness'.²²

Several times Palomides' identity seems dependent on his quest, just as other knights are identified with their quests. The others, however, are identified mainly with past exploits (like the derisive 'Knight of the Cart'), or sometimes with future exploits ('And sir Pelleas was a worshypfull knyght, and was one of the four that encheved the Sankgreal' [p. 133]). Palomides, on the other hand, is nearly always on his quest. Unlike the other quests, which have definite beginnings and endings, the quest for the Beast seems to have neither. Palomides is always in a state of becoming, never achieving his goal. Palomides' identity is involved in his quest when, for instance, he tells a varlet to ask the lady of a castle for food: 'And yf she aske the what I am,

²⁰The Making of the Middle Ages (London, 1967), p. 233.

²¹Lynette Ross Muir, 'The Questing Beast: its Origins and Development', Orpheus, IV fasc. 1-2 (1957), p. 28.

²²The translation of 'Glatissant' involves a pun, for 'questing' may mean 'noisy'--as hounds sighting the quarry--or 'searching'--as the usual meaning of 'quest' in the *Norte Darthur*. The Questing Beast is both noisy with the yelping of hounds and symbolic of a search.

telle her that I am the knyght that folowyth the Glatysaunte Beste' (p. 440). The same episode is described to Arthur's court later, when Palomides' identification of himself by his quest is quoted to identify the unrecognised knight as Palomides (p. 451). Another time (p. 487) Palomides takes the Beast as his shield device.

Palomides' other distinguishing characteristic is that he is a Saracen, although a strangely sympathetic one. For all his supposed alien-ness, his mother lives in Britain, as the mother of any of Arthur's knights might (p. 440 and p. 451). One brother is already a Christian (p. 620). The other brother is Segwarides, who fights in Arthur's tournament in Gareth, but is in Mark's court when he quarrels with Tristram.²³ He maintains that he wants to be baptised eventually, but he never seems able to decide on the right time. One may suspect that he finds it useful to be a Saracen. Isode intercedes with Tristram to save Palomides. Says Isode: 'And yett hit were grete pyté that I sholde se sir Palomydes slayne, for well I know by that the ende be done sir Palomydes is but a dede man, bycause that he is nat crystened, and I wolde be loth that he sholde dye a Sarezen' (p. 323). He uses his lack of baptism again with Isode: 'And wete you well sir Tramtryste had grete despyte at sir Palomydes, for La Beale Isode tolde Tramtryste that Palomydes was in wyll to be crystynde for hir sake' (p. 288). Finally at the very end of Tristram Palomides consents to be baptised. He yields himself to Tristram saying, 'And thys same day have me to the nexte church, and fyrste lat me be clene confessed, and aftir that se youreselff that I be truly baptysed' (p. 622). Immediately thereafter begins the Tale of the Sankgreal, suggesting that Palomides' eventual achievement of Christianity (and subsequent pursuing of the Questing Beast [p. 623]) is related to the great Quest of the Christian knights. Even though he still quests for

²³This could be another reason for Palomides' enmity with Tristram, but as far as I know this reason is never mentioned.

the Beast, another 'quest', that is, his progress toward becoming a Christian, is resolved. The quest for the Beast implies a parallel with Palomides' progress toward Christianity, although the parallel should not be interpreted too rigidly. They are obviously not the same, for after his conversion he continues to follow the Beast. However, since the Grail Quest begins so soon afterwards, the two quests are linked together.

Palomides is not so fully occupied with this search for the Questing Beast that he cannot have other projects. Another sort of quest he pursues concurrently is his search for Tristram, whom he professes to hate above all other knights. Again and again he speaks of this feud and often claims to be looking for Tristram. This search is sometimes a vehicle for comedy, as when he is reminded by Dinadan that his warlike boasts are not matched by his valour (pp. 409-10), and when he does manage to encounter Tristram and hastily backs down from his boasts (pp. 518-19). Palomides' reconciliation with Tristram and his achievement of Christianity come at the same moment as he speaks to Tristram when the latter has knocked the sword from his hand during a battle:

'As for to do thys batayle,' seyde sir Palomydes, 'I dare ryght well ende hyt. But I have no grete luste to fyght no more, and for thys cause,' seyde sir Palomydes: 'myne offence ys to you nat so grete but that we may be fryendys, for all that I have offended ys and was for the love of La Beall Isode. And as for her, I dare say she ys pyerles of all othir ladyes, and also I profyrd her never no maner of dyshonoure, and by her I have getyn the moste parte of my worshyp. And sytthyn I had offended never as to her owne persone, and as for the offence that I have done, hyt was ayenste youre owne persone, and for that offence ye have gyvyn me thys day many sad strokys (and som I have gyffyn you agayne, and now I dare sey I folte never man of youre myght nothir so well-brethed but yf hit were sir Launcelot du Laake), wherefore I requyre you, my lorde, forgyff me all that I have offended unto you! And thys same day have me to the nexte churchke, and fyrste lat me be clene confessed, and affir that se youreself that I be truly baptyssed. And than woll we all ryde togydys unto the courte of kynge Arthure, that we may be there at the nexte hyghe feste folowynge.'

(p. 622)

This rambling and muddled speech is Palomides' farewell to his previous way of life. He has recently said, 'I have but one batayle to do, and were that onys done I wolde be baptyzed' (p. 620). It is not clear whether Palomides means that he is waiting for one specific battle or for any battle at all. The 'vow' he speaks of ('I may nat yet be crystyned for a vowe that I have made many yerys agone' [p. 620]) may mean that he has vowed to fight a certain number of battles or that he must fight a certain important battle. Tristram takes him to mean 'one more battle' and says, 'Be my hede . . . as for one batayle, thou shalt nat seke hyt longe' (p. 620). Whether Palomides has planned it that way or not, his last great battle as a Saracen is against his archenemy Tristram. This great battle, however, comes to nothing, and even the long-standing feud was apparently based on nothing. His reasoning, such as it is, is that their enmity stems from a mutual love for Isode. He has never behaved improperly to Isode and in fact owes much of his honour to her. He presumably means that his choice of such a high lady reflected honourably on him and any battles he may have won in her name would have added to his honour. The only offence Palomides has committed has been in fighting Tristram, and Tristram has defended himself well. The battle has not been decisive; therefore they may consider themselves even. Palomides' coherence completely falls to pieces at this point, for he apparently wants to convince Tristram that he (Tristram) has repaid him for any injury ('for that offence ye have gyvyn me thys day many sad strokys'), but parenthetically he undermines his argument by adding that he himself has also struck Tristram. He then goes on to a complimentary comparison of Tristram with Lancelot before he gets back to his original subject and asks Tristram's forgiveness. In spite of the great length of this speech there is an atmosphere of reality about it because of its rambling, speech-like cadences and its loose logic.

In the space of a moment Palomides has stopped being the Saracen Who Hates Tristram. Of his three original identifying motifs he has only his Questing Beast left. Perhaps because he was outside the pale of Christianity he was obliged to search for a fabulous and elusive beast. His religion (or rather his lack of Christianity), even from the most sympathetic point of view, was as fabulous as the Beast, and the Beast's elusiveness may suggest the futility of the alien religion. In the beginning, in the Old French romances, the Beast was an allegorical representation of either the Church or the Creator of the twelve dissenting tribes.²⁴ Originally the connection between the Grail Quest and the Questing Beast was very close, for Percival quested for both. This original version is reflected in The Tale of King Arthur when Pellinore tells Arthur that the quest 'shall never be encheved but by me other by my nexte kynne' (p. 34), that is, Percival. However, in the versions in which not Percival but Galahad is the supreme Grail Knight it is no longer important for Percival to seek the Questing Beast. As Percival lost importance and Palomides became more popular, the adventure of the Questing Beast was transferred to Palomides.²⁵ But although Palomides searches for the Beast, a relationship between this quest and the Grail Quest still exists. It is quite clear that for Palomides the Quest for the Beast is a substitute for the others' Grail Quest. The 'nexte hyghe feste folowyng' (p. 622) that Palomides mentions to Tristram is the one at which the Quest for the Sankgreall begins. Palomides' conversion is announced: 'And so the kynge and all the courte were ryght glad that sir Palomydes was crystynde' (p. 623). The summary of future events is significant for the place Palomides is given in it.

²⁴Nitze, 'The Baste Glatissant in Arthurian Romance', pp. 412-13.

²⁵Muir, p. 28.

And that same feste in cam sir Galahad that was son
unto sir Launcelot du Lake, and sate in the Syge Peralous.
And so therewythall they departed and dysceyvirde, all
the knyghtys of the Round Table.

And than sir Trystram returned unto Joyus Garde, and
sir Palomydes followed afftir the Questynge Beste.

(p. 623)

At exactly the same time that the rest of the Round Table is questing for the Holy Grail Palomides is back on the track of the Questing Beast. Why does Palomides not join the other Quest now that he is a Christian? Besides being foreordained to follow the Questing Beast, his quest has become so much a part of his personal identity that, especially after the loss of his other two distinguishing motifs, it is essential that he continue with it. There may also be the idea that, having been born a Saracen, he is not on a high enough level of Christianity to compete with the others in the search for the Holy Grail. While this idea is doctrinally deplorable, there is a certain poetic logic in it. The relationship between Palomides' quest and the Grail Quest is both complicated and vague. His quest is sometimes almost a comic foil to the Grail Quest, and both of them are something of a wild goose chase. Palomides' quest is less an adventure than a state of existence. In this way, Palomides' quest represents the qualities of movement, searching, and striving that are present in any Arthurian quest, but Palomides is the Continual Quester, who has as a permanent state what the other knights have as finite adventures.

Repetition of Situation and Theme: Incurable Diseases and Wounds

The motif returns again and again in Malory of someone ill or disabled who can be cured only by following a certain precise formula. Wounds may sometimes be healed by the person or weapon which has caused them. Often cures are effected by skilled ladies or holy hermits. Blood plays a remarkable part in these wounds, not only as the obvious manifestation of them but also as the cure for them. I have already discussed (above, p. 85) the lady who 'myght nat be hole but yf she had bloode in

a sylver dysshe full', and her illness and its relationship to the Mained King's cure. Tristram's trip to Ireland and later to Brittany to seek cures for his wounds have already been sketched above (p. 71), but they justify some expansion now. Of these two situations, Tristram's trip to Ireland to have Isode heal the wound inflicted by Marhalt is the more important because it is longer and because it is more vital to the narrative. The result of Tristram's voyage to Ireland is his love affair with Isode, and the rest of the story depends on this fateful meeting. The voyage to Brittany, however, could have been left out, for all the narrative weight it carries. Nothing is substantially advanced by it, for his secondary love affair with Isode le Blanche Mains is of no great importance, since he is reconciled with La Belle Isode. The main reason for having Tristram go to Brittany is to give him a new set of surroundings and new adventures. It is interesting that he arrives in Brittany during an emergency in which Earl Gripe is making war on King Howell of Brittany, whose son is injured and unable to fight. Tristram's role is that of a national champion, for he kills Earl Gripe himself (p. 330) and leads a victorious army. On his trip to Ireland to be healed Tristram also fights, but in a tournament (pp. 288-91). Here there is no such national emergency; Isode urges Tristram to enter the tournament so that he can defeat Palomides, who seems on the point of winning. The account of the tournament is a bit muddled, for the purpose of it is ostensibly to marry off the lady of the Laundes (p. 288), King Angwish's cousin. The prize, however, seems to go unclaimed, because Tristram exchanges love tokens with Isode and requires Palomides to renounce his suit. Nothing else is said of the lady who was to be the booty; she is apparently only an excuse for the tournament. This episode has the further importance of being the first conflict between Tristram and Palomides, and the basis for Palomides' grudge. Impinging on this theme is another voyage of Tristram's: that from Lioness to Cornwall to offer his services to his uncle, King Mark,

who needs a champion to fight Marhalt. This trip is inspired simply by the desire to help his uncle and the honour of Cornwall, but it is related to the two healing journeys by the pattern of fighting for his host (King Howell) or hostess (Isode).

'The Healing of Sir Urry' seems the reverse of the usual pattern, for the great prototype is the healing of the Maimed King, Pellam, by Galahad. The theme is the healing, not by superior medical wisdom, but by personal goodness. If the distinction between the qualities of Lancelot and Galahad was vague at the end of the Quest for the Holy Grail, they are defined more carefully in the episode of Sir Urry. Although Lancelot has been seen to fail in the Grail Quest because of his moral faults, he is now shown to be if not absolutely good, at least relatively good. The short, neatly self-contained story of Sir Urry presents even at the beginning an artistic background. Sir Urry received his wounds at the hands of the Spanish knight Alpheus, whom he slew in a tournament. Alpheus' mother, a sorceress, avenged her son's death by ensuring that Urry's wounds would never heal 'untyll the beste knyght of the worlde had serched hys woundis' (pp. 808-9). To complement this idea of Alpheus' mother working against Urry in revenge, it is Urry's mother who sets about finding the 'beste knyght of the worlde'. The breadth of her search is emphasised by the cosmopolitan quality of the actors: Urry is from Hungary and Alpheus is from Spain, two countries seldom if ever mentioned in other accounts of Arthurian knights, who are usually from parts of France or the British Isles. Since she has searched for seven years (a good, mystic number, corresponding to Urry's seven wounds) and since she apparently began at such a distance from the Arthurian court, the Round Table is now a last resort. Arthur decrees that the whole court will attempt to heal Sir Urry, beginning with Arthur himself. He strikes a very modest tone in insisting that he begins not because he is likely to heal Urry, but so that his example may encourage others to try. It is as though

he remembers the excellence of Galahad in the Grail Quest and the failure of all the others. He stresses that his action is only to set an example and implies no hope of curing the wounded knight.

'In good tyme,' seyde the kynge. 'And sythyn ye ar com into thys lond, ye ar ryght welcom. And wyte you welle, here shall youre son be healed and ever ony Crystyn man may heale hym. And for to gyff all othir men off worshyp a currayge, I myselff woll asay to handyll your sonne, and so shall all the kynges, dukis and erlis that ben here presente at thys tyme, nat presumyng uppon me that I am so worthy to heale youre son be my dedis, but I woll corrayge othir men of worshyp to do as I woll do.'

(pp. 809-10)

Besides this great appearance of modesty, there is considerable importance laid on the fact of Christianity. Some of the emphasis on Christianity may be only convention. When Urry's mother 'lad hym so seven yere thorow all londis crystened and never cowde fynde no knyght that myght ease her sunne' (p. 809), we may take 'all londis crystened' to be a paraphrase for 'all the known world'. However, the frequent repetition of 'crystynde' and similar words cannot be accidental. Arthur is called 'the moste man of worshyp crystynde' (p. 810), and Urry addresses him as 'my moste noble crystynd kynge' (p. 810). Although Sir Priamus is present, 'whych was crystynde by the meanys of sir Trystram' (p. 812), the converted Palomydes is not. It is not that Malory has forgotten who he is, for he is mentioned in connection with 'sir Ermynde, brother to kynge Hermaunce, for whom sir Palomydes faught at the Red Cité with two brethirn' (p. 812). In spite of the long catalogue of knights who try to heal Urry, Palomydes is not at court for this adventure. His absence suggests that he does not participate in this Christian healing for the same reason it was not fitting for him to participate in the Quest for the Grail. When Lancelot arrives at court and is required to try to heal Urry, he prays to the Trinity (p. 814), and after the successful attempt, the celebration is specifically Christian: 'Than kyng Arthure lat ravyshe prystes and clarkes in the moste devoutiste wyse to brynge in sir Urré into Carlyle with

syngyng and lovyng to God' (p. 815). Because of the themes of healing wounds and of specifically Christian chivalry, 'The Healing of Sir Urry' is linked to the Tale of the Sankgreall. It seems to be an afterthought, an echo of the principal example of the theme. With such episodes as the attempt of Balin's damsel to heal the lady who requires a dishful of blood (p. 62), there is, as we have already seen, a sense of foreshadowing or a leading up to the Grail adventure. It is an introduction of a theme which is elaborated later and becomes one of three or four great themes running throughout the work. 'The Healing of Sir Urry', on the contrary, is a faint, late antiphony to the Grail adventure, a reverberation of the theme after the main theme has been introduced and explored.²⁶ It also recalls another much earlier instance of Lancelot's healing power. In The Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake there is a prelude to both 'Sir Urry' and the Grail when Lancelot goes into the Chapel Perilous to heal a wounded knight (pp. 202 ff.).

What accounts for Lancelot's success in this endeavour after his failure to recover the Grail? The superhuman Galahad was able to heal the Maimed King. Galahad must deal with the entire machinery of a mystic Christianity, for the tools of healing are the holiest of relics.

And kynge Pellam lay so many yerys sore wounded, and
myght never be hola'tytle that Galaad the Hawte Prynce heled
hym in the queste of the Sankgreall. For in that place was
parte of the blode of oure Lorde Jesu Cryste, which Joseph
off Aramathy brought into this lande. And there hymselff
lay in that ryche bedde. And that was the spere whych Longeus
smote oure Lorde with to the herte.

(p. 64)

Lancelot must undo the work of only a human witch. The nature of their relative 'goodnesses' is explained partly by the length of time it has

²⁶A reviewer of Essays on Malory, ed. J.A.W. Bennett, agrees with Eugène Vinaver that the Urry episode does not refer directly to Lancelot's Grail failure, but, he says, Lancelot's silent prayer is more in character with the later Lancelot 'and seems likely to reflect his chastening experiences in the Quest'. (S.S. Hussey, review in Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen, CCI [1965], p. 206.)

taken to resolve these adventures. Pellam has lain the indefinite 'so many yerys sore wounded' compared with the seven years that Urry has been wounded. The Grail, brought from Jerusalem by Joseph of Arimathaea, moves about, appearing, disappearing, and reappearing like an unlaidd ghost until the coming of Galahad. In some mysterious way Galahad's achieving of the Grail adventure causes the Grail to leave the realm of Logres, never to return (p. 735). The reason given to Galahad is that 'he [the Grail] ys nat served nother worshipped to hys ryght by hem of thys londe, for they be turned to evyll lyvyng . . .' (pp. 735-36). It seems to be Galahad's perfection, however, which brings the matter to a head. Lancelot's adventure has no such beginning at the dawn of the Christian era, nor does it involve any of the imponderables of Galahad's celestial chivalry. Lancelot's healing of Urry is a self-contained incident. Nevertheless, the high emotion surrounding the procession of consecutive failures is probably as taut as anything in the Grail, partly because of its human setting, in which miracles are not expected, and partly because it is not interrupted by theological disquisitions. A miracle does happen, for the healing is basically a supernatural feat. Compared with Galahad's healing of the Maimed King, however, it is a human accomplishment. Lancelot has his limitations, but is still proved to be the best of all earthly knights. Like Gawain in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, his failure weighs more heavily upon his own conscience than upon the thoughts of the rest of the court. Lancelot's failure, like Gawain's is a natural failing, a part of the human condition, but seems the more reprehensible to Lancelot because it is his only failure.

When a wounded knight is not part of an allegorical pattern, his wounds may constitute an interesting narrative device. For a knight a wound is always evidence of an Active Life; contemplative hermits are never wounded for they do not lead strenuous lives. Wounds are a kind of concrete proof of chivalric endeavour, which are more tangible than

other results of adventure, like a reputation for bravery or even the association in the minds of others with a certain exploit. The predicament of the wounded knight during a battle is a valuable device for varying the accounts of battles. At first it may seem that it shows a certain lack of knightly prowess to be wounded, but the knight who continues to fight and overthrow his enemies even after being wounded is still braver and more exalted than one who was not wounded and fought bravely. When Bors wounds Lancelot in a tournament, Lavain helps him onto a horse. 'And then sir Launcelot gate a spare in hys honde, and there he smote sir Bors, horse and man, to the erthe; and in the same wyse he served sir Ector and sir Lyonell . . . ' (p. 762). The battle continues with Bors rehorsed and accompanied by Ector and sir Lionel:

and all they three smote with their swerdis uppon sir Lancelottis helmet. And whan he felte their buffettis, and with that hys wounde greved hym grevously, than he thought to do what he myght whyle he cowde endure. And than he gaff sir Bors such a buffette that he made hym bowghe hys hede passynge lowe; and therewithall he raced of hys helme, and myght have slayne hym

And than afterward he hurled into the thyckest prees of them alle, and dyd there the merveylost dedes of armes that ever man sawe, and ever sir Lavayne with hym. And there sir Launcelot with hys swerde smote downe and pulled downe, as the Freynsh booke seyth, no than thirty knyghtes, and the moste party were of the Table Rounde.

(p. 763)

In this tournament we have Lancelot fighting as bravely as he ever has, if not more bravely, for he has the added disadvantage of his wounds. Even at a disadvantage, Lancelot does the 'merveylost dedes of armes that ever man sawe' but little good it does his reputation, because he leaves the tournament before his identity is discovered. This turn of events present a situation of irony and plot motivation. The court's discussion of the strange knight's prowess and their concern for his safety enhance Lancelot's reputation for the reader, at least, if not for Lancelot, who does not know he is being praised, or for the court, who

do not know whom they are praising. Arthur reacts to the report that the strange knight is badly, perhaps fatally, wounded:

'Alas,' seyde kyng Arthur, 'how may thys be? Ys he so sore hurte? But what ys hys name?' seyde kyng Arthur.

'Truly,' seyde they all, 'we know nat hys name, nother frome whens he cam, nother whether he wolde.'

'Alas,' seyde the kyng, 'thys ys the warste tydyngis that cam to me thys seven yere! For I wolde nat for all the londys I welde to knowe and wyte hit were so that that noble knyght were slayne.'

'Sir, knowe ye ought of hym?' seyde they all.

'As for that,' seyde kyng Arthur, 'whether I know hym other none, ye shall nat know for me what man he ys but Allmyghty Jesu sende me good tydyngis of hym.'

And so seyde they all.

'Be my hede,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'gyff hit so be that the good knyght be so sore hurte, hit ys gret damage and pite to all thys londe, for he ys one of the nobelyst knyghtes that ever I saw in a fylde handyll speare or swerde. And iff he may be founde I shall fynde hym, for I am sure he ys nat farre frome thys contrey.'

(pp.766-67)

Both his wounds and his bravery make him a topic of conversation in the hall, and there is some irony in the fact that those who discuss the unknown knight know Lancelot very well indeed. This scene shows that Lancelot's reputation and ability do not depend entirely on his name; those who are not aware of his past exploits and accumulated reputation still recognise the intrinsic qualities of his actions. The problem of the unknown knight also provides Gawain with an excuse to begin a quest. This is perhaps more convincing than most such quests resulting from some question of identity or location. In addition to these narrative and thematic advantages of wounds, they are also a way of getting the hero off centre stage without shifting the story completely away from him. Guinevere's character is developed somewhat by this device, too, for her great jealousy of Elaine contrasts with the concern for Lancelot felt by the rest of the court. She even goes to the length of claiming to wish him dead when Bors tells her Lancelot is recuperating at the hermitage: "Fy on hym, recreayde knyght!" seyde the quene. "For wyte you well I am ryght sory and he shall have hys lyff" (p. 776).

Not long afterwards in 'The Great Tournament' Guinevere requires Lancelot to wear her sleeve, since he had worn Elaine's in the previous tournament. There is even a parallel to the wound Lancelot received as the unknown knight in 'The Fair Maid of Astolat'. Instead of recuperating at a hermitage near Winchester (p. 771) Lancelot goes before the tournament to a hermitage near Windsor (p. 783) and is wounded accidentally by a huntress in the forest. (This also reflects Tristram's hunting accident in which he is shot with an arrow [p. 579].) The wound, however, does not interfere with his performance in the tournament. Even though Guinevere warns him sternly that he must 'ryde no more in no justis nor turnementis but that youre kynnesmen may know you . . .' (p. 783), he fancifully disguises himself as a Saracen (p. 785). These parallels--Lancelot as an unknown knight wearing a lady's token, his wound, his going to a hermit--serve to connect 'The Fair Maid of Astolat' with the next tale, 'The Great Tournament'. The themes which are continued and emphasised in the latter are Guinevere's pettishness and Lancelot's preference for fighting incognito. His arrow wound is one of the parallels with the previous tale which connect the two stories.

Finally, the unusual thing about wounds is that one never knows, when a knight is wounded, what the authorial attitude will be. Wounds may be mentioned merely as part of the battle convention, as in those places where knights hack at each other for hours at a time, slicing through their opponents' armour and flesh, and no one suffers much injury. In contrast, Lancelot spends a month recovering from his wound received at the Winchester tournament (p. 774). The description of the course of his illness is extremely realistic. Lancelot rides away from the tournament with the truncheon still in his side and asks Iovain to remove it:

And therewithall he descended frome hys horse, and ryght so ded sir Lavayne; and forthwithall he drew the truncheoun oute of hys syde and gaff a grete shryche and a gresly grone, that the blood braste oute, nyghe a pynte at onys, that at the laste he sanke downe uppon hys arse and so sowned downe, pale and dedly.

(p. 764)

The minor details of Lancelot's being helped onto his horse and his blood running down as he rides add a sense of uniqueness to this description:

And than with grete payne sir Lavayne holpe hym uppon hys horse, and than they rode a grete walop togyders, and ever sir Launcelot bled, that hit ran downe to the erthe.

(p. 764)

The reality of the wound is further emphasised by Lancelot's tentative efforts at arming himself and getting back on his horse after his month's recuperation.

And so whan he was uppon hys horse he steyrred hym freyshly, and the horse was passyng lusty and frycke, because he was nat laboured of a moneth before. And than sir Launcelot bade sir Lavayne gyff hym that grete speare, and so sir Launcelot cowchyd that speare in the reeste. The courser lepte myghtyly whan he felte the spurres, and he that was uppon hym, whiche was the nobelyst horseman of the worlde, strayned hym myghtyly and stabely, and kente styll the speare in the reeste. And therewith sir Launcelot strayned hymself so straytly, with so grete fors, to gete the courser forewarde that the bottom of hys wounde braste both within and withoute, and therewithall the bloode cam oute so fyersely that he felte hymself so feble that he myght nat sitte uppon hys horse.

(p. 774)

The detail of the horse's activity after not having been exercised for a month follows naturally and logically, and Lancelot's subsequent strain proceeds logically from the situation. He then falls unconscious off the horse, and Bors, Lavain and the hermit have to carry him indoors, unarm him, and put him to bed (p. 775). His unconsciousness, unarming, and revival combine to emphasise the particular quality of this injury and the seriousness of it. Lancelot, to his great regret, is prevented from attending Arthur's tournament with the King of North Gales and must watch Bors go on without him. Wounds, as in this case, may be treated

as absolutions from responsibility (perhaps something like the themes of sleep or drunkenness in some modern literature, although Lancelot's absolution is not intentional, as the modern instances are). It is the ultimate variation on the theme of Lancelot-at-the-tournament; it is Lancelot unable to be at the tournament but still heroic. There is a kind of passive heroism present in his incapacity.

His illness serves the further narrative purpose of providing for a report of the tournament when Bors returns to Lancelot (pp. 776-77). This is a valuable device for showing the tournament and Gareth's prowess from three different angles. We have the authorial account of the tournament, given in a straightforward, objective way:

And so that day sir Gawayne ded grete dedys of armys and began first; and the herowdis nombirde that sir Gawayne smote downe twenty knyghtes. Than sir Bors de Ganys cam in the same tyme, and he was numbirde he smote downe twenty knyghtes; and therefore the pryse was gyvyn betwyxt them bothe, for they began first and lengist endured. Also sir Gareth, as the boke seyth, ded that day grete dedis of armys, for he smote downe and pulled downe thirty knyghtes; but whan he had done that dedis he taryed nat, but so departed, and therefore he loste hys pryse.

(p. 776)

When Bors goes back to Lancelot at the hermitage he tells him 'of all the justys, lyke as ye have herde' (p. 776), but his actual words are not reported. However, his report must have contained great praise for Gareth, because Lancelot's first comment suggests the tenor of what Bors must have just said.

'I mervayle,' seyde sir Launcelot, 'that sir Gareth, whan he had done such dedis of armys, that he wolde nat tarry.'

'Sir, thereof we mervayled all,' seyde sir Bors, 'for but if hit were you, other the noble knyght sir Trystram, other the good knyght sir Lamorak de Galis, I saw never knyght bere so many knyghtes and smyte downe in so litill a whyle as ded sir Gareth. And anone as he was gone we all wist nat where he becom.'

'Be my hede,' seyde sir Launcelot, 'he ys a noble knyght and a myghty man and well-brethed; and yf he were well assayed,' seyde sir Launcelot, 'I wolde deme he were good inow for any knyght that beryth the lyff. And he ys

jantill, curteyse and ryght bounteous, meke and mylde,
and in hym ys no maner of male engynne, but playne,
faythfull an trew.'

(p. 777)

The second-hand report of the tournament soon becomes a panegyric for Gareth, which strengthens the theme of Lancelot's friendship and admiration for Gareth. This scene adds its weight to the irony later when Lancelot accidentally kills Gareth. It is just as well that his wound prevents him from meeting Gareth in this tournament. This situation with its second-hand report gives Lancelot the opportunity to express an opinion about another character and gives the reader a distinct impression of Bors's modesty. In his praise of Gareth we may almost forget that Bors won the prize at the tournament, sharing it with Gawain. The combination of these four knights seems significant later when Bors sides with Lancelot against the vengeful Gawain. When Gawain demands to know why Lancelot killed Gareth, Lancelot laments the unintentional killing of his friend with: 'I wolde with as a good a wyll have slayne my nevew, sir Bors de Ganys, at that tyme' (p. 838).

To sum up, wounds may have a variety of functions in Malorian romance. When they are not cliché wounds in cliché battles, they can be devices for revealing the personality of a character. They may be seen either as obstacles for the character to struggle against or, for those around the wounded character, as an opportunity to discuss him and his misfortune. When wounds are used as repeated themes, as in the complex of themes associated with the Grail Quest, they imply a comparison of two or more situations. In the same way Tristram's voyages are connected by the common cause of seeking a cure for a wound.

Repetition of Situation and Theme: Suspicions Confirmed

Throughout Malory there is the general theme of treachery: of brother slaying brother, of adultery, of various kinds of betrayal. One theme related to this larger complex of themes is that of suspicion and the

confirming of suspicion. The culmination of these themes is the aura of suspicion (and unspoken knowledge) surrounding Lancelot and Guinevere in the last days of the Round Table. In the Tristram section within a space of some twenty-odd pages there are three instances of suspicion and confession. In an attempt to poison Tristram, his step-mother leaves poison where her children are playing. Tristram's half-brother drinks it and dies. Later she leaves a second dose of poison, but this time King Meliodas starts to drink it:

. . . and as he wolde have drunken thereof the quene aspyed hym and ran unto hym and pulde the pyse from hym sodeynly. The kynge mervayled of hir why she ded so and remembred hym suddaynly how hir son was slayne with poyson. And than he toke hir by the honde and sayde,

'Thou false traytours! Thou shalt telle me what maner of drynke this is, other ellys I shall sle the!' And therewith he pulde oute his swerde and sware a grete othe that he sholde sle hir but yf she tolde hym the trouthe.

'Al! mercy, my lorde,' she seyde, 'and I shall telle you all.' And than she tolde hym why she wolde have slayne Trystrams, because her chyldir sholde rejoyse his londe.

(p. 278)

Here the confession follows very closely on the suspicion; no sooner has the king suspected his queen of murdering their son than he extracts a confession from her. After this scene, the king and his barons condemn the queen to be burnt at the stake, but Tristram, by asking an unspecified favour of his father, tricks him into freeing the queen (p. 279). This is another thematic precursor of Guinevere's several condemnations to death and her rescues by Lancelot.

During Tristram's sojourn in Ireland he is discovered to be the knight who killed Marhalt, the Irish champion and brother of the queen. The discovery scene is set in Tristram's chamber, where 'the quene and Isode, hir daughter, romed up and downe' (p. 292) while Tristram takes a bath.

The quene behelde his swerde as hit lay uppon his bedde, and than at unhappis the quene drew oute his swerde and behylde hit a long whyle. And bothe they thought hit a

passynge fayre swerde, but within a foote and an halff of the poynte there was a grete pyese thereof outebrokyn of the edge. And when the quene had aspyed the gappe in the swerde she remembirde hir of a pyese of a swerde that was founde in the braynne-panne of sir Marhalte that was hir brother.

'Alas!' than seyde she unto hir doughter Ia Beale Isode, 'this is the same traytoure knyght that slewe my brother, thyne eme.'

(p. 292)

The queen compares the broken piece with the sword, finds that they fit, and runs with the sword upon Tristram in his bath. One of his bath attendants restrains her. A queen is involved again, but as the accuser and not the accused. Her suspicion is quickly confirmed when she compares the sword with the missing piece, but she does not speak to Tristram. She tells the king that Tristram killed Marhalt, and the 'confession' element is delivered by Tristram to the king, and not directly to his accuser. Tristram puts his case to the king ('And for the trwage of Cornwayle I fought, for myne emys sake and for the ryght of Cornwayle that ye had be possessed many yerys' [p. 293]), and the king understands the chivalric reason for Tristram's chivalric offence.

'So God me helpe!' seyde the kyng, 'I may nat sey but ye dud as a knyght sholde do and as hit was youre parte to do for your quarell, and to encrece your vorshyp as a knyght sholde do. Howbehit I may nat mayntayne you in this contrey with my worship but that I sholde displese many of my barownes and my wyff and my kynne.'

(p. 293)

Tristram is forgiven in theory, but in practice is required to leave Ireland. The question of right and wrong, expressed in terms of guilt and duty, appears again here, and becomes one of the great themes of the Morte Darthur.

Tristram is involved in still another case of discovered guilt and forced confession. After he is wounded by King Mark in an ambush, Tristram sleeps with Segwarides' wife. 'And so in hys ragynge he toke to hewe of his greve wounde that kyng Marke had greefyn hym, and so sir Trystromes blaide the over-shete and the nayther-shete, and the pylowes and the

'hede-shete' (p. 296). The lady hurries Tristram away when her husband approaches. The discovery and confession scene follow quickly:

So by than was sir Segwarydes, hir lorde, com, and whan he founde hys bedde troubled and brokyn he wente nere and loked by candyll lyght and sawe that there had leyne a wounded knyght.

'A, false traytours!' he seyde, 'why haste thou betrayde me?' And therewithall he swange oute a swerde and seyde, 'But yf thou telle me who hath bene here, now shalt thou dey!'

'A, my lorde, mercy!' seyde the lady, and helde up hir hondys, 'and sle me nat, and I shall tell you all who hath bene here.'

Than anone seyde Segwarydes, 'Sey and tell me the trouthe.'

Anone for drede she seyde, 'Here was sir Trystrames with me, and by the way, as he come to me-warde, he was sore wounded.'

(p. 296)

The familiar threat at sword-point is here, and discovery again hinges on a concrete object, the bloody bed. In the other examples it was the broken sword and the cup of poison, or more accurately, the queen's behaviour when the king is about to drink it. This scene is the more remarkable for its graphic presentation. We sense Segwarides approaching the bed by his gradual perception of what we have already been told, namely that the sheets are bloody. At first he perceives only the general effect of the bed: the rumpled appearance. The detail of the candlelight adds immeasurably to the sense of gradual discovery, for his first impression has been in dim light and his closer look is confined to the area illuminated by the candlelight. His actual perception is not relayed to us by the author, but instead his conclusion. It is a bloody bed that he sees, but the implication of it is more important than the mere fact of its existence. When Segwarides 'loked by candyll lyght' he did not see a bloody bed; rather he saw 'that there had leyne a wounded knyght'. The suspicion is instantaneous, as it is with King Meliodas and Isode's mother. In the next two paragraphs, his wrathful threat and her plea for mercy and promise to confess are neatly balanced stylis-

tically. His speech is divided into two main parts with a description of a physical action between them. "A, false traytours!" he seyde, "why haste thou betrayde me?" And therewithall he swange oute a swerde and seyde, "But yf thou telle me who hath bene here, now shalt thou dey!" It is divided further into the accusation of the first spoken part and in the second part the demand and the threat. The lady's reply copies this construction. "A, my lorde, mercy!" seyde the lady, and helde up hir hondys, "and sle me nat, and I shall tell you all who hath bene here." Her quotation too is broken up by a physical action between the two parts. His accusation and drawing of the sword are answered by her cry for mercy and throwing up the hands. His demand and threat bring corresponding replies from the lady, except that she reverses the order of the clauses, probably because 'sle me nat' is more important to her than her promise to tell about her visitor. The contrasting use of the second person singular and plural pronouns intensifies the attitudes of threat and supplication. He addresses her as 'thou' with all of its suggestion of inferiority and submissiveness; she uses 'you' to address her 'lorde'. Both quotations begin with the interjection 'A!' followed by an exclamation of address. While it would sound natural for the lady to continue with her confession, Segwarides interrupts with an unnecessary 'Sey and tell me the trouthe', which has a stylistic use in producing a stichomythic effect. The lady admits Tristram's visit and explains that he was wounded on his way to see her. This represents a kind of resolution of this idea of the bloody bed. It was first presented with Tristram's guilt, then it was the cause of Segwarides' discovery, and now it is explained in the lady's admission of guilt. The scene then continues with three lines of dialogue which complete the effect of urgency inherent in short alternating speeches:

'A, false traytours! Where is he becom?'

'Sir,' she seyde, 'he is armed and departed on horsebrake

nat yett hens halff a myle.'
 'Ya sey well', seyde Segwarydes.'

(p. 296)

The lady's addition of extra information, that is, Tristram's distance from them and his wound, suggests her terrified state of mind. When asked where Tristram is, she does not answer with a noncommittal 'North' or 'Toward Tintagel', but gives the detailed, if superfluous, information that he is armed and on horseback. Her estimate of Tristram's distance is a function of the length of time he has been gone; her helpful translation of the time into distance is a measure of her fear and submission.

This pattern of suspicion, confirmation, and revenge in Tristram is a complete pattern in itself, but it is also related to the much more sinister working out of these themes in the later sections. When Guinevere's infidelity becomes more and more acknowledged, these patterns, which are here isolated cases, become a net involving the whole Round Table society.

Repetition of Situation and Theme: The Bloody Bed

The motif of the bloody bed as incriminating evidence occurs again in 'The Knight of the Cart' when Lancelot cuts his hand on the bars of Guinevere's window. The situation is very similar to the one just described and is a direct comparison of this kind of scandal in the Tristram context and in the more important context of Lancelot and Guinevere's adultery. The immediately noticeable difference between the two situations is that in Tristram the adultery is a private matter and is a simple triangle. In 'The Knight of the Cart' the adultery is practically an international incident. A fourth party, the officious Meleagant, intrudes into the triangle to report the adultery to King Arthur. Tristram's wound, inflicted by King Mark, has only a peripheral connection with the incident, but Lancelot sustains his injury while tearing the bars from Guinevere's window. Malory emphasises these window bars more than Chrétien, who dwells more on Lancelot's sorrow as he leaves the window which he entered

so joyfully the evening before.²⁷ In Malory he attends to the very practical matter of repairing the appearance of the window: '... he toke hys leve and departed at the wyndowe, and put hit togydir as well as he myght agayne, and so departed untyll hys owne chambir' (p. 801). Lancelot's shrewd practicality extends to noticing a useful ladder and returning to it before his assignation at Guinevere's window.²⁸ Like Segwarides, who gradually perceives the incriminating blood, Meleagant is at first surprised that the queen is still in bed, and on pulling the curtain back sees the blood. A great refinement of this story is that the blood immediately suggests to Meleagant certain specific wounded knights who have been couched in the queen's chamber because of her concern for them. Segwarides can assume only that some interloper has occupied the bed. Meleagant's assumption is given in more detail than Segwarides'. 'Whan sir Mellyyagaunt aspyed that blood, than he demed in her that she was false to the kyng and that som of the wounded knyghtes had lyene by her all that nyght' (p. 802). His reaction is not given in the logical order, because the larger implication (that she was false to the king) comes before the more immediate conclusion (that some of the knights had lain with her). Meleagant seems to be hoping for the worst so that the scandal will take attention away from his own offence in kidnapping the queen. Malory soon tells us that 'sir Mellyyagaunte was passyng glad that he had the quene at suche avauntayge, for he demed by

²⁷Le Chevalier de la Charrette, ed. Mario Roques, CFMA, No. 86 (Paris, 1958), pp. 143-44.

²⁸This detail is not mentioned in the French versions, nor is the sword Lancelot takes to the tryst. In Chrétien Lancelot climbs to Guinevere's window with the help of une piece del mur that had fallen into the garden (Thomas Malory, The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, ed. Eugène Vinaver [London, 1967], III, 1609). Another critic, Robert H. Wilson, believes that the stone from the wall may have suggested a ladder to Malory, but that in Chrétien the significance of the piece del mur is that it allows Lancelot to get through the wall and into the garden, not that it helps him to reach the window. ('The Prose Lancelot in Malory', University of Texas Studies in English, XXXII [1953], pp. 5-6.)

that to hyde hys owne treson' (p. 802). It is clear that he wants to make the most of the evidence, for he concludes not just a brief encounter with one of the knights, but that some of them 'had lyene by her all that nyght'.

To complicate matters further, Lancelot returns to Guinevere's chamber during Meleagant's accusation and stoutly maintains her innocence, prompting Meleagant to challenge him to battle. Now there is none of the threatening attitude of Segwarides toward his wife, and because there is no confession the identity of the culprit remains a prime mystery. Indeed in Chrétien Guinevere tells Meleagant that she has had a nose-bleed.²⁹ She offers no excuse in Malory except to look helplessly at the blood and say that none of her wounded knights is guilty. This episode is a study in semantic abuses. Lancelot, Guinevere, and Meleagant all use technicalities to absolve themselves of secret offences. Strictly speaking, Meleagant is correct in accusing the queen of adultery and of treason to the king. He himself, however, is guilty of kidnapping the queen and later of feloniously detaining Lancelot in a dungeon. His unseemly intrusion into the queen's bedchamber must be counted against him too. When Guinevere and Lancelot swear that she has slept with none of the wounded knights, they are technically telling the truth. When Lancelot undertakes to fight for Guinevere's honour he is still able to keep his vow not to fight for wrong causes, for the charge against the queen, as stated, is false. In the end, the portentous thing is not their guilt but the fact that the façade of respectable secrecy is beginning to crack. Their danger proceeds not from their adultery but from the climate of friction in Arthur's court which causes their secret to be used against them by their enemies.

²⁹Roques, p. 146.

Repetition of Situation and Theme: Guinevere's Rescues

Meleagant's accusation of Guinevere and her subsequent rescue at the eleventh hour are part of still another series of themes. In the last two books there is a careful repetition of this theme as Lancelot saves Guinevere from the stake three times. Even before that the boy Tristram asks his father to spare the life of his step-mother, who has tried to poison him (p.279). This has little in common with Lancelot's daring physical rescues, but like the queen of Lions, Guinevere is accused of poisoning someone in 'The Poisoned Apple'. The two episodes are only superficially similar, for Tristram's step-mother is guilty of the charge. In both cases something goes wrong with the plot: when Meliodas starts to drink the poison by mistake and when the poisoned apple intended for Gawain is eaten by Patrise. Both times the queens' punishment is decreed to be burning at the stake.

Guinevere's three rescues (in the Poisoned Apple episode, after Meleagant's accusation, and after the trap laid by Aggravain) are in a very clear ascending order. The recurring pattern of accusation-condemnation-rescue seems about to be repeated on the third occasion, but the seeming familiarity is a mask for the catastrophic outcome. It is just this apparent sameness which causes the reader to be so jarred by the final absconding of the lovers and the absolute division of the court. In the first episode and again in the third Gawain's fate is involved with the queen's. The Lot-Pellinore feud is brought into 'The Poisoned Apple' at the end of the list of knights attending Guinevere's feast: '... sir Pynell le Saveoyge, whych was cosyne to sir Lancelote de Galis, the good knyght that sir Gawayne and hys brathern slew by treson' (p. 747). It is this Sir Pinel who plans to use the first to poison Gawain anonymously. He poisons several apples in the hope that Gawain, who is known to like apples, will eat one. As might be expected in such a clumsy scheme, the wrong person eats the apple. The real culprit is discovered.

only after the accusation and rescue, although Gawain knows well enough whom the apple was meant for. "My lady the quene!" seyde sir Gawayne. "Madam, wyte you that thys dynar was made for me and my felowis, for all folkes that knowith my condicion undirstonde that I love well fruyte. And now I se well I had nere be slayne. Therefore, madam, I drede me leste ye wold be shamed" (p. 747). Gawain is still the courteous knight who, for all the provocation of the attempted murder, thinks first of the queen's honour. True, it is not a completely disinterested courtesy: there is a sinister accusatory touch, but it does not compare with the outburst of Mador de la Porte, a cousin of the poisoned knight:

'Thys shall nat so be ended,' seyde sir Mador de la Porte, 'for here have I loste a full noble knyght of my bloode, and therefore uppon thys shame and dispite I wold be revenged to the utteraunce!'

And there opynly sir Mador appeled the quene of the deth of hys cousyn sir Patryse.

(p. 748)

Gawain is a chorus-figure, not personally involved in any revenge, yet ironically commenting on the situation and recognising his own danger.

In the last days of Camelot suspicion hovers in the air and is quick to fall. No sooner does Patrise fall dead from the poisoned apple than Guinevere is assumed guilty.

Than every knyght lepe frome the bourde ashamed and araged for wretche oute of hir wittis, for they wyst nat what to sey, considerynge quene Goenyver made the feste and dynar; they had all suspeccion unto hir.

(p. 747)

On the strength of this suspicion Arthur condemns Guinevere to the stake, even though he cannot fight for his own wife and he does not believe her guilty.

'And that repentith me that I may nat do batayle for my wyff, for, as I dene, thys dede com never by her. And therefor I suppose she shall nat be all distayned, but that some good knyght shall put hys body in jouperte for my quene rather than she sholde be brente in a wronge quarell.'

(p. 746)

This is Arthur at his most simple-minded. Arthur's abdication of responsibility, apparently on the grounds of being above the struggle, leaves Guinevere's rescue to Lancelot, whom she has spurned and sent away from the court. Designed to show her independence from Lancelot, the dinner results in abject dependence on a chivalric rescue. In Malory's last two books and even more noticeably in the Old French Mort Artu Guinevere again and again plays the Patient Griselda. The depiction of Guinevere's despair sometimes lays the author open to charges of sadism. In Malory there is a certain amount of grovelling and hand-wringing, but it does not compare with the prolonged anguish in the Mort Artu. For example, Guinevere is called before Arthur and the whole court to answer Mador's charges:

. . . et ele i vint moult dolente et moult corrouciee,
 quar ele set bien que ele ne trouvera chevalier qui por
 lui entre en champ, por ce que il savoient bien verai-
 ment que ele avoit ocis le chevalier. . . . Et la reïne
 vint leanz la teste bessiee; si sembloit trop bien feme
 corrouciee.

(Frappier, p. 85)

Confronted with the accusation of treason and murder, and knowing that Lancelot is not only absent from court (as he is in Malory) but also wounded, Guinevere looks hopefully about the court for alternative help.

Quant la reïne voit que cil se poroffre si hardiement
 de prover la traïson encontre tout le meilleur chevalier
 de leanz, et ele commence a regarder tout entor lui por
 savoir non se aucuns vendroit avant qui de cest apel la
 deffendist; et quant ele voit que nus de ceus de leanz
 ne s'en remuent, einz bessent les euz et escoutent, ele
 est tant esbahie et esberdue qu'ele ne set que ele puisse
 devenir ne dire ne fere, et neorquant, parmi toute cele
 engoisse et parmi cele grant poor que ele avoit, respont
 et dist: «Sire, ge vos pri que vos ne teingniez a droit
 selonc l'esgart de vostre cort.»

(Frappier, p. 86)

The king gives her forty days in which to find a champion, but this apparent generosity conceals a device for prolonging the misery of the queen. During this time there is the episode of the funeral barre of

Elaine of Astolat. There is a pleasing balance here of two victims of circumstantial evidence: Guinevere accusing Lancelot of infidelity on the strength of his wearing Elaine's token at a tournament and Mador accusing Guinevere of murder because he and the others 'avoient tuit veu apertement que ele avoit donné au chevalier le fruit dont il estoit morz' (p. 87). However, the heavy-handed emotional treatment contrasts sharply with the more dignified and objective treatment in Malory, in which the queen finds allies in Bors and the king. In Malory the politics of the situation suggest the kind of complicated web so evident later when the court disintegrates. The character of Bors is shown in some depth, as he feels some sympathy for Guinevere but resents her imperious banishment of Lancelot from court. He knows Lancelot would defend the queen if he were able to, but he thinks it is Guinevere's own fault if she now finds herself without a defender. More important for the delicate balance of power, Bors seems afraid to defend the queen for fear of insulting the large faction who believe her guilty.

'And now ye have drevyn hym oute of thys contrey by whom ye and all we were dayly worshipped by. Therefore, madame, I mervayle how ye dare for shame to requyre me to do onythyng for you, insonuche ye have enchaced oute of your courte by whom we were up borne and honoured.'

(p. 750)

Arthur comes upon them as the queen kneels to implore Bors's help:

'A, jantill knyght,' seyde the kyng, 'have mercy upon my quene, curteyse knyght, for I am now in sertayne she ys untruly defamed. And therefore, curteyse knyght,' the kyng seyde, 'promyse her to do batayle for her, I requyre you, for the love ye owghe unto sir Launcelot.'

(p. 750)

The king is here in the much more reasonable position of arranging for his wife's defence. The fact that he maintains a formal stance in the court as impartial enforcer of the law enhances the depth of his character. The division between appearances and expediency, which plagues the court, is represented in the person of the king as he works diplomatically to save the Queen while still keeping up the public impression of justice.

Arthur's speech, with its three complimentary vocatives, appeals to Bors to defend Guinevere because (1) she is the queen (2) she is innocent and (3) Lancelot would want him to. The invocation of Lancelot contributes its own irony, like Arthur's earlier remark: 'What aylith you . . . that ye can nat kepe sir Launcelot uppon youre syde?' (p. 749). We may see Arthur as an affable simpleton, but more likely he is a politique who realises that the queen's relationship with Lancelot may be used to good advantage to enable him to appear just and still to ensure the queen's rescue.

The differences in the relationship between the major characters in this scene and in the Mort Artu are striking. In the French, Mador deduces that his opponent is Lancelot because of his obvious nobility. He surrenders and tells the king that the queen's defender is Lancelot.

Et quant li rois entent que c'est Lancelos, il n'atent mie tant que il soit issuz hors del champ, einz saut avant et cort a Lancelot et l'acole tout einsi armé com il estoit; et mesire Gauvains vient avant et li deslace son hiaume. Lors poïssiez veoir entor lui si grant joie que de greigneur n'orroiz vos jamés parler. La reïne fu clamee quite de l'apel que Mador avoit fet seur li; et se ele avoit esté corrouciee vers Lancelot, ele s'en tint a fole et a nice.

(Frappier, pp. 106-7)

The queen is practically forgotten, and the king's joy at seeing Lancelot has little to do with the safety of the queen. In Malory, Lancelot is discovered to be the defending knight when, after winning the battle, he takes off his helmet to drink.

And anone as the kyng wyst that, he toke the quene in hys honde and yode unto sir Launcelot and seyde,

'Sir, grauntermercy of youre grete travayle that ye have had this day for me and for my quyene.'

'My lorde,' seyde sir Launcelot, 'wytte you well y ought of ryght ever to be in youre quarell and in my ladyes the quenys quarell to do batayle, for ye ar the man that gaff me the hygh Order of Knyghthode, and that day my lady, youre quene, ded me worshyp.'

(p. 755)

In comparison the French version seems unusually boorish, with the king falling upon the long-lost Lancelot, seemingly happier because he is back in court than because he has saved Guinevere's life. The discovery of Lancelot in Malory is less artificial than the convention of having his obvious nobility and debonereté identify him. The problem of divided loyalties is elucidated here. Lancelot owes allegiance to both Arthur and Guinevere, and his defence of the queen is also a defence of the king. As long as his private betrayal of the king remains private and unacknowledged, the public honour he wins for one of the royal pair reflects on both.

Again in 'The Knight of the Cart' Arthur seems at the mercy of his own system of justice. The ludicrous Meleagant, having kidnapped Guinevere, accuses her of adultery:

Than was the kynge and all the courte full sore abaysshed
and shamed that the quene shulde have be brente in the
defaute of sir Launcelot.

(p. 806)

The possibility of Guinevere's guilt takes precedence over Meleagant's flagrant offence of kidnapping. Justice in the abstract seems to operate independently of human personalities: Meleagant's extremely weak basis of accusation is ignored and any power Arthur might have for clemency (if not an outright rejection of the charge) is disregarded. Even after Lancelot arrives late for the battle and reveals Meleagant's treachery in detaining him, Meleagant's accusation still stands and the reaction of the court is only that 'they were all ashamed on hys [Meleagant's] behalffe' (p. 806). Lancelot's easy victory over Meleagant makes us suspect that it is this very prowess that lulls Arthur into considering accusations against the queen: whatever the charge, Guinevere will always be exonerated by Lancelot's force of arms. Arthur's blasé response to the news of Meleagant's challenge to Lancelot is:

'Be my hede,' seyde kynge Arthure, 'I am afarde sir Mellyagaunce hath charged hymselff with a grote charge. But where is sir Launcelot?' seyde the kynge.

'Sir, we wote nat where he ys, but we dene he ys ryddyn to som adventure, as he ys offtyntymes wonte to do, for he had sir Iavaynes horse.'

'Lette hym be,' seyde the kynge, 'for he woll be founden but if he be trapped wyth som treson.'

(p. 804)

The official 'sentence' never comes; instead Arthur is goaded into accepting the situation.

. . . speke we of quene Gwenyver that was brought tyll a fyre to be brente; for sir Mellyagaunce was sure, hym thought, that sir Launcelotte sholde nat be at that batayle, and therefore he ever cryed uppon sir Arthur to do hym justyse othir ellys brynge forth sir Launcelot.

(pp. 805-6)

The idiocy of this situation ('to do him justice?') does not strike one at first, but it is all patently a device for displaying Lancelot's magnificence in single combat. His late arrival begins the battle on a dramatic note, and it develops into one of Lancelot's most flamboyant fights.³⁰ Lancelot toys with his enemy, who yields and asks mercy. It is only when Lancelot offers to bind his left hand behind him and uncover his head and left side that Meleagant consents to go on with the fight. By forgoing the important defensive measures of armour and his shield (which he would have held with his left hand) Lancelot is taunting his adversary, and Meleagant, always eager to take advantage of anybody, is again shown to be a coward by fighting only on these conditions. He parries Meleagant's next stroke with his sword and delivers the death blow. Like the variation on the battle theme effected by a wound, this disarming of Lancelot shows him to be vastly superior even when at a disadvantage.

The larger implication in 'The Knight of the Cart' for Arthur's later behaviour is his passivity at Meleagant's demand for 'justice'.

³⁰K.G.T. Webster suggests that Lancelot's partial disarming must be an addition of Malory's because plate-armour did not come in until about Malory's time. In Guinevere: a Study of Her Abductions (Gilton, Mass., 1951), p. 111.

He depends on Lancelot to extricate him and Guinevere from any dispute, and he allows an outsider to intimidate him. He seems to have lost some of the control he had in 'The Poisoned Apple', when it is Arthur himself who sets the time and place of the battle and who decrees Guinevere's fate if she should have no champion. In 'The Knight of the Cart' the law of the realm is short-circuited, for Meleagant and Lancelot arrange their trial by combat without Arthur's knowledge. 'Justice', it seems, has become more an abused formality than a genuine righting of wrongs.

In 'Slander and Strife' Lancelot and Guinevere are discovered together, and the scene seems set for another condemnation and rescue like the first two. It is interesting that Malory tries to protect the lovers even to the last by his pretended uncertainty: 'And whether they were abed other at other maner of disportis, me lyste nat thereof make no mencion, for love that tyme was nat as love ys nowadayes' (p. 821).³¹ He is not so chary of the incriminating fact where Tristram and Isode are concerned, for he says matter-of-factly that they were in bed together. The taking of Tristram and Isode is a very similar scene to the later, longer, more important scene with Lancelot and Guinevere:

Than sir Trystranes used dayly and nyghtly to go to quene Isode evir whan he myght, and ever sir Andret, his cosyn, wacched hym nyght by nyght for to take hym with La Beale Isode.

And so uppon a nyght sir Andret aspyed his owre and the tyme whan sir Trystranes went to his lady. Than sir Andret gate unto hym twelve knyghtis, and at mydnyght he sette uppon sir Trystranes secretly and suddeynly. And there sir Trystranes was takyn nakyd a-bed with La Beale Isode, and so was he bounde hande and foote and kepte tyll day.

(p. 327)

³¹Eugène Vinaver points out that the lovers were specifically 'abed' in both source versions (*Works*, III, 1630). The sources, Malory felt, might 'convey the wrong idea of how lovers were expected to behave in Arthur's time'. This differs from my discussion of the 'reality of uncertainty' (above, pp. 64-70) because here the fact is known, but Malory prefers not to be explicit; in the other cases the facts are not known. This remark is nearly an occultatio, in which the fact is stated through a pretence of not knowing.

Aggravain instigates the plot against Lancelot and is one of the first³² to be killed by it, but by then he has set in motion the clockwork of dissolution. When the motives are all untangled, Arthur's nephews feel insulted on behalf of him and will not tolerate the situation to which Arthur has resigned himself in order to keep peace in the realm. (This resignation may not be so painful as one might think, for Arthur is at least as devoted to Lancelot as he is to Guinevere. The king says, 'And much more I am sorry for my good knyghtes losse than for the losse of my fayre quene; for quenys I myght have inowe, but such a felyship of good knyghtes shall never be togydres in no company' [p. 833]. It is his 'felyship' that he values most, and Lancelot is the hub of that 'felyship'.) Aggravain's words are: '. . . we know all that sir Launcelot holdith youre quene, and hath done longe, and we be your syster sunnes, we may suffir hit no lenger' (p. 819). Arthur's attitude at this point is strangely but necessarily ambivalent. When Aggravain offers to prove Lancelot's treason, Arthur answers:

'Gyff hit be so,' seyde the kynge, 'wyte you well, he ys non othir. But I wolde be lothe to begyn such a thyng but I myght have prevys of hit, for sir Launcelot ys an hardy knyght, and all ye know that he ys the beste knyght amonge us all, and but if he be takyn with the dede he wold fyght with hym that bryngith up the noyse, and I know no knyght that ys able to meech hym. Therefore, and hit be sothe as ye say, I wolde that he were takyn with the dede.'

(p. 820)

In Arthur's half-hearted acquiescence he agrees in principle but is at pains to point out the practical difficulties, apparently either in the hope of discouraging Aggravain and his brothers at the outset or in the belief that the task of catching Lancelot will be impossible. Arthur must agree with them, for he cannot ask them to keep a discreet silence.

³²Aggravain is the second killed, after Colgreant, whose armour Lancelot uses (pp. 823-24).

The first accusation of the queen was for murder considered as treason, the second for sexual treason with unspecified partners, and now for sexual treason with Lancelot. In the first two cases one champion battled with Lancelot in a public place, previously agreed upon, but now that the accusation is completely true in all respects and Lancelot is not only the champion but is implicated in the crime, fourteen knights set upon him in an ambush witnessed only by Guinevere. The attack is a perversion of the idea of single combat for the sake of justice. Arthur's weakness, seen when he allows Meleagant to demand satisfaction for an injustice that does not concern him, is again evident when he lets Aggravain plan the strategy for taking Lancelot, even to the point of telling the king when to go hunting. Later Arthur comes to depend heavily on Gawain for advice, and that suggestion of passivity and helplessness has its basis in these scenes with Meleagant and Aggravain. There is no vassal-like deference in the behaviour of Mordred and Aggravain to their king.

'My lorde,' seyde sir Aggravayne, 'ye shall ryde to-morne an-huntyng, and doute ye nat, sir launcelot woll nat go wyth you. And so when hit drawith towarde nyght ye may sende the quene worde that ye woll ly oute all that nyght, and so may ye sende for your cookis. And than, uppon payne of deth, that nyght we shall take hym wyth the quene, and we shall brynge hym unto you, quyeke or dede.'

'I woll well,' seyde the kynge. 'Than I counceyle you to take with you sure fellyshyp.'

'Sir,' seyde sir Aggravayne, 'my brothir sir Mordred and I woll take wyth us twelve knyghtes of the Rounde Table.'

'Deware,' seyde kynge Arthure, 'for I warne you, ye shall fynde hym wyght.'

'Lat us deale!' seyde sir Aggravayne and sir Mordred.

(p. 820)

Aggravain's speech contains no courteous gestures or polite rhetoric. The speech is all business-like declarative sentences with a sprinkling of imperative verbs. The two emphatic shall's--'we shall take hym . . . we shall brynge hym'--suggest Aggravain's determination. The detail of sending for the cooks adds a sense of realism and suggests the meticulousness

of Aggravain's plan. A kind of formality is achieved by the two formulae, 'uppon payne of deth' and 'guyche or dede'. The former especially sounds legalistic (sub poena mortis) and adds solemnity to Aggravain's vow. Arthur takes the indignity of this speech in stride and agrees to the plan. Lancelot's enemies are too eager for revenge for Arthur to dissuade them, and his warnings have the effect of making Aggravain's group over-prepared. The final exclamation is ambiguous. Aggravain and Mordred may be saying 'Lat us deale!' to each other, with the meaning of 'Let us begin', or they may be saying it to Arthur with the emphasis on 'us' and the sense of 'manage' in 'deale'.³³ After Arthur's two expressions of doubt, the sharp exclamation seems directed at him. Since his first lukewarm 'counceyle' is confidently answered, one expects a parallel structure in the next exchange. However, since two speakers are mentioned, it can also seem that they are speaking to each other, in which case they are not answering Arthur at all, but impatiently ignoring what he says. In either case they are disrespectful to Arthur; ignoring him at best, at worst admonishing him outright.

The plan is carried through, the trap is laid, and on the following night Lancelot tells Bors that he intends to 'speke wyth the quene'. The conversation echoes in some respects the conversation between Arthur and Aggravain. Arthur and Lancelot are the opposing protagonists in the story, and each has his advisers. Bors anticipates Aggravain's plot and warns Lancelot not to risk seeing the queen, mirroring Aggravain's speech to Arthur.

'Sir, for I drede me ever of sir Aggravayne that waytith uppon you dayly to do you shame and us all. And never gaff ny harte ayenste no goynge that ever ye wente to the quene so much as now, for I mystruste that the kyng ys oute thys nyght frome the quene bycause peradventure he hath layne som wacche for you and the quene. Therefore I drede me sore of som treson.'

³³The OED illustrates this usage with an example from another part of Malory. 'Deal v. (20) To take action, act, proceed (usually in some matter or affair). Obs. MALORY Arthur iv. xiii. Wel said syr Vwayne go on your waye and lete me dele.'

'Have ye no drede,' seyde sir Launcelot, 'for I shall go and com agayne and make no taryynge.'

'Sir,' seyde sir Bors, 'that me repentis, for I drede me sore that youre goyng thys nyght shall wratth us all.'

'Payre neweame,' seyde sir Launcelot, 'I wervayle me much why ye say thus, sytthyn the quene hath sente for me. And wyte you well, I woll nat be so much a cowarde, but she shall undirstonde I woll se her good grace.'

'God spede you well,' seyde sir Bors, 'and sende you sounde and sauff agayne!'

(p. 821)

Bors is mistaken in crediting Arthur with the plot, but he is correct that a plot exists. In contrast to Arthur's misgivings, Lancelot is full of confidence. It is the adviser, Bors, who is apprehensive and repeats his warning. The end of the conversation is a benediction compared with the impolite abruptness of Aggravain and Mordred.

Both advisers feel personally involved in the situation: the status quo damages Aggravain's honour, and a change would damage Bors's. All the larger implications for the court are underscored, for each adviser is thinking not so much of the king or Lancelot, or even of himself (selfish as Aggravain seems), but rather of his faction. Both Arthur and Lancelot are not the masters of their actions. Arthur accepts his orders meekly, agreeing to spend the night away from the castle. Lancelot must see the queen because she has sent for him and because he will not appear cowardly. It is in keeping with Lancelot's character not to allow external conditions to interfere with his proposed actions.

After the ambush the impending crisis is partly familiar and partly innovatory. Both Lancelot and Guinevere have some realisation of this difference.

'Madame, now wyte you well, all oure trew love ys brought to an ende, for now wyll kyng Arthur ever be my foo. And therefore, madam, and hit lyke you that I may have you with me, I shall save you frome all maner adventures daungers.'

'Sir, that ys nat beste,' seyde the quene, 'meseriyth, for now ye have don so much harme hit woll be beste that ye holde you styll with this. And if ye se that as to-morne they woll putte me unto dethe, than may ye rescowe me as ye thynke beste.'

(p. 824)

Lancelot's expression of their changed situation is interesting. Before he offers her his protection and companionship (presumably in another place, after they have been forced to leave the court) and therefore seemingly the continuation of their relationship as it was before, he fears 'alloure trow love ys brought to an ende'. It is a bit as though Lancelot, who since the Quest has been trying ineffectually to stop his relationship with Guinevere, hopes that this will make it possible for him to extricate himself. The queen's reply has some of the old querulousness about it, with her assertion that he has 'don so much harme'. Lancelot, too, is somewhat ungenerous later when he explains his situation to his faction.

'Wyte you well, I have bene ever syns I cam to thys courte well-wylled unto my lorde Arthur and unto my lady quene Gwenyver unto my power. And thys nyght bycause my lady the quene sente for me to speke with her, I suppose hit was made by treson; howbehit I dare largely excuse her person, natwithstondyng I was there be a forecaste nerehonde slayne but as Jesu provyded for me.'

(p. 826)

Again he uses the excuse that the queen had sent for him in the first place. He not only avoids responsibility in this way but even suggests that she was involved in the plot. This is outrageously unfair to the queen and shows Lancelot to be unpleasantly hypocritical as he falls upon the thorns of life and pretends to be noble about it. The affair is by now universally known, and Lancelot's overly-innocent insistence that he had merely gone to speak with the queen is only slightly less audacious than his slander that her request 'was made by treson'. The idea that he is in a position to 'excuse her person' is highly unchivalrous, even in the modified version of chivalry in Malory. The reference to 'Jesu' is probably not as hypocritical as it sounds to modern readers. Nevertheless, Lancelot dissimulates unnecessarily. He manages to give the impression that the ambush and his relationship with the queen are unconnected. He continues to his kinsmen:

'And therefore wyte you well, my fayre lordis, I am sure there nys but warre unto me and to myne. And for cause I have slayne thys nyght sir Aggravayne, sir Gawaynes brothir, and at the lyste involve of hys felowis, and for thys cause now am I sure of mortall warre. For thes knyghtes were sente by kynge Arthur to betray me, and therefore the kyng woll in thys hete and malice jouge the quene unto brennyng, and that may not I suffir that she shulde be brente for my sake. For and I may be harde and suffirde and so takyn, I woll feyght for the quene, that she ys a trew lady untill her lorde. But the kyng in hys hete, I drede, woll not take me as I ought to be takyn.'

(p. 826)

The immediate cause of the war to come is Lancelot's slaying of Aggravain and his twelve companions. He seems to say that Arthur will probably condemn the queen to death out of pique at the failure of his plot against Lancelot. Here he accuses Arthur of gross injustice, not only in sending knights against him but in using the queen for revenge. In being 'brente for [his] sake' Guinevere would die not because they have committed adultery but because Lancelot has killed some of Arthur's knights and kinsmen. But Lancelot's position seems more than ever a pretence when he vows to 'feyght for the quene, that she ys a trew lady untill her lorde'. From what he has said before, her fidelity is not in question. It sounds like a kind of slip, in which Lancelot drops the pretence for a moment and recognises that the queen will be executed for adultery. Or it may be a suggestion that Arthur, wanting to burn the queen in his 'hete and malice' after the failure of his plot, will accuse her of not being a 'trew lady untill her lorde'. The king, he says, will misunderstand his motives in protecting the queen. Exactly what those motives are remain vague in spite of Lancelot's lengthy explanation.³⁴ His followers take up his allegation that the queen will be burned for his sake and concur that he should rescue her and uphold his and Guinevere's

³⁴The earliest reference given under this sense of the verb 'to take' in the OED (46.b 'To apprehend the meaning of, understand [a person, i.e. what he says]') is forty years later than Malory. It reads: '1513 DOUGLAS Aeneis I. Erol. 313 quha takis me nocht, go quhair thair haue ado'. However, the last two sentences of the above passage both offer excellent examples of this sense of 'to take'.

honour. Bors skirts the issue by saying: 'Insomuch as ye were takyn with her, whether ye ded ryght othir wronge, hit ys now youre parte to holde wyth the quene . . . ' (p. 827). By concentrating on their plans for future action and the necessity of upholding their honour, Lancelot and his kinsmen conveniently ignore the cause of the friction.

Meanwhile, Arthur and his group discuss their course of action, relying, like the others, on a certain amount of vagueness to disguise their motives. Arthur, upon hearing of the night's battle says simply that he regrets the split in the court. "And now hit ys fallen so," seyde the kynge, "that I may nat with my worshyp but my quene muste suffir dethe," and was sore amoved' (p. 829). This does not follow very well from the premise that the court is split, and seems too facile, conforming as it does to Lancelot's prediction. Malory's explanation of legal procedures in 'tho dayes' is a study in imprecision.

. . . whatsomever they were, of what astate or degré, if they were founden gylty of treson there shuld be none other remedy but deth, and othir the menour other the takynge wyth the dede shulde be causer of their hasty jougement. And ryght so was hit ordayned for quene Gwenyver: bycause sir Mordred was ascaped sore wounded, and the dethe of thirtene knyghtes of the Rounde Table, thes previs and experyenses caused kynge Arthur to commaunde the quene to the fyre and there to be brente.
(p. 829)

Malory's logic is no better than Arthur's. The offence is the death of the knights and not especially the fact that Lancelot and Guinevere were found together. However, after this has apparently been established, Gawain broaches the subject of the adultery. He suggests moderation and delay, because:

' . . . thoughe hyt were so that sir Launcelot were founde in the quenys chambir, yet hit myght be so that he can thydir for none evyll. For ye know, my lorde,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'that my lady the quene hath oftyntynges ben gretely beholdyn unto sir Launcelot, more than to any othir knyght; for oftyntynges he hath saved her lyff and done batayle for her whan all the courte refused the quene. And peradventure she sante for hym for goodness

and for none evyll, to rewarde hym for his good dedys that he had done to her in tymes past. And peradventure my lady the quene sente for hym to that entente, that sir Launcelot sholde a con prevaly to her, wenyng that hyt had be beste in eschewyng of slaundir; for oftyntymys we do many thynges that we wene for the beste be, and yet peradventure hit turnyth to the warste.'

(p. 829)

The repetition of such words as 'myght' and 'peradventure' and even 'oftyntymes' suggests that Gawain's surmises are more nearly wishful thinking. It is the very preciseness of his conjecture that is suspect. The two 'oftyntymes' in one sentence carry a suggestion of an attempt to discover a respectable precedent for Lancelot's behaviour. Gawain even has an explanation for the secrecy of the rendezvous: the queen wanted to avoid gossip. They meant well, says Gawain, and he invents a set of circumstances to absolve them, but his care to account for all the details simply adds to the impression that Gawain himself is not convinced of the innocence of the pair. Indeed, there is already some doubt in the reader's mind because of Malory's studied vagueness, but the doubt arising from Gawain's attitude has precisely the opposite cause. Gawain seems so anxious for his speech to ring true that it sounds false.

To finish his argument Gawain reassures Arthur that the queen is faithful and reminds him that an accusation would be pointless, for Lancelot would protect the queen and 'make hit good uppon any knyght lyvyng' (p. 829). The king's surprising reply is:

'That I beleve well,' seyde kyng Arthur, 'but I woll nat that way worke with sir Launcelot, for he trustyth so much uppon his hondis and his myght that he doutyth no man. And therefore for my quene he shall nevermore fyght, for she shall have the law. And if I may gate sir Launcelot, wyte you well he shall have as shrewfull a dothe.'

(p. 830)

The irony is that the king himself has often relied on Lancelot to save the queen. Arthur's attitude has changed radically since the time when he could allow Lancelot to defend the queen's honour against the accusations of Meleagant and watch benignly, certain that his façade of even-

handed justice would not jeopardise the queen. Now the balance is ruined and Arthur's resentment comes to the surface. His uncompromising opposition to Lancelot is in strange contrast to his attitude of only the day before. However, the remarks that seemed ambiguous then, like: 'Than I counceyle you to take with you sure felyshyp' (p. 820), were perhaps worth their face value after all. If at that time Arthur really was undecided, then we are witnessing the beginning of his resolve. The extremeness of his determination, following much hesitation and indecision, suggests intriguingly that Arthur has entertained these feelings against Lancelot for some time. This throws some light on his character in retrospect and indicates a certain emotional tension underlying his seeming good humour on the earlier occasions when Lancelot rescued Guinevere. Arthur's savage reversal ('And if I may gete sir Launcelot, wyte you well he shall have as shamefull a dethe') becomes an example for Gawain to follow later. Gawain, however, turns against Lancelot as an immediate result of the murders of his brothers, Gareth and Gaheris. Gawain's wrath seems not to have smouldered, for his outburst comes just after Arthur tells him of the killing: "'My kynge, my lorde, and myne uncle," seyde sir Gawayne, "wyte you well, now I shall make you a promyse whych I shall holde by my knyghthode, that frome thys day forewarde I shall never fayle sir Launcelot untyll that one of us have slayne that othir"' (p. 835). Arthur's behaviour is still more complex. During the Morte Darthur he has first suspected and then known of the adultery; he has also valued Lancelot as the finest knight of the court. We know that his final relentlessness comes as the end of a long accumulation. Gawain's revenge is all the more terrible for having been precipitated so abruptly and so soon after he tried to resolve the court's dissension with his none too convincing re-creating of Guinevere's invitation to Lancelot.

As at the door of the queen's chamber, Lancelot fights off a throng of knights to rescue Guinevere from the stake. This fight is a repetition

of the earlier one, in which Lancelot is pitted against a group of enemies, but this time it is Lancelot who has the advantage of weapons, while most of his opponents are unarmed. Lancelot, furthermore, swoops on his enemies by surprise, imitating in reverse the earlier ambush. This rescue is an act of outlawry in sharp contrast to the previous rescues, in which Lancelot has defended the queen against a specific champion according to a legal code. Now instead of presenting her, defended and saved, to a grateful Arthur, Lancelot carries her away to Joyous Gard, following Tristram's precedent and leaving Arthur to make the next move. The single-battle motif comes later when Gawain challenges Lancelot, but this combat has little to do with Guinevere, since it stems from the murder of Gawain's brothers. In the whole episode of Guinevere's third rescue, the role of Guinevere herself remains vague. She is only the catalyst that brings out into the open the tensions that existed before.

In the series of three rescues Guinevere becomes increasingly less important as the circumstances become more complex. At first, accused of poisoning Patrise, Guinevere is in a relatively simple situation: her accuser, Mador, genuinely believes she is guilty, as do the other witnesses. The motives of some of the characters are complex, however, as when Bors does not want to fight for the queen because of her treatment of Lancelot and because of Bors's loyalty to the court faction which believes the queen guilty. The murderer's motive stems from the Lot-Pellinore feud. The second episode has an accuser who distracts the court to cover his own kidnapping offence. Here there is a climate of half-truths as Lancelot defends the technically innocent queen. The machinery of justice becomes increasingly ineffective and corrupt, and by the third episode anarchy exists in the persons of Aggravain and his ambush party. Now whether the queen is believed guilty or not, there are other overriding considerations, like Arthur's kinsmen's resentment of Lancelot's affair with the queen and the unstable détente between the kinsmen of Lancelot and Gawain (or Arthur).

'Forks': Conflict of Duties

Some dramatic tension is necessary in a prolonged narrative, and it may often be lacking in seemingly motiveless challenges and battles. A geis device (discussed above, pp. 83-84 and 93), usually self-imposed, and the closely-related device of the pledge to grant an un-named boon may be used to give shape and tension to events. Both of these expedients may force a character to follow a specific course of action. The most frequent situation in which a character is required to make a decision is the fork in the road, with all of its symbolic associations. Even that situation hardly calls for a decision, for the character nearly always chooses the right-hand path, again for symbolic reasons. For purposes of characterisation, the most important scenes are those in which a real choice is necessary. There are two main kinds of choice in the Arthurian world: a decision of priority and a decision between two equally bad options. In the first case there are two possible courses of action, both of which should be followed, and the problem for the knight is to decide in which order to do them. In the other, the knight must choose one of two unpleasant eventualities, but not both.

The most obvious example of the priority problem is Pellinore's neglect of the weeping damsel who later kills herself. Pellinore is searching for a lady and a knight whom he has been required to find by Merlin (p. 76). On the way, in a typical, serenely vague romance setting, he meets a lady.

And as he rode in a foreyste he saw in a valey a damesell sitte by a well and a wounded knyght in her armys, and kyng Pellynor salewed hir. And whan she was ware of hym, she cryed on lowde and seyde, 'Helpe me, knyght, for Jesuys sake!' But kyng Pellynore wolde nat tarry, he was so egir in hys queste; and ever she cryed an hondred tymes afftir helpe. Whan she saw he wolde nat abyde, she prayde unto God to sende hym as much nede of helpe as she had, and that he myght feeles hit or he deyed. So, as the booke tellith, the knyght there dyed that was wounded, wherefore for pure sorow the lady slew hirselff with hys swerde.

(pp. 85-86)

We do not learn anything of Pellinore's decision-making, except that he rides on out of eagerness 'in hys queste'. The scene is portrayed more from the lady's point of view than from Pellinore's, for it gives the lady's prayer and later events---the knight's death and her suicide---which Pellinore does not see. We do know that he stopped, or at least paused, because he 'salewed' the lady, and at this time he presumably made his choice. We hear nothing else about this episode until Pellinore accomplishes his quest and is on the way back to Camelot. Then, like the other side of parentheses enclosing his quest, the well and the grisly remains of the couple are on Pellinore's return route. Pellinore is moved at the sight,

wherefore he made grete sorow and wepte passyng sore,
and seyde,

'Alas! hir lyff myght I have saved, but I was ferse
in my queste that I wolde nat abyde.'

'Wherefore make ye such doole?' seyde the lady.

'I wote nat,' seyde kynge Pellinore, 'but my herte
rwyth sore of the deth of hir that lyeth yondir, for she
was a passyng fayre lady, and a yonge.'

(p. 90)

The order of these sentences is not very logical, because Pellinore seems to have answered the lady's question before she asks it. However, the lady's question allows him to reiterate his sorrow and establish firmly his sense of regret. He arrives at court:

And there he was made to swere uppon the four Evangelistes
to telle the trouthe of hys queste frome the one ende to
that other.

'A, kynge Pellynor,' seyde quene Gwennyver, 'ye were
gretly to blame that ye saved nat thys ladyes lyff.'

'Madam,' seyde kynge Pellynore, 'ye were gretely
to blame and ye wolde nat save youre owne lyff and ye
myght. But, salf youre displesure, I was so furyous in
my queste that I wolde nat abyde, and that repentis me
and shall do dayes of my lyff.'

(p. 90)

The quest he started on is supplanted in importance by the casual adventure of the suicide. This idea is forcefully expressed by the transition from Pellinore's promise to tell of his adventure to Guinevere's response.

The abruptness makes her reaction seem immediate and shows that the salient part of the whole adventure was the encounter with the weeping damsel. Pellinore's state of mind is more complex than that of the usual romance character. He deeply regrets that he did not stop and help the lady and so prevent her from committing suicide, but when reproached for his neglect; he maintains his innocence. He is convinced that he did not do wrong (the suicide's death is her own fault), but he regrets that he did not stop.³⁵

Arthur is given a clear choice of action when he finds himself transported to a dungeon by Morgan le Fay's magic. His sudden captor is sir Damas, who needs a champion to fight his brother, the virtuous Outlake. Damas, as wicked as his brother is good, is reduced to seizing any knight errant who strays into his grasp, in the hope of coercing him to be his champion. Arthur and his companions in the dungeon are all in this predicament, and the others have all preferred to stay in captivity rather than to fight for the despised Damas. A damsel comes to Arthur in prison.

'Sir,' seyde she, 'and ye woll fyght for my lorde ye shall be delyverde oute of preson, and ellys ye ascape never with the lyff.'

'Now,' seyde Arthure, 'that is harde. Yet had I lever fyght with a knyght than to dey in preson. Wyth this,' seyde Arthure, 'I may be delyverde and all thes presoners, I woll do the batayle.'

(pp. 100-1)

First the damsel and then sir Damas agree to this proposal, and Arthur does battle for him. If he had agreed to fight only for his own freedom, his choice might be open to question, but he selflessly bargains for the freedom of the other prisoners. Free will only appears to be an element in this tale, for most of it is controlled by supernatural forces. The

³⁵I have discussed this scene above, pp. 82-83. Also see R.T. Davies, 'Was Pellynor Unworthy?' *NQ*, CCII (1957), p. 370. Davies argues that Pellinore was not unchivalrous not to take the blame for the lady's suicide.

battle between Arthur and Accolon (who takes Outlake's place) has been elaborately arranged by Morgan, there is sleight-of-hand with Excalibur and its magic scabbard, and the Damsel of the Lake intervenes on Arthur's behalf. Therefore, this choice is nearly the only piece of free will in the story. Damas' agreement to free all the other prisoners seems to be a measure of his desperation for a champion. For more than eight years he has tried to find a willing champion with no success; his prisoners not only refuse to fight but are too weak from hunger to fight anyway, and eighteen have died. On another occasion, however, Lancelot decides on the opposite course of action. When he is given the choice of staying in prison or becoming the paramour of the queens who have captured him, he chooses prison (p. 184).

The call of duty leads Dinadan into a conflict with reason; he, like Arthur, is obliged to defend a knight whom he dislikes. It is honour, rather than coercion, that compels him to fight. Dinadan and King Mark casually fall in together in the course of their adventuring. It is only later that Dinadan discovers the identity of his companion, but he knows from the beginning that he is a particularly inept and unworthy knight. When Berluse challenges Mark, Dinadan steps in:

'Sir knyght,' seyde sir Dynadan, 'I counceyle you as at this tyme medyll nat wyth hym, for he is rydyng to kyng Arthure. And bycause I promysed to conduyte hym to my lorde kyng Arthure, nedis muste I take a parte wyth hym; howbeit I love nat his condision, and fayne I wolde be from hym.'

'Well, sir Dynadan,' seyde sir Berluse, 'me repentys that ye woll take party with hym, but now do youre beste!'

(pp. 433-34)

Dinadan makes no secret of his distaste, but proceeds to fight bravely for Mark. He does most of the fighting, but in the end he has to protect Berluse from Mark: 'And had nat sir Dynadan bene, kyng Marke wolde have slayne hym; and so sir Dynadan rescowed hym of his lyff, for this kyng Marke was but a murtherer' (p. 434). Dinadan may feel called upon to do unpleasant things out of a sense of duty, but he does not lose control

of the situation. Mark must be defended, as a guest in the realm, but others must also be protected from Mark. Dinadan's sense of fair play is presented concisely and with enough complexity to give a convincing impression of human decision-making. The complexity lies in the presentation of a motive (duty of safe conduct) and exceptions or variations to it (curbing Mark's unscrupulousness).

Lamerok chooses between two undesirable possibilities when he has Morgan's magic horn re-routed to Mark's court instead of allowing it to go to Arthur's, where Morgan originally sent it (pp. 326-27). He does this apparently for two reasons. The immediate motive is to avenge himself on Tristram, with whom he has just quarrelled. Ladies unfaithful to their husbands cannot drink from the horn without spilling the drink; wherever the horn goes there will be strife. Later he gives a reason which may also have been part of the immediate reason or only a general afterthought. Lamerok explains his action to Tristram:

'Well,' seyde he, 'and hit were to do agayne, so wolde I do, for I had lever stryff and debate felle in kyng Markys courte rether than in kynge Arthurs courte, for the honour of bothe courtes be nat lyke.'

(p. 334)

Faced with two unfortunate alternatives, Lamerok chooses the lesser of the two evils, that is, to shame the lesser of the two courts. The excuse is now a bit lame, for now that he is talking to Tristram he does not give the reason he expressed at the time of the event. The second reason may have more to do with his reconciliation with Tristram than with his real reason for intercepting the drinking horn. The complexity of Lamerok's motives is enhanced by this uncertainty. Malory leaves us unsure of which reason is more important or how much influence Tristram's presence has on his second reason. Lamerok seems to be sincere in his apology to Tristram: 'And for your curtesy and jantylnes I shewed you unkyndnesse, and that now me repentyth' (p. 334). He seems sincere

because he has candidly confessed that he would still do it again if he had another chance; he therefore seems not to be lying about his motives to gain favour with Tristram.

Tristram has his chance to make a decision when his mistress, the wife of Segwarides, is kidnapped by Bleoberis. He does not follow immediately to rescue her, and when bitterly reproached with such unchivalrous behaviour by another lady of the court, Tristram has a well-reasoned reply for her:

'Fayre lady, hit is nat my parte to have ado in suche maters whyle her lorde and husbonde ys presente here. And yf so be that hir lorde had nat bene here in this courte, than for the worshyp of this courte peraventure I wold have bene hir champion. And yf so be sir Segwarydes spede nat well, hit may happyn that I wold speke with that good knyght or ever he passe far fro this contrey.'

(p. 298)

Tristram has not been mentioned during the scene of Bleoberis' appearance at court, and so we have heard nothing of his decision before. This implication of 'offstage' action contributes to a sense of texture in the narrative. Tristram's decision is complex in that it is based on certain chivalric considerations: that the lady's husband takes precedence in a rescue attempt and that the lover is entitled to try only if the husband fails. Any decision not to take immediate action is out of the ordinary in romance, as is a plan for alternative action. When Segwarides' squires soon return with the news that Segwarides has been badly beaten, we know that Tristram will take up the rescue attempt. By knowing beforehand what he plans to do if Segwarides fails, we have the impression of knowing Tristram's unspoken thoughts when the squires return. But for all of Tristram's thoughtful plans, he is rebuked by the lady he goes to rescue (p. 303). Segwarides' wife expected him to come immediately without allowing her husband the first attempt and is irate at his delay. The emphasis is clearly on courtly protocol and not on rescuing the lady. Bleoberis is not considered much of a threat. He has been welcomed at

King Mark's court and has carried off Segwarides' wife openly after having been granted a boon. This provocation is no more than a variation on the theme of knights challenging one another in the forest. It appears that Bleoberis (a good knight of the Round Table, who therefore does not intend to harm the lady) has staged this abduction to force someone to challenge him to battle. His disinterest in the affair is evident when he sides with the lady against Tristram in the ensuing dispute over the etiquette of the situation.

In various ways in Malory the theory and practice of chivalry are at odds: Tristram and Segwarides' wife argue about the theory, but even when people agree about the theory they may be unable for practical reasons to act according to it. King Angwish admits that Tristram has done right in killing Marhalt, but Marhalt unfortunately was his brother-in-law:

'I may nat sey but ye dud as a knyght sholde do and as hit was youre parte to do for your quarell, and to encrece your worshyp as a knyght sholde do. Howbehit I may nat mayntayne you in this contrey with my worship but that I sholde displese many of my barownes and my wyff and my kynne.'

(p. 293)

The practical considerations of the court outweigh the theoretical virtue of Tristram's actions. The most frequent example of this problem is the less than valorous knight who retreats even when he has a good cause for fighting. Segwarides finds it very awkward to be on bad terms with Tristram, who leaves him for dead after having smitten him 'thorow the waste of the body' (p. 297). Segwarides' honour remains unavenged after Tristram's affair with his wife, but he lets the matter drop.

And thus hit paste on many wykes and dayes, and all was forgyffyn and forgetyn, for sir Segwarydes durste nat have ado with sir Trystrames because of his noble proves, and also because he was newew unto kynge Marke. Therefore he lette hit overslyppe, for he that hath a prevy hurte is loth to have a shame outwarde.

(p. 297)

The gnomie statement sums up a central problem in romance, and one with which Arthur himself contends. Immediately after this setback, Segwarides is defeated while trying to defend his wife against Bleoberis (above, p. 142). In the end he gets his wife back, but only because of a deadlock between Tristram and Bleoberis. Some time later, there is still a theoretical feud between Segwarides and Tristram, but when they meet on the hostile Ile of Servage their knightly brotherhood and practical necessity over-rule the friction between them.

'Sir,' seyde sir Segwarydes, 'I know you well for sir Trystrames de Lyones, the man in the worlde that I have moste cause to hate, bycause ye departed the love betwene me and my wyff. But as for that,' seyde sir Segwarydes, 'I woll never hate a noble knyght for a lyght lady, and therefore I pray you to be my frende, and I woll be yourys unto my power. For wete you well ye ar harde bestadde in this valey, and we shall have inowe ado ayther to succoure other.'

(pp. 332-33)

In a way there is nothing exceptional in this reconciliation between two knights. Perhaps it is a measure of Tristram's nobility that even his enemies are drawn to him. Reasonable as this alliance is, it is a compromise with the ideal, for Segwarides should try to avenge his dishonour. Tristram's prowess and the problems of the moment, however, make him abandon the ideal course. Another factor in his decision is the relative importance of knightly brotherhood and the love of a lady; the noble brotherhood comes emphatically first. Segwarides' appearance here is mainly in the cause of exposition, for he drops out of the story immediately and serves only to warn Tristram of the danger on the island and to introduce him to a lady who adds more warnings. The action of the tale concerns mainly Tristram and Lamerok, and Segwarides' small part is not essential.

One difficulty of chivalric theory is the problem of directing revenge to only one person and so not involving some innocent bystander who then mounts a counter-revenge. This impossibility of acting within

a vacuum is articulated by Lancelot when he sees Palomides challenge Arthur after the latter has addressed Isode in what seems to Palomides an uncourteous way. Tristram is also present.

'I am lothe to have ado wyth yondir knyght, and nat for his owne sake, but for sir Trystrams. And of one thyng I am sure of hym: yf I smyte downe sir Palomydes I muste have ado wyth sir Trystram, and that were to muche to macche them bothe for me alone, for they ar two noble knyghtes. Natwythstondyng, whethir I lyve or dye, nedys muste I revenge my lorde Arthure, and so I woll, whatsomever befall me.'

(pp. 550-1)

The danger of offending Tristram is not enough to outweigh the obligations of duty, and Lancelot challenges Palomides, whom he unhorses. Tristram accordingly enters the fray.

'Sir knyght, kepe the! for I muste juste with the.'
'As for to juste wyth me,' seyde sir Launcelot, 'I woll nat fayle you for no drede that I have of you. But I am lothe to have ado wyth you and I myght chose, for I woll that ye wyte that I muste revenge my speciall lorde and my moste bedrad frynde that was unhorsed unwarely and unknyghtly. And therefore, sir, thoughe I revenge that falle, take ye no displeasure, for he is to me suche a frynde that I may nat se hym shamed.'

(p. 551)

Tristram understands, and the hostilities are at an end. The chivalric obligations seem more artificial as they become more removed from the first action: Palomides' challenge to Arthur. A battle between Tristram and Lancelot would be at three removes from the original quarrel, but it is exactly this absurdity that is behind the Lot-Pellinore feud and the final dissolution of the Round Table.

Probably the most intricate problem of this kind is the imbroglio in 'The Knight with the Two Swords'. Balin rises in the estimation of the court when he wins the magic sword brought by a damsel sent by 'the grete Lady Lyle of Avilion' (p. 45). As Balin is about to set out on an adventure, the Lady of the Lake arrives at court to ask the boon promised her when she gave Excalibur to Arthur. The evocation of that gift of a magic sword nicely counterbalances Balin's new sword. If 'Lady Lyle of

Avilion' and the 'Lady of the Lake' sound as though they may be the same person, they are not, for the Lady of the Lake would like both Balin and the damsel killed. Balin already knows the Lady of the Lake 'which by hir meanys had slayne hys modir' (p. 49) and kills her for that reason and because she has asked Arthur for his head. Balin seems to have some justification for striking off her head, if she has killed his mother, but Arthur reacts differently.

'Alas, for shame!' seyde the kynge. 'Why have ye do so? Ye have shamed me and all my courte, for thys lady was a lady that I was much beholdynge to, and hyder she com undir my sauffconduyghte. Therefore I shall never forgyff you that trespasse.'

(p. 49)

Arthur banishes him from court not entirely because he killed the lady, but because he killed her there in Arthur's court. Even Balin's squire reproaches him with having offended Arthur. Balin's revenge on the lady has had a bad side-effect, but he has a plan for putting it right.

... 'Iwoll hyghe me in all the haste that I may to mete with kyng Royns and destroy hym, othir ellis to dye therefore. And iff hit may happe me to wyne hym, than woll kynge Arthure be my good frende.'

(p. 49)

Roins has recently invaded Arthur's land. Balin by now has enemies for two reasons: he has won a sword reserved for a noble knight and he has shamed the court by killing the Lady of the Lake. Lanceor, who is jealous of Balin, asks Arthur's permission to avenge this dishonour. What began as repayment for Balin's dishonour has become dishonour for Arthur: a self-perpetuating series of conflicts. Merlin now enters with exposition about the damsel from Lady Lyle: her brother slew her lover, and she appealed to Lady Lyle to help her get revenge. There is a lapse in the logic here, for the Lady gives the damsel the sword, which the damsel gives to Balin, with which he is fated to kill his brother. Unless the damsel, Balin and Balan are siblings, the whole explanation is nonsense. What implication there is in Merlin's speech of their being brothers and

sister is uncharacteristically subtle; Merlin's explicit exposition usually leaves little to be surmised. It is clear, at least, that the damsel's gift of the sword stems from some sort of revenge plot.

Lanceor overtakes Balin and challenges him on behalf of Arthur. Balin points out the absurdity of Lanceor's challenge ('And youre quarell ys full symple,' seyde Balyne, 'unto me; for the lady that ys dede dud to me grate damage . . .' [p. 51]), but they fight anyway, and Lanceor is killed. Balin has unwillingly worsened his position in two ways. Arthur will be even more irate at this second offence against him, and Lanceor's lady rides up suddenly to mourn her lover's death and to kill herself. Balin is in much the same dilemma that Pellinore was when he was responsible for, or at least did not prevent, a lady's suicide. There is a considerable pause in the action while the foregoing events are recounted three times: first to Balan, who makes his first appearance here, then to a dwarf from Camelot, and then to King Mark. Balan is sorry for the killings because his brother regrets them, but he accepts the situation fatalistically ('But ye must take the adventure that God woll ordayne you' [p. 52]). He offers to join Balin in his challenge to King Roins, and as they are about to ride off, the dwarf stops them. We are forced to consider the scene again from the point of view of the newly arrived dwarf. There are two bodies on the ground. Balin describes what happened, and the dwarf reminds him of the revenge that will surely follow.

'Alas!' seyde the dwarff, 'thou hast done grate damage unto thyselff. For thys knyght that ys here dede was one of the moste valyauntis men that lyved. And truste well, Balyne, the kynne of thys knyght woll chase you thorow the worlde tyll they have slayne you.'

(p. 53)

In 'The Knight with the Two Swords' there seems to be no action without a reaction: no battle without its revenge. Finally King Mark rides up and arranges for a properly inscribed tomb. The place of battle and burial is at once an anonymous, isolated spot ('on a mowntayne' [p. 51])

and an increasingly crowded crossroads. The importance of this scene is emphasised by the drawn-out series of encounters. Balin and Lancelot meet; the lady rides up and kills herself; Balin next approaches; then the dwarf; finally Merlin. The successive explanations focus more attention on the situation, and serve to mark time, making the narrative hover over the battle (and its aftermath) between Balin and Lancelot. The ceremonious burial is not accorded to every dead knight and lady, and Merlin's attention to the incident marks it as an important event. The battle place, later such a meeting place, is to be still more important, for it is where a battle will take place between Tristram and Lancelot; the tomb, besides commemorating the lovers, marks this future event when Merlin adds the names of Tristram and Lancelot in gold. This spot is a point of intersection in both space and time. Balin's negligence in not preventing the lady's suicide is to have disastrous consequences, according to Merlin.

'Me repentis hit,' seyde Merlion; 'because of the dethe
of that lady thou shalt stryke a stroke moste dolerous that
ever man stroke, excepte the stroke of oure Lorde Jesu
Cryste.

(p. 54)

The Dolorous Stroke comes as the result of another revenge intrigue. Balin kills Garlon in Pellam's castle to avenge the deaths of two of his companions, and in the ensuing counter-battle with Pellam, Balin delivers the Dolorous Stroke, leaving Pellam wounded until Galahad cures him miraculously. The intricate pattern of revenge and counter-revenge of which this book is made up, is evident even in the story of Balin's host. Two of Balin's companions have been killed by Garlon, and the host has a similar grievance.

'I was but late at a justynge and there I justed with a knyght
that ys brothir unto kynge Pellam, and twyse I smote hym
downe. And than he promysed to quyte me on my beste frende.
And so he wounded thus my son that can nat be hole tylle
I have of that knyghtes bloode.'

(p. 62)

The Dolorous Stroke (p. 64) comes at the end of a series of revenges, and is related through Merlin's prophecy to another series of revenges. This connection between sets of revenge motives adds to the impression of an infinity of mirrors.

Characterisation Through Crises

This heading will at first seem no different from the 'fork' idea of characterisation, but the 'fork' is only one kind of crisis. Crises are aspects of the plot---abrupt turns or trying situations---which force a character to act decisively. They are usually situations in which the character has little control of events, but must make the best of his disadvantage. He is confronted with some circumstance which demands action, or at least thoughtful consideration. As in the 'fork' situation, a character does not act in a vacuum; his crisis may also be a crisis for the people around him. For example, in Lancelot's misadventures with Elaine of Corbin (discussed below), his crisis also proves to be one for Elaine and Guinevere. Nearly all of the characterisation in Malory is the revelation of character rather than the development of character. The personality and identity of a character are generally unchanging, except when an extra item is added to a knight's fame. But that is only a very primitive form of character 'development'. Gawain's strange relentlessness after the murder of his brothers is probably the closest thing to real development of character in Malory. It is not revelation, because it has not been there all along; it is rather a deepening of a character, a demonstration of what Gawain is capable of when driven to an extreme. Arthur's character undergoes a similar development when he finally sanctions the ambush of Lancelot.

The crises in Lancelot's career begin with his adventure with Elaine of Corbin and continue through his failure in the Grail Quest and the tensions in his relationship with Guinevere and in the power structure of the court. When Lancelot is tricked by the sorceress Brusen into

sleeping with Elaine (pp. 584-86), he regards it as a disastrous blunder. It is inevitable, however, and both Elaine and her father, Pelleas, know that Lancelot will father Galahad at this time. Lancelot is under enchantment and the result of his fornication is both good and inevitable. Nevertheless, Lancelot is mortified when he learns that he has made such a grave error against his will. His first reaction is anger, but it is quickly tempered by Elaine's charm.

'Alas!' he seyde, 'that I have lyved so longe, for now am I shamed.'

And anone he gate his swerde in his honde and seyde,
'Thou traytours! What art thou that I have layne
bye all this nyght? Thou shalt dye ryght here of myne
hondys!'

Than this fayre lady Elayne skypped oute of her bedde
all naked and seyde,

'Fayre curteyse knyght sir Launcelot,' knelynge byfore
hym, 'ye ar comyn of kynges bloode, and therefore I requyre
you have mercy uppon me! And as thou arte renowned the
moste noble knyght of the worlde, sle me nat, for I have in
my wombe bygetyn of the that shall be the moste nobelyste
knyght of the worlde.'

'A, false traytours! Why haste thou betrayed me?
Telle me anone,' seyde sir Launcelot, 'what thou arte.'

'Sir,' she seyde, 'I am Elayne, the doughter of kynge
Pelles.'

'Well,' seyde sir Launcelot, 'I woll forgyff you.'

And therewyth he toke her up in his armys and kyssed
her, for she was a fayre lady, and thereto lusty and yonge,
and wyse as ony was that tyme lyvyng.

(pp. 585-86)

His violence and wrath are extreme, even after Elaine has explained the situation in her rather naïve way. Elaine's nakedness should not be taken as a voluptuous detail, but as an indication (along with 'skipping' out of bed) of her naturalness and lack of artifice. She would normally sleep naked, as would Lancelot, who is presumably also naked since he has just got up.³⁶ The speed of her getting out of bed and the fact that she does not stop to put on a gown suggest a freshness and honesty that would not be present if she had got up carefully and first put on a garment before pleading with Lancelot. There would be a calculating

³⁶Lancelot does specifically wear a 'shurte' when this happens again (p. 594).

quality about it, even though in the cause of modesty. The innocence of her single-mindedness is attractive, but Lancelot is unmoved.³⁷ His speech after her explanation is only a paraphrase of his speech immediately before it. Again he calls her a 'traytoures' and demands to know who she is, although he does not threaten a second time to kill her. It is a hint that he is relenting a little in his first thought of revenge. Her identity seems magically to absolve her, for Lancelot immediately forgives her. However, the news that she is the daughter of a king is perhaps not the only reason he forgives her, for 'he toke her up in his armys and kyssed her, for she was a fayre lady, and thereto lusty and yonge, and wyse as ony was that tyme lyvyng'. His previous anger becomes less convincing all the time and seems to have been mainly a gesture. The speed with which Lancelot forgives Elaine (after a great show of violence and anger) followed by an unseemly embrace and the authorial emphasis on her beauty show Lancelot to be very susceptible to the damsel, even when he has his wits about him. To continue the gesture of outraged virtue Lancelot vows revenge upon the sorceress, Brusen. However, this threat (that she 'shall lose her hede for her wycchecraftys, for there was never knyght disceyved as I am this nyght' [p. 586]) is not very convincing either, and appears to be only a substitution of a scapegoat for Elaine. When Lancelot allows himself to be tricked a second time, Brusen becomes a minor Celestina figure.

After the birth of Galahad, Elaine comes to Camelot, but Lancelot does not speak to her for shame: not, however, shame of having slept with her, but shame 'bycause he drew hys swerde to her on the morne aftir

³⁷There are points of stylistic interest in her speech, too. It is fairly unusual to find a participial phrase like 'knelynge byfore hym' as an interrupter of direct speech in Malory. The beginning of that sentence ('Than . . . seyde') is remarkable for its rippling anapestic cadence. If this suggests a smooth physical movement, there is also a suggestion of the lady's speed in getting up in the spondee in the first three (or four?) syllables. 'Bedde' and 'seyde' probably do not rhyme.

that he had layne by her' (p. 592). Elaine is admired by the court at Camelot, and in spite of Lancelot's shame, he 'thought that she was the fayrest woman that ever he sye in his lyeff dayes' (p. 592). Guinevere suspects Lancelot of planning to continue his affair with Elaine while she is at court, but he innocently promises the queen to come to her in the night instead of to Elaine: "'Madame," seyde sir Launcelot, "I shall nat fayle you, but I shall be redy at youre commaundement"' (p. 593). When Guinevere discovers him in the next room in bed with Elaine, it is Lancelot who leaps hurriedly out of bed. Instead of berating Elaine for her treachery, now it is Lancelot who is soundly and uncompromisingly berated and called a 'traytoure' (p. 594). Instead of threatening to kill him, Guinevere banishes him from court.

'A, thou false traytoure knyght! Loke thou never abyde in my courte, and lyghtly that thou voyde my chambir! And nat so hardy, thou false traytoure knyght, that evermore thou com in my syght!'

'Alas!' seyde sir Launcelot.

And therewyth he toke suche an hartely sorrow at her wordys that he felle downe to the floure in a sowne. And therewythall quene Gwenyver departed.

(p. 594)

Lancelot's single word 'Alas!' suggests his dismay much better than a long speech would, no matter how pathetic. Lancelot's great lenience with Elaine contrasts to Guinevere's unsympathetic firmness. Her flinty attitude is nicely defined by her departure as Lancelot lies on the floor in a faint. Guinevere softens later after Lancelot has gone mad and jumped from the window. "'Alas!" seyde feyre Elayne, and "Alas!" seyde the quene, "for now I wote well that we have loste hym for ever!"' (p. 595). Guinevere's change of heart shows her impetuous nature; she acts in the passion of the moment but soon relents. This tendency is also evident in Guinevere's speech to Elaine. She has peremptorily banished Lancelot from court, but she is thinking of practical realities when she banishes Elaine shortly afterwards. "'Well, dame Elayne," seyde the quene, "as sone as hit ys daylyght I charge you to avoyde my courte"' (p. 594).

In place of the wild outburst and intimate pronoun, 'thou', in her speech to Lancelot, Guinevere uses the more formal 'you' and thinks of the practical matter of the time of day. Guinevere seems to have been calmed by Elaine's intervening speech reprimanding her for Lancelot's madness and telling her candidly of their son, Galahad. Again there is extraordinary naïveté in Elaine's speech ('. . . ye have a lorde royall of youre owne, and therefore hit were youre parte for to love hym . . . And yf ye were nat, I myght have getyn the love of my lorde sir Launcelot') [p. 594]]. Guinevere seems taken aback by such openness. It is not certain how much effect Elaine's speech has, but Guinevere's remorse soon prompts her to beg Bors, Ector, and Lionel to find Lancelot (p. 596). In manifestations of character, madness is a ne plus ultra, a greater and more lasting expression than fainting.³⁸ Both are a resignation of personality; such a strain is put on the personality that it temporarily ceases to exist.

It is hard to talk about crises in relation to the Quest for the Grail, because it is a series of crises, but they differ from the usual romance crises in that they are mainly abstract and symbolic. Most of the emotion in these crises is intellectualised and not especially convincing as characterisation. At the height of Lancelot's spiritual progress in the Quest he again comes to a point at which his condition is expressed through unconsciousness. He comes too near the Grail and stricken with a mystic paralysis (pp. 727-28). For all the supposed impact of this experience, Lancelot's remarks are surprisingly low-keyed and complacent.

³⁸Swooning as an expression of grief in earlier romances (Horn, Bevis, and Guy) is discussed by Herbert L. Creek in 'Character in the "Matter of England" Romances', JEGP, X (1911), pp. 592-93, and 596n. Madness as excessive grief is dealt with by Richard Bernheimer in Wild Men in the Middle Ages: a Study in Art, Sentiment, and Demonology, Cambridge, Mass., 1952.

'Now I thanke God,' seyde sir Launcelot, 'for Hys grete mercy of that I have sene, for hit suffisith me. For, as I suppose, no man in thys worlde have lyved bettir than I have done to enchyve that I have done.'

(p. 723)

A more telling speech is Lancelot's explanation to the queen when she complains of his flagging ardour.

'A, madame,' seyde sir Launcelot, 'in thys ye must holde me excused for dyvers causis: one ys, I was but late in the quest of the Sankgreall, and I thanke God of Hys grete mercy, and never of my deservynge, that I saw in that my queste as much as ever saw ony synfull man lyvyng, and so was hit tolde me. And if that I had nat had my prevy thoughtis to returne to youre love agayne as I do, I had sene as grete mysteryes as ever saw my sonne sir Galahad, Percivale, other sir Bors. And therefore, madam, I was but late in that queste, and wyte you well, madam, hit may nat be yet lyghtly forgotyn, the hyghe servyse in whom I dud my dyligente laboure.'

(pp. 744-45)

The idea that his past experiences in the Quest haunt him in this way is more satisfyingly realistic than the description of his immediate reaction to the experience. His regret sounds as if it is tinged with some resentment toward Guinevere; the repetition of 'madame' adds a sense of stiff formality to Lancelot's words. There is an interesting mixture of satisfaction and regret now. A comparison of these two speeches of Lancelot's suggests that his first sense of satisfaction has given way to regret at not having been as successful as at least Percival and Bors, if not Galahad. At the time of his speech after waking from his coma, he did not know of the adventures of the more exalted Grail knights. His repetition of the formula 'I was but late in the quest' and his reminder, 'hit may nat be yet lyghtly forgotyn' evoke his preoccupied frame of mind.

Arthur

There are special problems in discussing the crises of Arthur's career. For most of the Morte Darthur he remains a static figure with few, if any, real crises until he is forced to act by Aggravain's plot

against Lancelot. One of the few indications of Arthur's character being influenced by the plot is his reaction when Tristram comes to a tournament carrying a shield which pictorially incriminates Lancelot and Guinevere. So that Arthur will not miss the point when he sees it:

Than was there a damesell of quene Morgan in a chambir
by kynge Arthure, and whan she harde kynge Arthur speke of
that shylde, than she spake opynly unto kynge Arthure:

'Sir kynge, wyte you well thys shylde was ordayned
for you, to warn you of youre shame and dishonoure that
longith to you and youre quene.'

(p. 415)

The lady, having fulfilled her purpose in the narrative, vanishes, and Arthur, 'sad and wrothe', asks 'frome whens com that damesell' (p. 415). Her point-blank information is disconcerting to Arthur, and he must make some response. Anyone really seeking information about what the lady has said might ask Guinevere, since she is mentioned in the lady's cryptic speech. But the last thing Arthur wants is information, and so he asks about the lady herself rather than about what she said. The reactions of Arthur and of Guinevere are juxtaposed twice, and in each case Guinevere understands what the picture on the shield represents but Arthur does not. 'And whan kynge Arthure saw that shylde he mer-vayled gretly in what entent hit was made. But quene Gwenyver demed as hit was, wherefore she was hevvy' (p. 415). And soon after:

Than quene Gwenyvere called to sir Ector de Marys,
and there she made hyr complaynte to hym and seyde,

'I wote well thys shylde was made by Morgan le Fay
in the dispite of me and of sir Launcelot, wherefore I
drede me sore leste I shall be distroyed.'

And ever the kynge behylde sir Trystram that ded
so mervaylous dedis of armys that he wondred sore what
knyght hit myght be, and well he wyste hit was nat sir
Launcelot.

(p. 416)

It is not stated whether Arthur and Guinevere sit together watching the tournament from the same place, although one would expect them to sit

together in the observers' seats.³⁹ There is some indication that they are close together when the queen 'aspies' Arthur's attention to the strange knight and is 'sore aferde' (p. 416). Each of them looks at the shield and reacts to it and each of them speaks to other people about it, but they never speak to each other. Because their reactions, both verbal and internal, are given so close together, there is a quite noticeable absence of any communication between them.

With great economy the scene is suggested: Arthur sits puzzling over the sinister picture on the shield, occasionally asking questions of his companions around him. Guinevere sits to one side watching apprehensively.

And ever the kyng behylde sir Trystram that ded so mervaylous dedis of armys that he wondred sore what knyght hit myght be, and well he wyste hit was nat sir Launcelot. And also hit was tolde hym that sir Trystram was in Bretayne with Isolde le Blaunche Maynys, for he demed, and he had bene in the realme of Logrys, sir Launcelot other som of hys felowis that were in the queste of sir Trystram, that they sholde have founde hym or that tyme. So kyng Arthure had mervayle what knyght he myght be. And ever kyng Arthurs ye was on that shyld. And all that aspyed the quene and that made hir sore aferde.

(p. 416)

The phrase, 'and also hit was tolde hym' seems to recall Arthur's question about the lady, which he addresses to his ymsittenas: 'And there was nat one that knew her nother wyst nat where she was becom' (p. 415). His companions around him are still advising him and offering suggestions, it seems. It sounds as though they are all trying to think of who the strange knight might be and have thought of Tristram and

³⁹One historian says, '. . . it is Arthur's custom to sit high on a scaffold in order to judge the prowess of those who take part in a tourney'. (Sister Imogene Baker, OSB, The King's Household in the Arthurian Court from Geoffrey of Monmouth to Malory [Washington, D.C., 1937], p. 138) However, Malory specifically says they were in a 'chambir'. 'Chamber' in the OED is not defined in any way that could be construed as part of a grandstand. It is phrased to suggest that Arthur, Guinevere, and their companions are watching from a chamber in the castle. Presumably the tournament was in a tiltyard next to the castle.

erroneously eliminated him, without waiting for Arthur to ask them. He clearly suspects that the shield, depicting a knight standing on a king and queen, alludes to Lancelot and Guinevere's affair (or to some such scandal, if he does not know the exact details). His understated certainty ('. . . well he wyste hit was nat sir Launcelot') is ambiguous. He knows Lancelot is away on adventures, but it seems as if he may also know the knight is not Lancelot for the deeply ironic reason of the incriminating shield. The last two sentences in the passage sum up the scene in the spectators' gallery: Arthur's companions, if they are still present, are ignored as Arthur stares at the shield and Guinevere fearfully watches everything. As part of the juxtaposition of Arthur and the queen the objects of their concentration are contrasted: the small and distant shield on the one hand, and on the other, Guinevere's observation of the whole situation, including such intangibles as her speculation on Arthur's thoughts.

The problem of Arthur's succession to the throne is a kind of crisis and presents the young king coping with the dissensions of the realm. Although Uther names Arthur as his successor on his deathbed, there is a power struggle among the barons after his death. One may wonder what value Uther's deathbed legacy has when no one seems to know who Arthur is. Even Arthur's foster-father, Ector, does not know Arthur's lineage. The succession to the throne is decided by a supernatural sign, the sword in the anvil, which favours Arthur and so confirms Uther's choice, but Uther's word would have meant nothing without it. Arthur himself is shown as a modest and unassuming youth, in sharp contrast to the grasping barons. The reader is given the history of the sword in the anvil--how it appeared in the churchyard and how a tournament is decreed so that everyone may have a chance to pull the sword from the anvil (pp. 7-8). Arthur, who comes with Ector and Kay, his foster-father and foster-brother, seems to know nothing about the meaning of the sword. With touching sincerity,

Arthur hurries back to their lodging for Kay's forgotten sword. But no one is at home:

Thenne was Arthur wroth and saide to hymself, 'I will ryde to the chircheyard and take the sword with me that stycketh in the stone, for my broder sir Kay shal not be without a sword this day.'

(p. 8)

His unselfish single-mindedness in finding any usable sword for his foster-brother leads him to take the magic sword.⁴⁰ Kay is Arthur's foil as he slyly claims the kingdom on the evidence of the sword.

And as sone as sir Kay saw the sword he wist wel it was the sword of the stone, and so he rode to his fader syr Ector and said, 'Sire, loo here is the sword of the stone, wherfor I must be kyng of thys land.'

When syre Ector beheld the sword he retorned ageyne and cam to the chirche, and there they alighte al thre and wente into the chirche, and anon he made sir Kay to swere upon a book how he came to that sword.

'Syr,' said sir Kay, 'by my broder Arthur, for he brought it to me.'

(pp. 8-9) -

There are intriguing suggestions of character here as Kay rides immediately to his father to claim the realm. His own youth and callowness are evident, for in his egotism he does not stop to wonder how Arthur got the sword in the first place or to reflect that Arthur himself may be the rightful king. (Kay, too, has a kind of 'innocence of single-mindedness'.) His impetuous and rather transparent speech to Ector ignores the important detail that it is not the possession of the sword but the pulling of it from the anvil that signifies kingship. Apparently without answering his son, Ector takes both Kay and Arthur back to the churchyard. Ector's swift action in taking Kay to the church and making him swear 'how he cam to that sword' implies something about Ector's attitude toward

⁴⁰This idea of the innocence of single-mindedness may be compared with Elaine's similar ingenuousness, above, pp. 150-51. One critic, speaking in general of romances in which a passionate woman woos a knight, says the treatment is 'attractive by its simplicity, its frankness, its faithfulness, its healthy, unspoiled, primitive human nature'. (Herbert L. Creek, 'Character in the "Matter of England" Romances', *JEGP*, X [1911], p. 598.)

his son: that he does not consider Kay completely trustworthy. Kay's straightforward but sheepish reply suggests that he is not a hardened liar, but only a tentative opportunist. It takes from Christmas to Pentecost to convince the barons that Arthur is their rightful king, and then, in a touch more English than French, it is the commoners who acclaim Arthur as their king: 'We wille have Arthur unto our king! . . . and who that holdeth ageynst it we wille slee hym' (p. 11).

Descriptions of Arthur's character appear mainly at the beginning of his career and toward the end of it. He is still a young king when the messengers from the Roman emperor come with his ultimatum. This episode (pp. 136-40) is rather clumsy as far as characterisation goes, except for certain general ideas, like Arthur's firmness in defying the emperor, his stiff courtesy toward the messengers, and his relationship with his vassals. The firmness is perhaps overdone, as when Arthur's frown terrifies the messengers (p. 136). His care to treat the Roman messengers well hardly conceals his contempt for them and their master. He protects their lives, but just barely, for he warns them not to ride at night and gives them a week to leave the country at Sandwich, threatening to hold them for ransom if they fail to leave then (p. 139). The speeches here are set-piece tirades rather than conversations; the tone is one of bombastic exposition. Arthur says to the messengers:

' . . . for all thy brym wordys I woll nat be to over-hasty,
and therfore thou and thy felowys shall abyde here seven
dayes; and shall calle unto me my counceyle of my moste
trusty knyghtes and deukes and regeaunte kynges and erlys
and barowns and of my moste wyse doctours, and whan we have
takynoure avysement ye shall have your answere playnly,
suche as I shall abyde by.'

(p. 136)

Superficially this speech is directed to the messengers, but it seems to contain irrelevant material. This list of people whom he will consult sounds more like an authorial comment or a soliloquy, and the promise 'suche as I shall abyde by' seems directed at the world at large, perhaps

to both the messengers and his own vassals. He appears to be promising the same thing to both groups, but with a slightly different emphasis. He assures his vassals that he will abide by their 'avysement', and tells the messengers that he will abide by the answer he gives them (based on the 'avysement'). It is an official pronouncement, and while it has a somewhat emphatic tone, it contains no real personal emotion. It is the sort of speech in which a royal 'we' would be appropriate. For all of Arthur's formality and dignity, he appeals in a relatively humble, almost democratic way to his vassals for advice: 'That truage to Roome woll I never pay. Therefore counceyle me, my knyghtes, for Crystes love of Hevyn' (p. 137). Most of the dialogue in this section is stilted, and the cadence sounds as if it was written on horseback, for the alliterative and rhythmic patterns of the Morte Arthure show through Malory's reworking. Nevertheless, there is some complexity in the presentation of Arthur as firm, even frightening, toward outsiders or enemies, yet careful to observe diplomatic etiquette to the letter, and respectful toward the advice of his vassals.

Arthur's attitude toward the Grail Quest is one of the most telling bits of characterisation in Malory. He does not go on the Quest himself, remaining a neutral background figure who watches his knights leave on their difficult adventure. As king he is outside the Quest; whatever symbolism it has of religious growth does not affect him. But he shows a complexity of emotions as his knights prepare to leave him. The scene is the familiar one of the Round Table gathered for a feast. It is Arthur's custom to refuse to eat until he has seen some marvel, and 'adventures' are not lacking at this feast of Pentecost. As if the writing on the Siege Perilous were not enough, the knights go to the river to see the floating stone with a sword stuck in it, and as they begin to eat 'all the doorys and wyndowes of the paleyse shutte by themselff' (p. 630). Such remarkable events often occur at Arthur's feasts, and the king is

pleased by these supernatural attentions to his court. 'Be God, fayre felowis and lordis, we have sene this day mervayles! But or nyght I suppose we shall se gretter mervayles' (p. 630). Arthur is pleased when Galahad comes to court. He says to Gawain: 'Fayre nevew, now have we amonge us sir Galahad, the good knyght that shall worship us all. And uppon payne of my lyff he shall encheve the Sankgreall . . .' (p. 631). Galahad pulls the sword from the floating stone after the other knights have failed, and as the company stand there a prophetic damsel comes 'rydyngge downe the ryver' (p. 632).⁴¹ The damsel's words and Arthur's response show the change in Arthur's attitude toward the Quest.

'And, sir kyng, Nacien the eremeyte sendeth the worde that the shall befall the grettyst worship that ever befelle kyng in Bretayne, and I sey you wherefore: for thys day the Sankegreall appered in thy house and fedde the and all thy felyship of the Rounde Table.'

So she departed and wente the same way that she cam.

'Now,' seyde the kyng, 'I am sure at this quest of the Sankegreall shall all ye of the Rownde Table departe, and nevyr shall I se you agayne hole togydirs, therefore ones shall I se you togydir in the medow, all hole togydirs! Therefore I wol se you all hole togydir in the medow of Camelot, to juste and to turney, that aftir youre dethe men may speke of hit that such good knyghtes were here, such a day, hole togydirs.'

(p. 633)

The lady's speech seems full of praise and future honour for the Round Table, but Arthur's response is suddenly melancholy. Immediately before this speech of the damsel's, she has explained to Lancelot that he is no longer the best knight in the world, although, she says, he was the best, 'and [is] yet, of ony synfull man of the worlde' (p. 633). Exactly what brings Arthur to this new frame of mind is an interesting question. The lady's speech touches on competition between the knights, not on the

⁴¹I take this to mean that the lady rode on the water of the river, although it may mean that she rode beside the river. The problem is not cleared up very much by the description of the lady's exit: 'So she departed and wente the same way that she cam' (p. 633). It is in keeping with the other events that she should ride miraculously on the water and Malory's cryptic remark may be meant to emphasise the peculiar way in which the lady came. The damsel is equally mysterious in the *OF Queste*. (*La Queste del saint graal; roman du XIII^e siècle*, ed. Albert Pauphilet, GFMA [Paris, 1965], pp. 12-13.)

familiar lines of physical prowess, but on the new division lines between sin and virtue. This is the beginning of a different ordering of things, a different perspective on the excellences and failures of the Round Table knights. The sense of this may have changed Arthur's mood. The accumulation of supernatural occurrences (if we interpret the above passage to mean that the lady rides on the water) may make Arthur uncomfortable, for his melancholy speech comes just after the lady leaves 'the same way that she cam'. It is possible to imagine that the spectacle of the lady coming in a supernatural way, speaking of Lancelot's failings and the honour of the Round Table, and departing in the same supernatural way finally alerts Arthur to some impending danger.

The drum-like repetition of 'hole togydirs' in Arthur's speech helps bring about the tone of melancholy pathos. Arthur's certainty that the group will never be 'hole togydirs' again and his thoughts of his knights' deaths make this quest suddenly seem sinister and dangerous in a way that the other quests have not been. The unusual repetition of phrases suggests Arthur's grief, as he comes back again and again to the soon to be lost ideal of the complete Round Table. Already, before the knights even set out on their adventure, there is an elegy for their failure.

I have already discussed Arthur's response to Aggravain's plot to ambush Lancelot with the queen (above, pp. 127 ff.). His change from sceptical to relentless (pp. 820-30) is one of the few instances of real decisiveness in Arthur's career.

Mark

Much of Mark's characterisation comes from comparisons to Arthur and from innumerable casual remarks criticising him. Sometimes the universal condemnation of him is seen to be justified, as when he fights Berluse unchivalrously (p. 434). Mark is not merely a foil to Arthur; indeed, much of the relationship between the two kings is in their response to the same sort of problem, but that view of Mark's function is too narrow

to encompass all of his personality. We may see Mark and Arthur as a wicked king and a good king both beset by the same problems of dissension and adultery within the court. If the emphasis were heavily on Mark and his Cornish court, the comparison with Arthur would suggest that even good kings may have the same problems as evil ones, and that perhaps the subsequent downfall is inevitable. As the two courts stand, however, one would expect strife in the court of an incompetent king and unworthy knight; strife in the perfect court of Logres is much more frightening and unnatural. Mark's court lacks any sense of tragedy, except sometimes when Tristram is concerned, for he is cast as the one grand figure in a group of dwarves. Tristram always seems to be a Round Table knight inexplicably attached to the wrong court. Isode urges him to leave the hostile Mark: '. . . and than draw you unto the courte off kynge Arthure, for there ar ye beloved' (p. 374).

The difference in the internal workings of the two courts is shown when Tristram comes back to court after his madness. Mark wants to have him executed.

And so he lete calle hys barownes to geve jugemente unto sir Trystramys to the dethe. Than many of hys barownes wolde nat assente thereto, and in especiall sir Dynas the Senesciall and sir Fergus. And so by the avyse of them all sir Trystramys was banysshed oute of the contrey for ten yere, and thereuppon he toke hys othe uppon a booke before the kynge and hys barownys. And so he was made to departe oute of the contrey of Cornwayle, and there were many barownes brought hym unto hys shyp, that som were of hys frendis and som were of hys fooys.

(p. 375)

The barons over-rule King Mark and soften Tristram's sentence. Like Arthur's court, allegiances are divided between Mark and Tristram. But when Arthur sentences his queen to death, his barons, mainly Gawain, protest (pp. 829-31). Arthur, however, refuses to alter the sentence. As we have seen in the war with Lucius, Arthur is usually more receptive of suggestions by his barons; his resoluteness now is not his usual

attitude, but a departure from it. It is Mark who is more orthodox in sentencing his wife's lover for treason instead of his wife. Strictly speaking, it is Lancelot and not Guinevere who is guilty of treason. Mark, for all his cowardice and evilness, is perhaps the more conventional king. If Mark is a kind of cynically exaggerated norm, Arthur's greatness is partly defined by his departures from Mark's pattern.

The differences between the courts are not lost on the knights. When Bors advises Lancelot to follow Tristram's example and take Guinevere away to Joyous Gard until it is safe to return, Lancelot pessimistically fears that his fate may be like Tristram's.

'That ys hard for to do,' seyde sir Launcelot, 'for by sir Trystram I may have a warnyng: for whan by meanys of trefte sir Trystram brought agayne La Beall Isode unto kyng Marke from Joyous Garde, loke ye now what felle on the ende, how shamefully that false traytour kyng Mark slew hym as he sate harpyng afore hys lady, La Beall Isode. Wyth a grounden glayve he threste hym in behynde to the harte, whych grevyth sore me,' seyde sir Launcelot, 'to speke of his dethe, for all the worlde may nat fynde such another knyght.'

'All thys ys trouthe,' seyde sir Bors, 'but there ys one thyng shall corrayge you and us all: ye know well that kyng Arthur and kyng Marke were never lyke of condicions, for there was never yet man that ever coude preve kyng Arthur untrew of hys promyse.'

(p. 828)

This is one of the few times Lancelot ever comes close to censuring Arthur. This speech simultaneously shows Lancelot's bitterness toward Arthur and Bors's reasonableness and lack of vindictiveness. It also serves as exposition, for we have not heard before of the fate of Tristram. Mark allows his vassals to over-rule him on the question of Tristram's sentences, but in the end he accomplishes by treachery what he could not by law. Arthur's steadfastness and probity, apparently good qualities, are exactly the tragic flaw that leads him to pursue Lancelot so relentlessly. Finally, this speech indicates that even when dissension becomes war, Arthur's enemies still respect him for his truthfulness. The same could never be said of King Mark.

Mark's first appearance in The Book of Sir Tristram de Lyones shows him in the midst of a crisis: finding a champion to fight against Marhalt of Ireland. His actions, however, serve less to characterise him than to contribute to Tristram's character. The decision to ask the Irish king to send a champion to Cornwall is made by 'kynges Marke and his barownes' (p. 280); in the corporate action and the indirect telling of it, there is little room left for any indication of Mark's individuality. At this point in the story, when the scene changes to the Irish court, there is a more detailed description of action there than there was in the Cornish court. Marhalt is a worthy knight of the Round Table, and his king is commendably generous: 'And whatsomevir ye spende, ye shall have suffyciauntely more than ye shall nede' (p. 280). Mark is again undercut when Marhalt arrives at the coast of Tintagil.

And thus sir Marhalte abode in the see, and every day he sente unto kynges Marke for to pay the trwayge that was behynde seven yere, other ellys to fynde a knyght to fyght with hym for the trewayge. This maner of message sir Marhalte sente unto kynges Marke.

Than they of Cornwayle lete make cryes that what knyght that wolde fyght for to save the trwayge of Cornwayle he shold be rewarded to fare the bettir, terme of his lyff. Than som of the barowns seyde to kynges Marke and counceyled hym to sende to the courte of kynges Arthure for to seke sir Launcelott du Lake that was that tyme named for the mervaylyste knyght of the worlde.

Than there were other barownes that counceyled the kynges not to do so, and seyde that hit was laboure in vayne bycause sir Marhalte was a knyght of Rounde Table; therefore ony of hem wolde be loth to have ado with other, but yf hit were so that ony knyght at his owne rekeyste wolde fyght disgysed and unknowyn. So the kynges and all his barownes assentyd that hit was no boote to seke aftir no knyght of the Rounde Table.

(p. 281)

The result of the message sent to King Mark is that 'they of Cornwayle' seek a champion. We hear of no direct action or decision on the part of the king of Cornwall at all, but only the various advice of his barons. The final agreement not to ask for a champion from the Round Table is taken by 'the kynges and all his barownes'. This may seem laudably democratic to the modern reader, but more likely it is an indication of Mark's

lack of decisiveness. One can hardly imagine Arthur without a champion and reduced to advertising around at other courts; even without Lancelot he would have several knights willing to fight for him. Just as the king of Ireland has offered Marhalt recompense for his efforts, 'they of Cornwayle' also offer to reward a champion 'to fare the bettir, terme of his lyff'. This sounds like a generous pension, except that the condition is attached that the champion must 'fare the bettir', whereas the champion of Ireland is simply offered enough to cover his expenses with 'suffyciauntely more' left over. There is something suspiciously parsimonious about this offer to reward the champion only if he wins, especially when contrasted with the openhandedness of the Irish king. Because generosity is so much the hallmark of a good king, this detail is a small but telling one. Certainly there is no criticism of the Irish king, who easily finds a good champion and rewards him well, and the more reproachless his enemies the more suspect Mark is.

There is nothing very remarkable about the way Mark receives the information that Tristram is his nephew. Marhalt sends to know if the champion of Cornwall is of royal lineage; Tristram tells Mark:

'... now shall ye know that I am kynge of Melyodas some,
borne of your owne sister dame Elyzabeth that dyed in the
foreste in the byrth of me.'

'A, Jesu!' seyde kynge Marke, 'ye ar welcom, fayre
nevew, to me.'

Than in all the haste the kyng horsed sir Trystrams
and armed hym on the beste maner that myght be gotyn for
golde othir sylver.

(p. 283)

Mark behaves as an uncle might be expected to, in greeting his nephew. But why does he send Tristram off to battle 'in all the haste'? The main result of this discovery is that Marhalt is 'gladde and blyeth that he sholde feyght with suche a jantylman' (p. 283). In comparison Mark's attitude is a bit cool. Mark's haste very subtly suggests that he is more interested in Tristram as a champion than in Tristram as his own nephew. Again when Tristram departs to fight Marhalt Mark is only one

of a group who watch him go: 'And whan kynge Marke and his barownes of Cornwayle behelde how yonge sir Trystrams departed with suche a caryage to feyght for the ryght of Cornwayle, there was nother man nother woman of worshyp but they wepte to se and undirstonde so yonge a knyght to jouparté hymself for theire ryght' (pp. 283-84). King Mark's importance is diluted by his appearing constantly as part of a group.

After a long and valiant battle⁴² Tristram returns to Cornwall. Even when Mark receives him, his barons are still present, and his actions are reported as a part of theirs.

And whan kynge Marke saw his woundys he wepte hertely,
and so dud all his lordys.

'So God me helpe,' seyde kynge Marke, 'I wolde nat
for all my londys that my newew dyed.'

(p. 287)

Later, when Tristram seems hopelessly wounded and the 'wyttly lady' comes to court to advise Tristram to seek a cure in 'the same contrey that the venym cam fro' (p. 287), she speaks to 'the kynge Marke and to sir Trystrames and to all his barownes' (p. 287). Throughout this episode of seeking a champion, meeting his nephew, and receiving him after the battle, King Mark is consistently undercut in the narrative. Tristram is the great hero of the piece, and next to him even the king has a minor role. Compared to his knights King Arthur often has a minor role, but he is seldom so firmly in the background as Mark is. King Arthur is not so much in the background of the action as above it. In the Grail Quest and other minor quests he remains aloof; any messenger is likely to address Arthur primarily and not Arthur as simply another member of the

⁴²In Tristram's long speech of greeting to Marhalt he unaccountably speaks of 'suche promyse I have made at my newewys requeste and myne owne sekyng that I shall fyght with the unto the uttermuste . . .' (p. 285). As far as we know Tristram has no nephew, but is the nephew of King Mark. Vinaver in his *Commentary* (*Works*, III, 1457) equates this use of 'newew' with 'uncle' but admits: 'This meaning of "nephew" is not recorded in the *Oxford Engl. Dict.* nor, so far as I am aware, in any published text'. It seems likely that this is simply an error, rather than a unique usage.

assembled court (e.g. p. 113, when the damsel from Morgan and the Damsel of the Lake both come to speak to Arthur). This characteristic balance between Arthur and his knights does not exist in the Cornish court. In the episode that should give Mark a chance to show some decisiveness and to define his character somewhat, he becomes a nonentity, not only in comparison with Tristram, but even in comparison with the rest of the court.

The other crisis which might give Mark an opportunity for some character-revealing action is his reaction to the affair between Tristram and Isode. In the dramatic episode in which Tristram is 'takyn nakyd a-bed with La Beale Isode' (p. 327) it is Tristram's kinsman, Andret, who leads the faction against him. Mark seems not to have been consulted about the plan to take Tristram; even Arthur, in a similar position, retains some small control over his vengeful knights. In the course of Tristram's capture and escape, Mark is mentioned in only one connection: 'And than by the assent of kynge Marke and of sir Andret and of som of the barownes sir Trystramys was lad unto a chapell that stood upon the see rockys, there for to take his jugemente' (p. 327). Because of Mark's habitual lack of authority it seems that Andret is much more the leader in this situation than Mark is. Mark's feeling toward Tristram is mainly one of resentment.

Than kynge Marke had grete dispyte at sir Trystram. And whan he chaced hym oute of Cornwayle (yette was he nevew unto kynge Marke, but he had grete suspeccion unto sir Trystram bycause of his quene, La Beale Isode, for hym semed that there was muche love betwene them twayne), so whan sir Trystram was departed oute of Cornwayle into Ingelonde, kynge Marke harde of the grete proues that sir Trystram ded there, wyth the whyche he greved.

So he sente on his party men to aspye what dedis he ded, and the quene sente pryvaly on hir party spyes to know what dedis he had done, for full grete love was there betwene them. So whan the messyngers were com home they tolde the trouthe as they herde, and how he passed all other knyghtes but yf hit were sir Launcelot. Than kynge Marke was ryght hevy of tho tydynges, and as glad was La Beale Isode.

'Than grete dispyte kynge Marke had at hym, and so
he toke wyth hym two knyghtes and two squyers, and
disgyssed hymself, and toke his way into Ingelonde to the
entente to sle sir Trystram.

(pp. 428-29)

Mark's 'dispyte' results not only in grievance at Tristram's triumphs, but in a morbid curiosity to know more about his deeds. This detail may tell us more about Mark's character than anything else in the Book of Tristram. The attempt to dishonour him through banishment has not worked, for he now has more honour than ever. It is not enough for Mark to hear rumours of Tristram's 'proues'; he must know the details. Something of his brooding, wrathful mentality can be seen here. The near repetition of the opening formula ('Than grete dispyte kynge Marke had at hym . . .') denotes a new 'dispyte' rather than a reiteration of the first one. These two similar clauses come at different logical points in the exposition. The first sentence in this passage, which begins Part VII, 'King Mark', gives the effect, and the cause is explained in the rest of the paragraph: he suspects Tristram of a liaison with Isode (before the banishment) and he hears disturbing news about Tristram's prowess (after the banishment). The second 'grete dispyte' seems to be a direct result of the news brought by the messengers. It is this jealousy of Tristram's prowess, as much as the liaison with Isode, which drives Mark to seek revenge. There is also in this exposition the contrast of Isode also sending 'spyes' to report on Tristram's deeds, but out of a motive of concern for her lover. Finally, the hearsay news of Tristram's prowess shows the extent of his reputation, for those who are sent to 'aspye' come back and tell 'the trouthe as they herde'.

Gareth

The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkeney has a somewhat pedestrian theme of the worthy but unknown knight being ridiculed by a lady but at last being recognised for his qualities. More than any other story in the Morte Darthur, however, Gareth is concerned with characterisation. Unlike

the crises discussed above, Gareth's crisis is one in which he is obliged not to act in the face of extreme provocation. It is a crisis of discreetly courtly behaviour rather than of bold decision. Because of Gareth's fanciful desire to be thought a kitchen knave, he acquires a reputation of low birth, and his dealings with Linet are then one long effort to overcome her prejudice. In spite of Gareth's elegant clothes (p. 216) the damsel harps on his status as kitchen boy: 'Thou stynkyst all of the kychyn, thy clothis bene bawdy of the grece and talow' (p. 218). She accepts Kay's opinion of Gareth: 'I know the well, for sir Kay named the Beawmaynes. What art thou but a luske, and a turner of brochis, and a ladyll-waysher?' (p. 218). Gareth's response is a rather conventional speech of forbearance.

'Damesell,' seyde sir Beawmaynes, 'sey to me what ye wolle, yet wolle nat I go fro you whatsoever ye sey, for I have undirtake to kynge Arthure for to encheve your adventure, and so shall I fynnyssh hit to the ende, other ellys I shall dye therefore.'

'Fye on the, kychyn knave! Wolt thou fynnyssh myne adventure? Thou shalt anone be mette withall, that thou woldyst nat for all the broth that ever thou souped onys to loke hym in the face.'

(p. 218)

The damsel's insults, here as elsewhere, show a certain spiteful ingenuity in their allusions to the kitchen.

When Gareth rescues a knight from six thieves, the grateful knight invites him and the damsel to his castle for the night.

And at souper the knyght sette sir Beawmaynes afore the damesell.

'Fy, fy,' than seyde she, 'sir knyght, ye ar uncurtayse to sette a kychyn page afore me. Hym semyth bettir to styke a swyne than to sytte afore a damesell of hyghe parage.'

Than the knyght was ashamed at hir wordys, and toke hym up and sette hym at a sydebourde and sate hymself before hym.

(p. 219)

This is the beginning of a recurring pattern in which the other knight in an encounter (the defeated knight after this, rather than a rescued knight) takes Gareth's side against the lady. Linet seems to become

increasingly blind to Beaumains' real qualities and continually reiterates her original opinion of him. The knights whom they meet, however, have no prejudice against Gareth and are able to accept his great prowess. In the next encounter Linet attributes Gareth's victory to accident and remains haughty to him and his plea to 'gyff me goodly langgag' (p. 220). The Black Knight at first thinks Gareth is a Round Table knight (p. 221), but then takes the lady's word for it that he is only a kitchen knave. After Gareth dispatches the Black Knight, the lady's attitude is unchanged: 'Away, kychyn knave, oute of the wynde, for the smelle of thy bawdy clothis grevyth me!' (p. 222). By now Gareth has lost some of his complacency about her insults and says, apparently with some emotion:

' . . . for ever ye sey that they woll sle me othir bete me,
but howsomever hit happenyth I ascape and they lye on
the grounde. And therefore hit were as good for you to
holde you style thus all day rebuking me'
(p. 222)

The next knight they meet is the Green Knight, and at this point Gareth cleverly forces the damsel to take some slight recognition of his prowess. He threatens to kill the Green Knight unless she intercedes on his behalf. She responds predictably: 'Fye uppon the, false kychyn payge! I woll never pray the to save his lyff, for I woll nat be so muche in thy daunger' (p. 223). The Green Knight pleads with Gareth, promising him the allegiance of himself and thirty vassals.

'In the devyls name,' seyde the damesell, 'that such
a bawdy kychyn knave sholde have thirty knyghtes servyse
and thyne!'

'Sir knyght,' seyde Bewmaynes, 'all this awaylyth
the nought but yf my damesell speke to me for thy lyff,'
and therewithall he made a semblaunte to sle hym.

'Lat be,' seyde the dameselle, 'thou bawdy kychyn
knave! Sle hym nat, for and thou do thou shalt repente
hit.'

(p. 224)

It appears that Gareth would not have killed the Green Knight anyway and makes only the 'semblaunte' to slay him. The damsel's speech is far

from a plea for mercy; it is an insulting threat prompted by Gareth's unworthiness to defeat the knight rather than by any sympathy for the Green Knight. Later the Green Knight speaks to the damsel of Gareth's nobility in arms: 'Therefore ye do grete wronge so to rebuke hym, for he shall do you ryght goode servyse' (p. 224).

As the adventures progress, the damsel's original prejudices are disproved again and again, but on each occasion she repeats the same opinions and insults. As Gareth's prowess becomes more and more evident, the damsel's words become increasingly ridiculous. When they meet the Red Knight the damsel's outburst suggests a pent-up hysteria.

'A,' seyde this damesell, 'this knave hathe slayne your brother, and sir Kay named hym Bewmaynes; and this horse and this harneyse was thy brothirs, the Blak Knyght. Also I sawe thy brothir the Grene Knyght overcom of his hondys. But now may ye be revenged on hym, for I may nevyr be quyte of hym.'

(p. 226)

Apparently the damsel is so certain that Beaumains is a kitchen boy that any evidence to the contrary must be dismissed as an accident. After enough of these 'accidents' her perplexity begins to show through. The first three clauses of the damsel's speech are in a peculiar random order; his nickname has practically nothing to do with the slaying of the Red Knight's brother or the ownership of the horse. Because all these knights in coloured armour are brothers, the first clause is vague. When the horse's owner, the Black Knight, is mentioned it may seem that the first brother mentioned is not the Black Knight. The only way in which the phrase 'and sir Kay named hym Bewmaynes' fits into the speech is to indicate the lady's shock at the first fact she mentions. It seems that in her muddled thinking she may think of the second clause as being subordinate to the first, i.e. 'he killed your brother, although Kay named him Beaumains'. The insulting nickname is for her the whole identity of Gareth, and his noble behaviour is an inexplicable deviation from it. The damsel's daze at these events is suggested not only by the jumble

of ideas in the first sentence, but more subtly in the second. The key here is 'I sawe'. She says not 'Thy brothir the Grene Knyght was overcome of his hondys', but 'I sawe thy brothir . . .'. Her phrasing suggests perfectly her incredulity. Her final sentence is also revealing, for her self-interest prompts her to encourage the Red Knight to revenge himself on Gareth. Ostensibly the Red Knight should fight Gareth because Gareth has defeated his two brothers, but the lady's reason is that she would like to be rid of Gareth.

Just as in the battle with the Green Knight, Gareth forces Linet to plead for the Red Knight.

'All this avaylyth nat,' seyde Beawmaynes, 'but if my damesell pray me to save thy lyffe.' And therewith he made semblaunte to stryke of his hede.

'Let be, thou Bewmaynes, and sle hym nat, for he is a noble knyght, and nat so hardy uppon thyne hede but that thou save hym.'

(p. 227)

Linnet's tone has finally changed. Her corresponding speech in the battle against the Green Knight was: 'Lat be . . . thou bawdy kychyn knave! Sle hym nat for and thou do thou shalt repente hit' (p. 224). As they go to spend the night with the Red Knight the lady continues to berate Gareth.

But allwayes this damesell seyde many foule wordys unto Bewmaynes, whereof the Rede Knyght had grete merveyle. And all that nyght the Rede Knyght made three score knyghtes to wacche Bewmaynes, that he sholde have no shame nother vylony.

(p. 227)

The Green Knight also commanded 'thirty knyghtes prevyly to wacche Bewmaynes for to kepe hym from all treson' (p. 225) after the damsel spoke scathingly of Gareth. Because the guard is posted after the damsel's sharp words about Gareth (which in both cases shock the knights, who know his prowess well), it is implicit that they are protecting Gareth from the damsel.

For all of Gareth's outward calm, the constant criticism is affecting him. "Damesell," seyde Bownaynes, "ye ar uncourteyse so to rebuke me as ye do . . ." (p. 227). However, there is a curious scene when Gareth and his damsel reach the city of Sir Persant of Inde, for she abruptly recants.

'Ey, fy!' seyde the damesell, 'that evir suche a stynkyng kychyn knave sholde blowe suche a boste!'

'Damesell,' he seyde, 'ye ar to blame so to rebuke me, for I had lever do fyve batayles than so to be rebuked. Lat hym com and than lat hym doo his worste.'

'Sir,' she seyde, 'I mervayle what thou art and of what kyn thou arte com; for boldely thou spekest and boldely thou haste done, that have I sene. Therefore, I pray the save thyself and thou may, for thyne horse and thou have had grete travayle, and I drede that we dwelle ovirlonge frome the seege; for hit is hens but seven myle, and all perelous passages we are paste sauff all only this passage, and here I drede me sore last ye shall cacche som hurte. Therefore I wolde ye were hens, that ye were nat brused nothir hurte with this stronge knyght. But I lat you wete this sir Persaunte of Inde is nothyng of myght nor strength unto the knyght that lyeth at the seege aboute my lady.'

(pp. 228-29)

The damsel's remarks begin in the familiar way, but suddenly she wonders who Gareth really is, since it is now apparent even to her that he is not a kitchen knave. Her main concern is with his bloodlines; the fact that he has proven himself in battle is not a feat in itself but only an indication of his genealogy. Like her earlier shocked statement to the Red Knight ('Also I sawe thy brothir the Grene Knyght overcom of his hondys' [p. 226]) she again emphasises what she has seen. Before, her sense of sight contradicted what she 'knew' about Gareth, and now she frankly admits that her pre-conceived opinion about Gareth does not match her observations, and instead of assuming her observations are wrong she is beginning to believe them. Now she is extremely solicitous about Gareth's welfare, and while she still does not seem completely confident in his prowess, she expresses concern for his safety rather than taunting him with his inevitable failure. Her sharp change in attitude is also illustrated by the change from 'thou' to 'ye' toward the end of her speech.

Now that the lady has reversed her attitude toward Gareth, she speaks of her former attitude. She is apparently aware that her former insults were unjustified:

' . . . so fowle and so shamfully dud never woman revyle
a knyght as I have done you, and ever curteysly ye have
suffyrde me, and that com never but of jantyll bloode.'
(p. 229)

Now it seems that the damsel was reviling Gareth in order to test him, and that she may have realised the injustice of her insults some time before these speeches. This idea is supported by the fact that her change from insult to admiration takes place in practically the same breath. The only speech resembling a transition is her slightly mollified petition for mercy for the Green Knight. To complete the progression, illustrated by the damsel's acts of mercy, she intervenes on behalf of Persant when Gareth seems about to kill him.

. . . and than he lepte uppon hym overthwarte and unlaced
his helme to have slayne hym. Than sir Persaunte yelded
hym and asked hym mercy. Wyth that com the damesell and
prayde hym to save his lyff.
'I woll well,' he seyde, 'for hit were pyté this
noble knyght sholde dye.'

(p. 230)

Before, Gareth has had to force her to be merciful by threatening to kill his opponent unless she intervened, and so placing all the responsibility on her. The second time he does it, as we have seen, the damsel seems moved more by the opponent's worthiness than by her distaste for Gareth. Now the damsel volunteers her mercy without any prompting from Gareth. (Indeed, he makes no 'semblaunte' to kill Persant but seems really about to behead him.) They have made their peace, and they show it by their behaviour toward a third person. Similarly, Persant sends his daughter to Gareth at night, whereas his two previous hosts, disconcerted at the damsel's strong words, have posted guards on Gareth. Gareth declines the daughter's advances, further confirming Persant's belief in his nobility. Presumably Persant does not think of guarding Gareth

because the damsel, who is not mentioned again until they depart the next morning, has shown no hostility toward Gareth. This friendly, even overly friendly, gesture of Persant's helps suggest the cordial (if not quite amorous) atmosphere between Gareth and the damsel.

Gawain

The event which has the most shattering effect on Gawain's character is the discovery that Lancelot has killed Gareth and Gaheris. It affects his behaviour in two important ways: he begins to pursue Lancelot doggedly and he becomes more forceful in his relationship with Arthur. Gawain at first cannot believe that Lancelot has killed his brothers, but his informant assures him that it is true.

'Veryly, sir,' seyde the man, 'hit ys noysed that he slew hym.'

'Alas,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'now ys my joy gone!'

And than he felle downe and sowned, and longe he lay there as he had ben dede. And whan he arose oute of hys swoughe he cryed oute sorowfully and seyde,

'Alas!'

And forthwith he ran unto the kynge, crierig and wepyng, and seyde,

'A, myne uncle kynge Arthur! My good brother sir Gareth ys slayne, and so ys my brothir sir Gaherys, whych were two noble knyghtes.'

Than the kynge wepte and he bothe, and so they felle onsownynge.

(p. 834)

As in Lancelot's scene with Elaine and Guinevere (above, pp. 152-53), a swoon is the expression of extreme emotion. Gawain's tortured state of mind is betrayed by his confusion over Lancelot's motive or lack of motive. At first he tells this anonymous informant (immediately before the above speech) that Lancelot loved Gareth and that Gareth would have joined Lancelot's faction. 'And therefore I may never belyeve that sir Launcelot slew my brethern' (p. 834). But when Lancelot expresses regret for the terrible accident and explains that he did not see them, Gawain has changed his charitable outlook.

'Thou lvest, recrayed knyght,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'thou slewyste hem in the despite of me. And therefore wyte thou well, sir Launcelot, I shall make warre upon the, and all the whyle that I may lyve by thyne enemy!'

(p. 838)

He has already sworn to Arthur that he will avenge his brothers' deaths:

'... I shall seke sir launcelot thorowoute seven kynges realmys, but I shall sle hym, other ellis he shall sle me' (p. 835). Gawain's sudden mania for revenge propels Arthur along by its momentum. When a damsel comes from Lancelot's besieged castle to sue for peace at Arthur's camp, Lucan the Butler speaks to her candidly.

'Alas,' seyde sir Lucan, 'my lorde Arthure wolde accorde with sir Launcelot, but sir Gawayne woll nat suffir hym.' And than he seyde, 'I pray to God, damesell, that ye may spede well, for all we that bene aboute the kyng wolde that Launcelot ded beste of ony knyght lyvyng.'

(p. 853)

Gawain has become the king's principal adviser. Arthur seems to have abdicated his responsibility in the confrontation with Lancelot. When the damsel comes before Arthur, Gawain is clearly in control and overrules not only Arthur but Arthur's other vassals.

And so with thys sir Lucan lad the damesell to the kyng, where he sate with syr Gawayne, for to hyre what she wolde say. So whan she had tolde her tale the watir ran oute of the kyngis yen. And all the lordys were full glad for to advyce the kyng to be accorded with sir Launcelot, save all only sir Gawayne. And he seyde,

'My lorde, myne uncle, what woll ye do? Woll ye now turne agayne, now ye ar paste thys farre uppon youre journey? All the worlde woll speke of you vylany and shame.'

'Now,' seyde kyng Arthur, 'wyte you well, sir Gawayne, I woll do as ye advyse me; and yet mesemyth,' seyde kyng Arthur, 'hys fayre proffers were nat good to be reffused. But sytthyn I am com so far uppon thys journey, I woll that ye gyff the damesell her answeere, for I may nat speke to her for pite: for her profirs ben so large.'

Than sir Gawayne seyde unto the damesell thus:

'Sey ye to sir Launcelot that hyt ys waste laboure now to sew to myne uncle. For telle hym, and he wolde have made ony laboure for pease, he sholde have made hit or thys tyme, for telle hym now hit ys to late. And say to hym that I, sir Gawayne, so sende hym word, that I promyse hym by the faythe that I owghe to God and to knyghthode, I shall never leve hym tylle he hatha slayne me or I hym!'

So the damesell wapte and departed, and so there was many a wepyng yghc.

(p. 853)

In the first sentence there is the significant detail that the king and Gawain are sitting together. They may be sitting slightly apart from the others, for they are mentioned specially, even though the other barons are present. Gawain's advice is directed only to Arthur and not to the other knights in the hope of reaching a general agreement. Gawain's argument is entirely emotional and has little to do with the present situation. He simply encourages Arthur to continue with his policy through inertia and fear for his reputation. Arthur meekly submits to Gawain's policy, although he seems to have some doubts about it. He is so cowed by the situation and by Gawain's energy that he allows Gawain to answer the damsel. The king, not his adviser, was the object of the damsel's journey, but Gawain's power over the king is such that he can reply to this peace overture in an uncompromising, warlike way, against unanimous opposition including that of Arthur.

Looking back on the Morte Darthur from the perspective of the last book, one sees that in his time Arthur has had two influential advisers, Merlin and Gawain. The old guide---now playful, now admonitory---of Arthur's youth is replaced at the end by an impetuous man with none of Merlin's magic gifts. Arthur may have learned some statecraft from Merlin, but he is only bullied by Gawain.

Palomides

The career of this knight is informed with failure on two fronts. It is an ambiguous failure in one respect, for although he never catches his Questing Beast, the quest continues indefinitely, and he therefore cannot be said to have failed completely. His feud with Tristram, however, is doomed from the start. Palomides is characterised by humility: not chivalrous modesty, but a humility stemming from real inferiority. His long speech to Tristram at the end of the Book of Tristram (discussed above, pp. 97-98) may be considered as the outcome of a kind of crisis,

for he decides to change two important facets of his character. He reconciles himself with his sworn enemy, Tristram, and he at last agrees to be baptised. It is a crisis in that it is a turning point of Palomides' character, but it is not an especially good example of the phenomenon, for it is not the cataclysmic point in the plot that some crises may be (Arthur's predicament at the beginning of the Grail Quest, for example). Palomides' 'crisis' is a static condition which stems from the hopelessness of his enmity with Tristram (based on an equally hopeless love for Isode) and from his futile search for the Questing Beast. The fact that he is a Saracen suggests that his religion, too, is futile. In spite of Palomides' seeming wrong-headedness, he is depicted as an admirable knight. He has moments of great bravery and prowess, as at the tournament at Lonezep, where he defeats ten knights in quick succession (pp. 536-37). His bravery completely deserts him when he is confronted by Tristram, however. When asked what knight he hates most, he replies that he hates Tristram, 'for and I may mete wyth hym the tone of us shall dye' (p. 518). When the knight turns out to be Tristram himself, Palomides performs a farcical about-face. 'I pray you, sir Trystram, forgyff me all my evyll wyll! . . . I wote nat what eylyth me, for mesemyth that ye ar a good knyght . . .' (p. 519). In a general way, Palomides is imprisoned by circumstances. His love for Isode, his alleged hatred of Tristram, his strange compulsion to search for the Questing Beast, and his mistaken religion all condemn him to a career of swimming against the current.

Conclusion

As might be expected in a story devoted to such an extent to the description of action, the characters in Malory are mainly instruments of the plot. That is, they are part of the plot rather than separate, free agents who shape the plot. A repetition of events and ideas may serve as an oblique comparison of two or more characters. It may also be aesthetically satisfying as musical repetitions are satisfying, showing

a progression or development of events. The plot, by bringing some immediate problem upon a character, may illuminate elements of his personality. Such a 'problem' or 'crisis' is any situation in which a character is forced to make a decision and act. Malory brings the narrative to a point at which nothing further can happen without some act on the part of a character. That is, unless he begins some whole new story line, the present action can go no further from only manipulation of external events. One kind of crisis is the 'fork', in which the protagonist is forced to choose between two actions. For example, a knight may go through the forest, endlessly challenging others to battle, rescuing damsels, and lodging at abbeys, but when he is forced to decide whether to stay in prison or to fight as someone's champion, nothing else can happen until he makes his decision. The story comes to a complete halt, and depends, as it were, on the character himself to keep it going. The sense of authorial manipulation (as in a series of battles and rescues) is gone, and one feels that the character has somehow come alive. In the moment of confrontation when the protagonist is made to act in some decisive way, clues to his character are revealed--revealed rather than developed, in most cases, for there is a sense of pre-existence and constancy about Malory's characters. For the most part they are unchanging, but like figures being carved from stone, they gradually emerge from their background and become distinct personalities. It is just this sense of gradual and imperfect revelation of already existing facts that gives the greatest realism to Malory's characters and events.

IV. SHIFTS OF FOCUS

There are several related devices that Malory uses in the Morte Darthur which involve changes in the narrative flow. They are shifts in one medium or another, and in a general way, they either speed or slow the pace of the action and are valuable for that function alone. There are other uses for individual examples of this device, and the one we shall be most concerned with is the function of developing character. However, I shall need to discuss the entire phenomenon in order to explain the narrower use of the device. I believe that 'shift in focus' adequately describes the category of this tool. The shifts I have found are verbal, temporal, spatial, and visual.

The verbal shift in focus is a change from indirect to direct speech, or the reverse, although its most striking use is in highlighting a direct quotation in a paragraph of indirect discourse. The direct quotation is often epigrammatic or gnomic. When the opposite shift occurs, its function is usually to speed the progress of the conversation--to summarise quickly the gist of the speeches in order to get on to something more important. The temporal shift is simply a narrative jump forward or backward to related events. One battle recalls another, whether or not it has happened yet by strict chronological reckoning. The spatial shift is most frequent in those episodes in which several adventures are occurring simultaneously, and at a pause in one the scene changes to another. There is often a little backtracking in time as we follow one knight's adventure and then take up his companion at the point where they parted the day before. This shift in time, however, does not compare with the category of what I have called the temporal shift, because the time involved is usually only a short period and is part of the same general division of time. The visual shift is partly

temporal and partly spatial, but much smaller in scope. Changes in time are of only a few minutes, and changes in space may be only a few feet. For all of this miniaturisation, it is more striking than the other two, perhaps because it is more integrated into the surrounding action. The effect is remarkably like the film technique of following a long-range shot with a close-up. One principal use of this device is to add another dimension to a battle scene by showing the reaction of the onlookers. While the temporal and the spatial shifts are more commonplace and pedestrian, the visual and verbal changes seem indicative of a conscious artistry.

Verbal Shifts of Focus

All of these kinds of movement give the impression of revealed fragments of a whole; many adventures are going on at once, and we see only some of them. In the case of verbal shifts, this sense of fragmentation means that we hear only parts of conversations, but at the same time understand the gist. In one episode, that of Lancelot and the daughter of King Bagdemagus, there are two instances of this device, each illustrating a separate use. In the first the lady helps Lancelot escape from Morgan le Fay. The action is telescoped into two sentences, and although there is no indirect speech, a direct quotation from Lancelot slows the action at the significant moment as he effects his escape.

And so she departed and come on the morne erly and
 founde hym redy. Than she brought hym oute of twelve
 lockys, and toke hym his armour and his owne horse; and
 lyghtly he sadyld hym and toke his spere in his honde,
 and so rode forth, and sayde,
 'Damesell, I shall not fayle, by the grace of God.'
 (p. 185)

The direct quotation and consequent slowing of the narrative have the effect of suggesting a pause as Lancelot rides away on horseback.

The other direct quotation I have mentioned seems to be the important final statement of a long speech which is reported in synopsis.

Than sir Launcelot made his couplaynte unto the kyng,
 how he was betrayed; and how he was brother unto sir Lyonell,
 whyche was departed frome hym he wyste not where, and how
 his doughter had delyverde hym oute of preson. 'Therefore,
 whyle that I lyve, I shall do hir servyse and all hir
 kynrede.'

(p. 187)

Here again there is a similar sense of speed and slowing down. There is a telescoping, of speech rather than of actions, and a summary of the scene in the form of a direct quotation.

Still another noticeable verbal shift is a snippet of direct expression surrounded by indirect speech. In this résumé of Arthur's message, the centre quoted material stands out like a rough texture against a smooth background: 'Than kyng Arthure lette wryte unto kyng Pellynor and prayde hym in all haste to make hym redy "with suche peple as we myght lyghtlyeste arere," and to hyghe hym aftir in haste' (p. 93). It is not simply a change in punctuation, for the pronoun changes to the first person. There seems to be no compelling reason to single out this particular part of the message to quote exactly; the ending summons would be as appropriate. However, the effect of picking out a snatch of the middle of the call to arms gives us the flavour of the whole message and the sense that we have actually overheard part of it instead of merely hearing a second-hand paraphrase.

There is a battle scene in the 'Tale of Sir Launcelot' which is representative of several devices at once. It illustrates a common structuring of scenes: the overall view, the particular comment, and the telescoping of time.

Wyth that com in sir Launcelot, and he threste in with his spere in the thyckyst of the pres; and there he smote downe with one spere fyve knyghtes, and of four of them he brake their backys. And in that thrange he smote downe the kyng of North Galys, and brake his thygh in that falle. All this doyng of sir Launcelot saw the three knyghtes of Arthurs, and seyde, 'Yondir is a shrewde gaste,' seyde sir Mador de la Porte, 'therefore have here ons at hym.' So they encountred, and sir Launcelot bare hym downe horse and man so that his sholdir wente oute of joynte.

(p. 188)

It is interesting that part of the speed results from the habit of noting both the blow and the wound sustained at the same time. In this short scene it occurs three times. Not only does Lancelot strike down five knights, but the fall breaks the backs of four of them--a development that we would not ordinarily learn about until much later. In presenting the original blow, Malory defines it by adding the result of it. There are a fairly limited number of ways in which one knight can knock another off his horse, but some extra variety may be introduced by elaborating another variable, that of the wound incurred. After the quick sketch, full of warlike verbs, of Lancelot fighting Bagdemagus' enemies, there is the verbal observation of knights not yet in the fray. This, of course, is also what I have called a visual shift, for the scene changes slightly to another part of the same action. The quotation is an effective interruption, for it introduces a change of mood. It is not a battle-cry, as one might expect in the middle of a battle, but a relatively quiet, reasoned remark. The speed is promptly resumed after the quotation with a summary of action exactly like the previous sentences: an encounter in which Mador is borne down and his shoulder dislocated. It should be noted that of these three battles, the one with the king of North Gales is original with Malory, for in the source the king was only a spectator.¹

Also in the same tale there is a passage of direct discourse which begins in the middle of an indirect sentence. It gives an impression of gradualness: of the speech emerging into earshot.

And than there was grete joy betwene hem, and they made sir Launcelot all the chere that they myghte. And so on the morne sir Launcelot toke his leve and bade sir Melyot hyghe hym 'to the courte of my lorde Arthure, for hit drawyth nyghe to the feste of Pentecoste. And there, by the grace of God, ye shall fynde me.' And therewith they departed.

(pp. 204-5)

¹Works, ed. Vinaver, III, 1418.

The main virtue of this device is to cut out any narratively unnecessary formal greeting that might precede the speech. The quoted matter is the substance of the whole speech; the only thing apparently left out is 'hyghe ye', which is reported indirectly. A very similar usage occurs at the beginning of the same tale.

Thus sir Launcelot rested hym longe with play and game;
and than he thought hymself to preve in straunge adventures,
and bade his newew, sir Lyonell, for to make hym redy, 'for
we muste go seke adventures'.

(p. 180)

The quote here, beginning with 'for', gives the impression of being an important statement, picked out of indirect context because it sums up the reason for the command just before it. The same statement of a reason exists in the previous passage: 'for hit drawyth nyghe to the feste of Pentecoste', but since it is surrounded by other quoted material, it does not have quite the same effect. In any case, the importance of a direct quotation in expanding character is simply that it is almost always better to hear the person's exact words than merely a second-hand report of what he said. The indirect statement, however, may be better for expressing understatement.

Sometimes an indirect passage introduces a dialogue, as in this scene in 'Gawain, Ywain, and Marhalt':

And than he [an anonymous knight] was ware of sir Gawayne
and salewed hym, and prayde to God to sende hym muche
worshyp.

'As for that,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'gramercy. Also
I pray to God sende you honoure and worshyp.'

'A,' sayde the knyght, 'I may lay that on syde, for
sorow and shame commyth unto me after worshyppe.'

(p. 119)

The knight then fights against ten others. When he first speaks to Gawain, he has just ridden up. The movement from the distance is apparent here in the three phases as he first notices Gawain, then gets near enough to speak, and finally an indirect speech is reported. In the dialogue, however, the first direct voice is that of Gawain, who is emphasised by

being the first to speak directly. Gawain's speech is the most mundane sort, but it sets the tone of their relationship and allows Gawain to watch the ensuing battle with some detachment. In the two following adventures that Gawain sees he becomes progressively more involved with the combatants.² It is only later that he decides to help this knight, who he learns is Pelleas, but their acquaintance has already been established through this superficial exchange.

Their meeting furnishes another instance of the shift to direct speech. Gawain has been told of Pelleas' predicament and goes to help him. They meet, Gawain asks Pelleas why he is so sad, and Pelleas tells him. Instead of repeating the story, which is already familiar to the reader (and to Gawain too, for that matter), Malory simply says that Pelleas told it to Gawain. But there follows an extended comment by Pelleas on his own misery. It is given as direct speech because it is a personal epilogue to the bare statement of the facts. The full passage is this:

So on the morow sir Gawayne toke his leve of his oste,
sir Carados, and rode into the foreste. And at the laste
he mette with sir Pelleas makynge grete mone oute of mesure;
so eche of hem salewed other, and asked hym why he made such
sorow. And as hit above rehersyth sir Pelleas tolde sir
Gawayne.

'But allwayes I suffir her knyghtes to fare so with me
as ye sawe yestirday, in truste at the laste to wyne hir love;
for she knoweth well all hir knyghtes sholde nat lyghtly
wyne me and me lyst to fyght with them to the uttirmoste.
Wherefore and I loved hir nat so sore I had lever dye an
hondred tymes, and I myght dye so ofte rathir than I wolde
suffir that dispyte, but I truste she wold have pyté uppon
me at the laste; for love causyth many a good knyght to
suffir to have his entente, but alas, I am infortunate!'

(p. 122)

This scene does not occur in the French source. Vinaver comments,
'Whereas the French writer thinks that the knight is amply justified
in besmirching his reputation for prowess in obedience to his lady,

²The structure of these episodes is discussed more fully above,
pp. 32-33.

[Malory] endeavours to assure his readers that but for the expectation of a reward Pelleas would have preferred death'.³ Whether we owe it to Malory or to an intermediate source, there is in Pelleas' speech a note of hysteria and incoherence. His first sentence is relatively restrained, but the second is so convoluted that it is no surprise to learn just after this speech that the distraught knight almost falls off his horse with grief. 'That dyspyte' seems to have an antecedent but does not, except one that might have appeared in his speech to Gawain, which has not been reported. 'That dyspyte' means 'being beaten'. The repetition of 'truste' and 'at the laste' adds a touching pathos to this rambling outcry. Pelleas' speech presents a desperate and woebegone knight in his own words, and the character of Pelleas is all the more vivid for it.

The presentation of a speech as both direct and indirect discourse combines the best of both forms. Malory can quickly sum up a speech, but by giving the last part of it directly he can give the impression that it has all been given directly, or that the most important part has been quoted exactly. A perfect example is this speech from 'Isode the Fair':

Than sir Trystrames wente unto La Beale Isode and toke his leve. And than he tolde what he was, and how a lady tolde hym that he sholde never be hole 'untyll I cam into this contrey where the poyson was made, wherethorow I was nere my deth, had nat your ladyshyp bene.'

(p. 294)

As in many places in Malory, there is also a sense of movement, or a sense of growing awareness. It is as though a conversation seen from a distance has suddenly become audible. A sense of speed, too, is involved. The presentation of the fact of the conversation and its general subject matter gives way to the conversation itself; the quick summary slows to the andante of the final spoken words.

A more complicated use of the same device occurs shortly afterwards in the text at the beginning of the episode of the rivalry of Mark and

³Works, III, 1359.

Tristram for Segwarides' wife. In the middle of the speech there is a snippet of direct address, then a return to indirect.

So hit befelle uppon a day, this lady sente a dwarff unto sir Trystrames and bade hym, as he loved hir, that he wolde be with hir the nexte nyght folowyng.

'Also she charged you that ye com nat to hir but yf ye be well armed.' For her lorde was called a good knyght.
(p. 295)

It begins as a paraphrase of the lady's message to Tristram, but the direct speech is the dwarf's words, which are a paraphrase themselves of the lady's message. The final sentence is an authorial intrusion to clarify the important part of the message, which has been stressed through quotation. The striking thing about this passage is that the pronoun changes to the second person. In the previous passage cited, Tristram, the speaker, changes from third person to first person. In the present passage, however, the lady remains in the third person, but the person quoting her changes from the author to the dwarf, and Tristram is addressed in the second person instead of being spoken about in the third. In this short passage the perspective changes from authorial paraphrase of the lady's message, to the dwarf's paraphrase (but as a direct quotation) to a narrative statement by the author.

Most of the verbal shifts, however, are more pedestrian. The more usual sort are like this glimpse of Sir Bleoberis: '. . . so this sir Bleoberys cam unto the courte of kyng Marke, and there he asked kynge Marke to gyff hym a bone, "what gyffte that I wold aske in this courte"' (p. 297). It is a very trite situation, and any variation of the description is welcome. As usual, the part given in direct quotation is the final important point in the speech and the part which surprises King Mark, for 'he mervayled of his askynge' (p. 297). Even though the situation is so common, the king's surprise at the request is sufficient reason for quoting the most daring part of the speech, that is, not just the request for a gift, but an unnamed gift.

A brief interlude in a direct conversation can be used to inject a bit of straight narrative. This is part of a scene in which Sagramour and Dodinas challenge Tristram while he is on his way to challenge Bleoberis:

'Ye charge me with a grete thyng,' seyde sir Trystrames, 'and sytthyn ye lyst to wete, ye shall know and undirstonde that my name is sir Trystrames de Lyones, kynge Malyodas son, and nevew unto kynge Marke.'

Than were they two knyghtes fayne that they had mette with sir Trystrames, and so they prayde hym to abyde in their felyshyp.

'Nay,' seyde sir Trystrames, 'for I muste have ado wyth one of your felawys. His name is sir Bleoberys de Ganys.'
(p. 300)

The meek request of the two knights fades into insignificance by being reported only by indirect speech. The two strong, assertive statements by Tristram are broken only by a murmur. Most important, the shift to indirect discourse provides a chance to give a reason for the speech along with the speech itself. By not recording the exact words of the speech, this sentence suggests a servile tone (especially following, as it does, Tristram's triumph over them in combat after they have taunted him with the cowardice of Cornish knights). Tristram not only defeats them in battle but rebuffs their attempts to curry favour.

There is a comparable effect in another scene in which a minor character's indirect speech sets the stage for a fairly long direct speech by Tristram.

Than whan sir Trystrames was in his pavylyon Governayle his man com and tolde hym how that kynge Angwysh of Irelande was com thidir, and he was in grete dystresse; and there he tolde hym how he was somned and appeled of murthur.

'So God me helpe,' seyde sir Trystrames, 'this is the beste tydynges that ever com to me this seven yere, for now shall the kynge of Irelande have nede of my helpe. For I dere say there is no knyght in this contrey that is nat in Arthures courte that dare do batayle wyth sir Blamoure de Ganys. And for to wyne the love of the kynge of Irelande I woll take the batayle uppon me. And therefore, Governayle, bere me this worde, I charge the, to the kynge.'

(p. 306)

I have given Tristram's entire speech to show the relative length of it to the brief introductory stage-setting speech of Governail's. The servant's speech is not only given indirectly but also summarised. The two how's suggest that the actual speech may have been very much longer than this précis. Tristram's reply, by contrast, is longer, but still compact. There are certain subtleties of thought in it: his idea to help King Angwish is made up of a desire to win the king's favour and the realistic self-knowledge that he is the only non-Round Table knight capable of the task. It is not a bragging statement because he distinguishes between Arthur's knights and other knights. If his statement were only a swaggering speech of a proud knight he would not have put himself in the less desirable category and allowed the suggestion to stand that many, if not all, of the Round Table might be equal to the battle with Blamour.

In the subsequent battle, Blamour has a speech which we have seen many times before.

Than anone sir Blamour avoyded his horse and pulled
oute his swerde and toke his shyld before hym and bade
sir Trystrames alyght, 'for thoughe my horse hath fayled,
I truste to God the erthe woll nat fayle me!'

(p. 309)

From its frequency, it seems to be a kind of cliché epigram. The only advantage of this prefixed indirect speech is that it allows an uninterrupted series of verbs ('avoyded', 'pulled', 'toke', and 'bade') without the formal introduction of a speech. Rather, the indirect imperative, 'alyght', expressed as an infinitive, blends into the spoken words, which are the familiar finale indicating the reason for an action.

At the end of 'Isode the Fair' there is an exchange of letters between Isode and Guinevere. There are a number of important things in Guinevere's letter that could have been put into direct speech, but again only the final bit is quoted.

And so in this meanewhyle La Beale Isode made a lettir unto quene Gwenyvere complaynyng her of the untrouthe of sir Trystrames, how he had wedded the kynges doughter of Bretayne. So quene Gwenyver sente her another letter and bade her be of goode comforte, for she sholde have joy aftir sorow: for sir Trystrames was so noble a knyght called that by craftes of sorcery ladyes wolde make suche noble men to wedde them. 'But the ende', quene Gwenyver seyde, 'shulde be thus, that he shall hate her and love you bettir than ever he dud.'

(p. 331)

This example is also interesting because the letter is presented as being spoken aloud. The speech is then only a 'figurative' kind of direct speech, unless we think of Guinevere dictating the letter or of Isode reading Guinevere's words aloud. The final prophecy is more important than the rest of the letter, and is further emphasised by being quoted as direct speech. Coming at the end of the whole section, it is on a larger scale what many other examples have been: a concluding statement containing either a summary, the key element, or the reason behind the earlier indirect quotation.

When a reason is presented in the final, spoken statement, it is not always a statement which is justified, but sometimes an action. In this passage from 'Lamerok de Galys' the action is reported, and then Tristram gives the reason:

So whan sir Trystrames was armed as hym lyked beste and well shylded and swerded, he dressed to hym on foote, 'for well I know that sir Nabone wolde nat abyde a stroke with a speare, and therefore he woll sle all knyghtes horse.'

(p. 335)

This passage is somewhat remarkable because the quotation does not continue an indirect quotation, but seems taken out of some separate, unreported speech. There is no introduction to the speech at all--no suggestion that Tristram has been saying anything. Furthermore, the speech is not addressed to anyone. This passage occurs immediately before Nabon's challenge to fight; when Tristram says this he seems to be standing in front of Nabon, but the speech is an aside.

The direct quotation which is the important end of a sentence and statement of a conclusion of some sort is seen again in this tribute to Gareth:

. . . all tho ladyes tolde the kynge how that sir Gareth had delyverde them fro the Dolorous Towre, and slew the Browne Knyght withoute Pyté: 'and therefore all we and oure ayres for evermore wold do omage unto sir Gareth of Orkeney.'

(p. 272)

The previous action, which the reader already knows, is quickly summed up, and then the ladies' response to it is given in exact speech. The quoted statement is interesting for its legalistic tone; it sounds very much like the conclusion of a legal document, especially with the reference to heirs. This suggestion of jurisprudence adds to the sense of the passage being an important conclusion.

More often the concluding statement is on a much lower key. Compare the above passage with this one in Gareth's battle with the Red Knight: 'And therewith he bade the Rede Knyght of the Rede Laundes make hym redy, "and lette us do oure batayle to the utteraunce"' (p. 239). The quotation is a conclusion: it is the heart of the challenge to the Red Knight, but it is not remarkable in any way, either in the context or the phrasing. This device can become useless in passages where nothing is achieved by it. In this same battle between Gareth and the Red Knight, the latter's allies and vassals plead with Gareth to spare his life:

Than cam there many erlys and barowns and noble knyghtes and prayde that knyght to save his lyff, 'and take hym to your presoner.' And all they felle uppon their kneis and prayde hym of mercy that he wolde save his lyff.

(p. 240)

Putting this into a direct statement seems to add little if anything to the scene. It does, however, point out the alternative to killing the Red Knight and Gareth's compensation for not killing him. It also helps to separate the repetition of 'prayde' and 'save his lyff' from the first

mention of them. It can be considered as an ending (because it is slightly more emphatic than the preceding material), and as a separation of one set of pleas from another. Between 'prayde that knyght to save his lyff' and a near repetition of that prayer, the petitioners 'felle uppon their kneis'. The value of the quotation is that it emphasises the fact that there are two separate supplications.

In the passage which follows there are two interesting uses of a sudden change from indirect to direct speech.

And than were they ware and saw hym com rydyng, and whan he was com to them he tolde all how he had spedde and escaped in the dyspyte of all the castell, 'and som of the beste of hem woll telle no talys.'

'Thow gabbyst falsely,' seyde the damesell, 'that dare I make good! For as a foole and a dastarde to all knyghthode they have latte the passe.'

'That may ye preve,' seyde La Cote Male Tayle.

With that she sente a corroure of hersthat allway rode with her, and so he rode thydir lyghtly and spurred how and in what wyse that knyght ascaped oute of that castell. Than all the knyghtes cursed hym and seyde he was a fende and no man, 'for he hath slayne here twelve of oure beste knyghtis, and we wente unto this day that hit had bene to muche for sir Trystrames de Lyones othir for sir Launcelot de Lake. And in dyspyte and magré of us all he is departed frome us.'

And so hir curroure com agayne and tolde the damesell all how sir La Cote Male Tayle spedde at the Castell Orgulus. Than she smote downe the hede and seyde but lytyll.

(pp. 346-47)

The action of the events is speeded up considerably; between the argument and its conclusion there is the courier's long errand. But the returning courier, for the purposes of the narrative, apparently finds the damsel and La Cote Male Taile still in the same attitude of quarrel in which he left them. For the argument to be soundly and forcefully won by La Cote Male Taile the proof of his deeds must come as soon as possible after the haughty accusation by the lady. Direct quotation is used sparingly, but for a good effect. The knight's first direct speech is the core of his boast: 'and som of the beste of hem woll telle no talys'. It is this boast, not just that he escaped but that he also killed several of the enemy, that the lady questions so fiercely. It is essential that her

speech be given in exact quotation to show her extreme contempt for La Cote Male Taile so that, in turn, her embarrassment will be all the more acute. His restrained answer, 'That may ye preve', derives its strength from the contrast with the lady's outburst. Like some of the examples I have discussed earlier, La Cote Male Taile's first speech is a transition from a speech summary ('. . . he tolde all how . . .') to a direct dialogue. It both concludes his description and invites the damsel's insults.

The scene suddenly shifts to the Castle Orgulus. We have seen previously, before this passage, how La Cote Male Taile fought and escaped from the castle; we already know that he slew twelve knights. But this is the first time we have had the reaction of the defeated knights in the castle. The sentence beginning 'Than all the knyghtes . . . ' is an extraordinary example of Malory's style. First there is a statement of attitude but not actual words, even quoted indirectly. Then follows an indirect statement of actual words, '. . . seyde he was a fende and no man'. This may be either another consensus statement like the 'cursed him', or it may be part of a speech of one of these knights. The speaker of the sentence subtly changes from 'all the knyghtes' to a speaker representing them. The intermediate phrase, 'seyde he was a fende and no man', is the link between the two kinds of speaker, because either of them could have said it. The enemy knight's description of the battle with La Cote Male Taile is another kind of shift of focus: the reader has recently seen this battle from the hero's point of view, and now he is reminded of it again, but from the opposite perspective. This knight's speech is a curious mixture of detached reporting and shock at being defeated. There is a certain unreality in the situation: why does the hostile castle allow a mere courier to enter and leave freely, and why are they so willing to chronicle their own defeat? This very 'fault' contributes to the atmosphere of shock and defeat: the knights of the castle are so demoralised and astounded that they will tell their story

to anyone. The first sentence is somewhat disjointed and rambles in a way slightly reminiscent of Pelleas' speech discussed earlier. The verb 'went' would make more sense in the conditional perfect, with the meaning 'we would have thought' rather than 'we thought'. As it stands, it sounds as if the knights had specifically considered the possibility of Tristram or Lancelot killing twelve of them and thought it beyond either of them. What the knight presumably means is that they had not thought of it before, but if they had, they would have thought the feat impossible for even Tristram or Lancelot. The final sentence, by comparison, is surprisingly calm, perhaps because of its contrasting shortness. There is, nevertheless, a suggestion of shocked awe. The tautology of 'dyspyte' and 'magré' emphasise his wonder, as does the repetition of 'of us all' and 'frome us'. All this is referred to when the courier 'tolde . . . all how' La Cote Male Taile escaped. The damsel's predictable reaction is reported in an authorial understatement: rather than saying 'but lytyll' she probably said nothing at all, in marked contrast to her vocal attack only a few lines before. This whole episode of sending the messenger to verify the battle seems to be original with Malory,⁴ and so we are on surer ground than usual in speaking of his style.

The combination of direct and indirect speech can be used to emphasise an exclamation by expressing it directly in surroundings of indirect speech.

And whan sir Dynas cam home and myste hys paramoure
and hys brachettes, than was he the more wrother for hys
brachettis, more than for hys lady. So than he rode aftir
the knyght that had hys paramoure, and bade hym turne and
juste. So sir Dynas smote hym downe, that with the falle
he brake hys legge and hys arme. And than hys lady and
paramour cryed and seyde, 'Sir Dynas, mercy!' and she wolde
love hym bettir than ever she ded.

'Nay,' seyde sir Dynas, 'I shall never truste them that
onys betrayeth me, and therefore as ye have begunne so ende,
for I woll nevyr meddill with you.'

(p. 409)

⁴Works, ed. Vinaver, III, 1467-68.

The whole episode is apparently Malory's own invention, for according to Professor Vinaver, this passage is a rewriting of the French version, in which there is no battle, but the brachets choose between Dinas and the lady's abductor, because, says Dinas, their instinct is more reliable than a woman's heart.⁵ Part of this attitude remains, however, in that Dinas is more concerned about his dogs than his lady and he completely renounces her because of her infidelity. Her exclamation, 'Sir Dynas, mercy!' suggests the tone in which the indirect speech is uttered. By suggesting a tone of desperation, Malory allows the reader to imagine the rest. The lady's snippet of direct speech leads up stylistically to Dinas' longer speech, which is an important statement in the confrontation with the lady, but is also important in its relation to the first part of the paragraph. It explains why he was more concerned for his brachets than for the lady; it suggests that at the outset he had decided to reject the lady. In turn, his motives for battling the lady's lover are seen not to be to win the lady back, but simply to avenge himself on the knight who deceived him and to recover his brachets.

Another scene in which an exclamation in direct speech serves to heighten the emotion of a following indirect speech is in the episode of Guinevere and the poisoned apple.

So whan the kynge and the quene were togidirs the kynge asked the quene how this case befelle. Than the quene seyde, 'Sir, as Jesu be my helpe!' She wyst nat how, nother in what manere.

'Where ys sir Launcelot?' seyde kynge Arthure. 'And he were here he wolde nat grucche to do batayle for you.'

(p. 749)

Arthur's indirect question is answered by the queen's direct exclamation and indirect answer. Arthur's rejoinder is in direct speech, and a conversation between them in direct speech follows. The stylistic movement is similar to the previous example, for the exclamation acts as a

⁵Works, III, 1480.

transition between passages of indirect and direct speech. The queen's passionate outcry is more effective in direct quotation, and it indicates the way the following indirect sentence is to be interpreted. Above all, it sounds sincere. Any indirect rendering of 'Sir, as Jesu be my helpe!' would sound false. Subtle suggestions of the queen's state of mind are made here. The reader already knows she is innocent, for Fionel's plot to poison Gawain has been explained. Guinevere would naturally be expected to be astounded at the poisoning at her feast. After the exclamation, the tautology in the sentence 'She wylt nat how, nother in what manere' suggests a confused state of mind.

It is not unusual to find an indirect question being answered by a direct statement. This device, like the previous one, can be a transition to a conversation in direct discourse, and it can underscore an important answer. At the tournament at Surluse Lamerok drives away Palomides:

So whan he was departed the kynge cam to sir Lamerok and thankyd hym of his goodnes and prayde hym to tell hym his name.

'Syr,' seyde sir Lamerok, 'wyte you well I owghe you my servyse, but as at this tyme I woll nat abyde here, for I se off myne enemyes many aboute you.'

'Alas!' seyde kynge Arthure, 'nowe wote I well hit is sir Lamerok de Galys. A, sir Lamerok, abyde wyth me! And be my crowne, I shall never fayle the: and nat so hardy in sir Gawaynes hede, nothir none of his bretherne, to do the wronge.'

(p. 494)

The innocuous question, rightly played down in indirect speech, has yielded an answer closely connected to the great feud theme of the Morte Darthur. Lamerok's allusion to his enemies is enough to tell Arthur who he is. Arthur's promise to protect him is ironic in the light of Lamerok's later murder.

In this longer passage there are two interesting examples of combinations of direct and indirect speech. During the Quest Gawain has just taken part in a battle:

And sir Gawayne rode tyll he com to an ermytayge, and there he founde the good man seyyng hys evynsonge of cure lady. And there sir Gawayne asked Herberow for charité, and the good man graunted hym gladly. Than the good man asked hym what he was.

'Sir,' he seyde, 'I am a knyght of kyng Arthures that am in the queste of the Sankgreall, and my name ys sir Gawayne.'

'Sir,' seyde the good man, 'I wolde wete how hit stondith betwyxte God and you.'

'Sir,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'I wyll with a good wyll shew you my lyff if hit please you.'

There he tolde the eremyte how a monke of an abbay 'called me wycked knyght'.

'He myght well sey hit,' seyde the eremyte, 'for whan ye were made first knyght ye sholde have takyn you to knyghtly dedys and vertuous lyvyng. And ye have done the contrary, for ye have lyved myschevously many wyntirs.

(pp. 650-51)

First there is the asking of herberow and granting of it, both in indirect speech. Then the hermit's indirect question is answered by a commonplace self-identification speech by Gawain. However, it is the most important speech so far in the episode, because this formula of introduction is an indispensable convention, judging from its constant use. Gawain's offer to 'shew you my lyff' introduces a presumably long explanation of the events leading up to the next important point, that he has been called wicked. This resumption of direct speech in turn introduces a very long speech of direct discourse by the hermit, of which I have quoted only the beginning. In the Old French Queste del Saint Graal nearly all of this scene is narrated in indirect speech, except for the hermit's long tirade. If Malory was trying to undermine the importance of the religious figures in the Queste, this scene may have been part of the attempt, for Gawain has a few important speeches and is not entirely the passive listener that he is in the French source.

The fact that it is not always possible to tell where these direct quotations begin and end is shown by a discrepancy between the three-volume edition and the smaller Oxford Standard Authors version of the same text. In the Tristram section of the longer edition there is this passage:

'Now,' seyde sir Gryfflet, 'be my counceyle lat us sende to yondir arraunte knyghte and wete whether he be of kynge Arthurs courte, for, as I deme, hit is sir Lameroke de Galys.'

So they sente unto hym and prayde that stronge knyght to telle 'us his name', and whethir he were of kynge Arthurs courte other nat.

(p. 588)

The last paragraph of the same passage in the shorter edition reads:

So they sente unto hym and prayde that stronge knyght 'to telle us his name', and whethir he were of kynge Arthurs courte other nat.

(p. 439)

Clearly 'that stronge knyght' is part of an indirect speech, and so is 'whether . . . nat' but there is some sort of change when 'they' become 'us'. Grifflet and his companions are the 'they' of the narrative, and become 'us' when they speak, but if they are addressing the strange knight, 'his name' should be 'your name'. Because of the one change in pronoun, something should be indicated as direct speech, but perhaps it should be only 'to telle us', since the third person pronoun is then used to refer to the other knight.

To avoid presenting Malory's style in a vacuum, I will discuss a few passages from two of his sources, the alliterative Morte Arthure and the Old French Queste. In the alliterative poem Arthur's actions and speeches after he kills the giant are broken up into direct and indirect sections. The people have just thanked Arthur for freeing them from the giant:

Thane the conquerour cristenly carpez to his pople,
 "Thankes Gode," quod he, "of this grace, and no gone elles,
 ffor it was neuer manns dede, bot myghte of Hym selfene,
 Or myracle of hys modyre, that mylde es tille alle!"
 He somond than the schippemene scharpely ther-aftyre,
 To schake furthe with the schyre mene to schifte the gudez;
 "Alle the myche tresour that traytour had wonnene,
 To comouns of the contré, clergye and other,
 Luke it be done and delte to my dere pople,
 That none pleyne of theire parte, o peyne of 3our lyfez."
 He comaunde hys cosyne, with knyghtlyche wordez,
 To make a kyrke on the cragg, ther the corse lengez,

And a couent there-in, Criste for to serfe,
 In mynde of that martyre, that in the monte rystez.
 (ll. 1208-21)⁶

Just as is typical of Malory, the most important speeches are highlighted by being quoted directly. Arthur is shown in two important stances: attributing his deeds to God and distributing the booty among the deserving common people. The summarised indirect speeches are important and revealing of character, but are mainly concerned with administrative detail and would clog up the flow of the narrative. Malory's rendering of this is contained in only a few lines:

'All thanke ye God,' seyde Arthure, 'and no man ellys.
 Looke that the gooddys be skyffted, that none playne of
 his parte.'

Than he commaunded his cosyn, sir Howell, to make
 a kyrke on that same cragge in the worshyppe of Seynte
 Mychael.

(p. 148)

In spite of the telescoping, the two important indications of Arthur's character are retained.

The French prose, by comparison to these two English styles, has a modern sophistication about it, since the sentence structure is varied with subordinate clauses. Direct and indirect quotation may be used to give an almost mottled effect to a passage. Galahad helps a wounded knight:

Et lors demande a Melyant que il veut que il li face,
 car il fera por lui ce que il porra. «Sire, se je pooie
 soffrir le chevauchier, je voldroie que vos me meissiez
 devant vos, et m'en portissiez jusques a une abeie qui est
 pres de ci. Car je sai bien, se je estoie ilec, que len
 metroit toutes les peines que len poroit en moi garir.»
 Et il dist que ce fera il volentiers. «Mes je quit que
 que il seroit mierz, fet Galaad, que len vos ostast avant
 cel fer.»

(p. 43)⁷

⁶Morte Arthure, ed. Edmund Brock (ETS OS 8, 1961).

⁷La Queste del saint graal: roman du XIII^e siècle, ed. Albert Pauphilet, CFMA (Paris, 1965).

The corresponding episode in Malory is simply:

And sir Galahad sterte up behynde hym and hylde hym in
hys armys, and so brought hym to the abbay, and there
unarmed hym and brought hym to hys chambir.

(p. 645)

In the French Gauvain and his brother Gaheriez ride up behind Yvain
and call out to him.

Et il se resgarde quant il s'of nomer, si s'arreste et
les conoist a la parole. Et il li font grant joie et
li demandent coment il l'a puis fet. Et il respont qu'il
n'a riens fet, car onques puis ne trova aventure qui li
pleust. --«Or chevauchons tuit ensemble, fet Gaheriez,
tant que Diex nos envoie aventure.»

(p. 52)

Malory's version is this:

. . . and by the way they mett with sir Uwayne le Avowtres.
And there sir Uwayne tolde sir Gawayne that he had mette
with none adventures syth he departed frome the courte.

'Nother yet we,' seyde sir Gawayne.

And so ayther promysed othir to tho three knyghtes
nat to departe whyle they were in that queste but if
suddayne fortune caused hyt.

(p. 650)

Here the more important quotation seems to be in the French version; the
most notable part of the conversation is the proposal that they should
all ride on together. In the English, Gawain's quotation hardly seems
worth emphasising. However, on the day before Gawain has stayed at the
abbey where Melias (Melyant in the French) was recovering. Melias told
Gawain of Galahad's marvelous adventures, and one of the monks told Gawain
(in the pointed way of these Quest monks) that 'ye be wycked and synfull,
and he [Galahad] ys full blyssed' (p. 650). This was the reason, according
to the monks, that Gawain could not share in Galahad's adventures. In
this light, Gawain's remark 'Nother yet we' has a certain rueful irony
about it.

It is worthwhile to see the use of dialogue in Malory's sources
to understand the context of his style. If there is any conclusion to
be drawn from the comparison, it is perhaps that he is more sparing with

quotation and tends to use it to better advantage than his sources, probably partly because of his shortening of the original and the necessity of condensing quotation.⁸ In the Morte Darthur the varying use of direct and indirect speech creates certain effects in subtleties of style and character delineation. Conversations blend naturally with the surrounding narrative description so that dialogue is not formally set out but rather unobtrusively introduced into the flow of the action. When the final, important phrase of an indirect speech is given as a direct quotation the meaning of the final phrase is emphasised and the quotation itself suggests that the whole speech has been presented in direct quotation. This device makes it possible to give a condensed version of the speech but still to give the impression that it was all spoken by the character. In the middle of a passage of indirect quotation, a phrase of direct quotation--usually made especially noticeable by a change of pronoun--gives the slightly eerie impression of one's having heard the speech or a part of it. Occasionally the narrative description and dialogue may be used together in such a way as to suggest a gradual leading up to the quotation: a movement of characters toward one another, a distant salutation, and finally speech. A shift to direct quotation may slow down the action at a critical point after a summary of action. On the most general level these shifts from indirect to direct speech vary the tempo of the narrative and so contribute to the distinctive cadence of Malory's prose.

Visual Shifts of Focus

What I have called 'visual shifts' are similar to my other category of 'spatial shifts', but on a smaller scale. In the latter, the perspec-

⁸Vinaver, however, sees this from a different angle. He believes the most efficient method of simplification 'would have been to substitute direct speech for indirect quotation. Malory seldom has recourse to this device.' (Malory, [Oxford, 1929], p. 38n.) But transferring everything to indirect speech would surely be an efficient method of simplification, too.

tive may change from one scene to another of simultaneous action, but by 'visual' I mean a change to another part of the same general episode or field of action. The main use of this device is in the battle scenes in which the perspective changes momentarily to the spectators.⁹ The usual effect is to expand the meaning of the battle by showing its influence on the onlookers: their sympathy, encouragement, displeasure, or grief. It is connected with the theme of identity and significance: the external impression of the action helps to define it.

One such battle is Gareth's fight with the Red Knight of the Red Landes at the castle of the lady Liones. During a pause in the battle, Gareth sees his lady smiling at him from a window and goes back to the battle with renewed effort. The scene is described like this:

And than sir Bewmaynes, whan his helme was off, he loked up to the wyndowe, and there he save the fayre lady dame Lyones, and she made hym suche countenaunce that his herte waxed lyght and joly. And therewith he bade the Rede Knyght of the Rede Laundes make hym redy, 'and lette us do oure batayle to the utteraunce.'

(p. 239)

Often in this sort of scene the importance of the brief transfer of emphasis is to provide some slight motive for the battle itself. Sometimes it is a way of altering the pace of the battle, and it may herald the turning-point by providing a reason for the renewed strength of the hero. In this case, however, the most important effect of the device is to advance the relationship between Gareth and the lady Liones. She is not the usual anonymous lady who acts as an emotional mirror of the action, but the future lover and wife of Gareth. This is only the second time he has seen the lady. His earlier introduction to the lady is worth quoting for the comparison with this interlude in the battle scene.

And so he rode into a lytyll vale undir the castell, that all that were in the castell and at the sege myght beholde the batayle.

⁹This is like the 'selective illumination' of a scene described by Alain Renoir. See above, p. 65n.

'Sir,' seyde the damesell Lynet unto sir Bewmaynes,
'loke ye be glad and lyght, for yondir is your dedley
enemy, and at yondir wyndow is my lady, my sistir dame
Lyones.'

'Where?' seyde Bewmaynes.

'Yondir,' seyde the damesell, and poynted with her
fyngir.

'That is trowth,' seyde Bewmaynes, 'she besemyth
afarre the fayryst lady that ever I lokyd uppon, and truly,'
he seyde, 'I aske no better quarell than now for to do
batayle, for truly she shall be my lady and for hir wolle
I fyght.'

And ever he loked up to the wyndow with glad
countenance, and this lady dame Lyones made curtesy to
hym downe to the erth, holdyng up bothe her hondys. Wyth
that the Rede Knyghte calle unto Bewmaynes and seyde,

'Sir knyght, leve thy beholdyng and loke on me, I
counsaille the, for I warne the well, she is my lady, and
for hir I have done many stronge batayles.'

(p. 237)

Both little scenes take place 'undir the castell', although his first sighting of her seems to be from a greater distance because the damsel is obliged to point out her sister and Beaumains speaks of seeing her 'afarre'.¹⁰ Distance is suggested by, besides the repetition of 'yondir', the lady's response, a vague mime of benevolence. I believe she does not, as it first appears, make a low curtsy, but rather looks down at Gareth on the ground and makes a sign of approval to him. Even as Gareth approaches the battle place it is mentioned that 'all that were in the castell and at the sege myght beholde the batayle'. The entire battle, therefore, may be thought of as watched by a number of spectators, even when they are not specifically mentioned during the course of the battle. When he later looks up at Liones we realise that she has been watching all along, and that numerous other persons are still watching. There is an element of humour in the Red Knight's abrupt challenge after Gareth has been gazing at the lady. The gruffness of his speech contrasts sharply with the courteous exchanges of the future lovers.

¹⁰'Afarre' seems ambiguous in that it might modify either 'besemyth' or 'fayryst'. However, the OED defines 'afar' as 'from far, from a distance' and 'far, far away, at or to a distance, fig. remotely'. Therefore the lady is the fairest as seen from a distance, not the fairest 'by far' in the modern sense.

More significant in relation to the later scene is the visual movement in this description of Gareth's arrival. In the first sentence there are both the narrative perspective and the suggestion of still another perspective. The narrative perspective is the classical third-person view of the hero riding into the 'lytyll vale'; it is a view originating in an undetermined place but following and sympathising with the rider. Whatever the reader's impression of the scene, he also realises that this same scene is being observed by others from another perspective. Both areas of action, the vale and the castle, are in the reader's imaginary field of vision. The distance between these two areas is partly defined by the exchanges of the damsel and Beaumains. Adding to the complexity are the two 'yondir's, the 'yondir' of the lady at the window and the 'yondir' of the Red Knight. The lady's window is obviously at some considerable distance or height because Beaumains does not see it immediately. His question and the damsel's repeated 'yondir' and her pointing 'with her fyngir' are an effective bit of realism. In the usual courtly romance we could expect the knight to see his lady at once, or if his companion drew his attention to her (more for narrative exposition, probably, than for the benefit of the knight) we could expect him to see her then. This has affinities with the tendency in modern novels for a chaotic environment: things perceived which are unnecessary to the plot and other things perceived which are not understood. The landscape here is not so simple that Beaumains sees what he is supposed to in his role as courtly knight. The view is not so unimaginatively presented as it is in most cases in romance, in which everything visible is seen. There are apparently distracting objects around Gareth which prevent him from seeing the lady without guidance. His confusion subtly suggests these objects without their being enumerated or described.

One critic points out that in one of the parallels to Gareth in the Suite de Merlin the spectators' reactions to the climactic battle

are mentioned.¹¹ In the Suite the spectators inside and outside the castle pity the knights. If Malory's Gareth incorporates this episode, it improves on it greatly by using the 'spectator-reaction' device to further the relationship between Gareth and Liones. The Gareth is unusually full of these side remarks which bring peripheral onlookers into the action. The obvious effect of them is to show the importance of this battle; it is not an unobserved encounter in the forest or at a bridge; it is the culminating battle in Gareth's progress to Liones' castle. The reader is constantly reminded that this battle is taking place near a castle from which many people are watching with deep interest. At the very outset of the episode 'the seege and the castell' are brought into the description. (I take 'seege' to mean the enemy emplacement: those who are besieging the castle, their tents and equipment.)

And therewith he spored his horse streyte to the
sygamoure tre and so blew the horne egirly that all the
seege and the castell range thereof. And than there
lepe oute many knyghtes oute of their tentys and pavylyons,
and they within the castell loked ovir the wallys and oute
at wyndowis.

(pp. 236-37)

When they first run together and knock each other unconscious, the impression of the combatants on the onlookers is registered:

And so they lay a grete whyle sore astoned, that all that
were in the castell and in the sege wente their neckys
had bene broste.

Than many a straunger and othir seyde that the straunge
knyght was a bygge man and a noble jouter, 'for or now
we sawe never no knyght macche the Rede Knyght of the Rede
Laundys.' Thus they seyde bothe within and withoute.

(p. 238)

In the next sentence the Red Knight and Gareth begin combat on foot, and it is as though their period of unconsciousness is defined by the length of the remarks by the spectators. This sense of camera 'close-up'

¹¹Wilfrid Guerin, "'The Tale of Gareth': The Chivalric Flowering' in Malory's Originality, ed. R. M. Lumiansky, (Baltimore, 1964), p. 105.

is heightened by the quotation, which puts^{us} within earshot of the onlookers. A gradualness of the movement is suggested by the distance, closeness, and distance again of (1) 'all that were in the castell and in the sege', (2) the sense of the speech, (3) the actual speech, and (4) the last sentence, which shows a moving away. It is a balanced presentation of the group as a whole with a momentary glimpse of individuals. The monolithic sense of the group is in both of the general allusions: first everyone has the common opinion that the fighters' necks are broken, then they are reported as all saying the same thing 'bothe within and without'. The middle sentence begins with 'many a straunger and othir' commenting on the knights, and the direct quotation itself, for all its sense of individualisation, is spoken by a plural 'we'. While it suggests only one person speaking, it is more nearly a pattern of what innumerable persons are saying in many places. The little scene is both an effective interruption of the action and a natural bit of marking time while the knights recover their senses. The narrative importance of it lies in the praise of Gareth by seemingly disinterested strangers; even the liegemen of the Red Knight admit his prowess.

At length, after a telescoping of the day's strenuous fighting, the knights are still being watched intently. In spite of the summary, the actions themselves are not seen as any less physical. When they pause in their battle, 'they stode waggyng, stagerynge, pantyng, blowyng, and bledyng, that all that behelde them for the moste party wepte for pyté' (p. 238). This device of the pitying onlookers allows the author to show that the knights were pitiful without actually saying so and thereby keeping his impression of the objective chronicler. It may well be related to the medieval fondness for citing authorities: the knights appeared pitiful to a great many people, and therefore their pitifulness is not merely an opinion of the author or a few onlookers. Fighting again, the knights are seen 'trasyng, traversyng, foynyng,

and rasyng as two borys' (p. 238). These strings of present participles express the action vividly but at the same time condense it.¹² At the end of all this activity the situation is seen through the eyes of the spectators again.

And thus they endured tyll evynsonge, that there was none that behelde them myght know whethir was lyke to wynne the batayle. And theire armoure was so forhewyn that men myght se their naked sydys, and in other placis they were naked; but ever the nakyd placis they dud defende.
(pp. 238-39)

Once more we are forcefully reminded that the knights are being seen by many people. We have seen a bit of their combat before, but now we get a second-hand account in the form of the impression they give that they are very evenly matched and that their armour is 'forhewyn'. In the first sentence by telling us the universal impression the fighters make, that no one 'myght know whethir was lyke to wynne the batayle', the narrator allows the reader to imagine the specific observations the onlookers might have made, based on the previous description of the battle. The more usual practice is either to relate the events and let the reader draw his own conclusions or to relate the events and then explain the conclusions that should be drawn. Malory's device is the more sophisticated one of describing the conclusions in order to suggest the events. This device is evident in two passages I have already discussed:

. . . they stooede waggyng, stagerynge, pantynge, blowynge, and bledyng, that all that behelde them for the moste party wepte for pyté.

(p. 238)

And so they lay a grete whyle sore astoned, that all that were in the castell and in the sege wente their neckys had bene broste.

(p. 238)

¹²Malory's lists of present participles are remarkably like the device used by Virginia Woolf in To the Lighthouse, in which present participles are used in a series to sum up great activity over a period of time. Penguin edition (Harmondsworth, Middx., 1968), p. 159.

There is a partial description of the events, but the reaction of the observers implies an intensity that the mere stating of the case does not. The narrative, however, stays cool and objective. For example, the knights are bleeding and the onlookers weep, but there is no overt statement that the reader should weep or that the author weeps.

It is at this point that the main passage occurs, in which Liones mimes encouragement from her window. Inspired, Beaumains fights the Red Knight again, but there is a reversal and Beaumains is pinned to the earth. Again there is a pained response from the gallery.

Than cryed the maydyn Lynet on hyght and seyde,
 'A, sir Bewmaynes! Where is thy corrayge becom? Alas!
 my lady my sister beholdyth the, and she shrekys and wepys
 so that hit makyth myne herte hevye.'

(p. 239)

This passage is a stylistic culmination, in which the narrator, having played with the device of spectator reactions, now contrives to double it--to use it in two different ways simultaneously. The important observer, Liones, is at one remove from Beaumains. Her actions are reported by Linet: the observer is observed. Linet stands between them, responding to the actions of both. The next step in this series would be for some other member of the general audience to observe Beaumains, Liones, and Linet and to make a comment on the actions of all three. As it is, the encouragement has a double force when Linet describes her sister's despair. Liones' actions (as reported by Linet) come as a surprise to the reader, who last remembers Liones a few lines before making Beaumains 'such countenance that his herte waxed lyght and joly'. Beaumains temporary defeat by the Red Knight, just related in a very objective, matter-of-fact way, is given great emotional emphasis by the extreme reaction of Liones. Again the impression is one of the narrator remaining detached and the characters interpreting each others' actions.

The constant interplay of the audience with the fighting knights leads naturally to the end of the battle, when 'many erlys and barowys and noble knyghtes' (p. 240) petition Beaumains to spare the Red Knight's life. This is a direct, face to face confrontation between Beaumains and his audience. Beaumains agrees to spare his enemy's life if Linet will forgive the Red Knight. He then sends the Red Knight into the castle to ask the lady's mercy, but not before Linet unarms and tends the wounds of both combatants. This appearance of Linet, the petitioners, and the Red Knight's visit to Liones are also part of the audience-reaction theme. The whole episode is thematically like a ballet between two spheres of action. They are separate except for the occasional movement from one to the other, as when Beaumains looks at Liones and Linet speaks to Beaumains. At the end of the battle, the two spheres are united by three things: the visit of the 'erlys and barowys and noble knyghtes', the care of Linet for the knights, and the Red Knight's visit to Liones. The first two are movements from the 'castell and seege' to the battlefield and the second is a movement in the other direction, from the battlefield to the castle. The 'castell and seege' were opposing arenas before Beaumains came. His coming changed the balance by creating the duelling ground and throwing the former opposites--the defenders and the attackers--together into the same role as spectators. As a result of his battle there are no longer the two opposing forces, for the Red Knight and his vassals become Beaumains' men. The 'castell' rather than the 'seege' prevails, and this is symbolised by the Red Knight's going into the castle as a defeated besieger to ask the lady's mercy. This evolution of the plot is mirrored by the changing relationships between the onlookers and the central figures.

When Balin is required at a strange castle to fight his brother unknowingly, ladies watch from the towers. Balan, the castle champion, wears red armour. Another curious echo of the Beaumains story is this sentence:

Thenne they wente to batail ageyn so merveillously
that doubte it was to here of that bataille for the grete
blood shedynge; and their hawberkes unnailed, that naked
they were on every syde.

(p. 68)

It is similar in its function as a summary and a device for introducing
outside reactions and in the common mention of their naked sides to this
passage, mentioned above, in Gareth:

And thus they endured tyll evynsonge, that there was
none that behelde them myght know whethir was lyke to wyne
the batayle. And theire armoure was so forhewyn that men
myght se their naked svdys, and in other placis they were
naked; but ever the nakyd placis they dud defende.

(pp. 238-39)

It is unclear, however, in the Balin/Balan fight what the importance
of the ladies is. There is no personal relationship as there was with
Liones and Beaumains, and these ladies have no appreciable response to
the battle or effect on it. Balin and Balan fight 'tyl theyr brethes
faylled':

Thenne Balyn loked up to the castel and sawe the towres
stand ful of ladyes. Soo they went unto bataille ageyne
and wounded everyche other dolefully, and thenne they
brethed oftymes, and so wente unto bataille that alle the
place theareas they fought was blood reed.

(p. 68)

Here the shift to the ladies in the tower seems to be only a matter of
description--an interruption in the battle as the brothers pause for
breath. It suggests the pause in the action by momentarily focusing on
some other subject.

Two central ideas of this story are the hidden identity of the
brothers and the catastrophic result of their killing each other. It
is therefore natural that the shifts of emphasis should deal with aspects
of these two ideas. Though not a visual shift, Balin's exclamation to
his brother indicates the place of the outside world in the scheme of
things: 'O, Balan, my broder! Thow hast slayne me and I the, wherefore
alle the wyde world shalle speke of us bothe' (p. 69). Like the reactions

of the spectators, this speech puts the present action into a larger context and emphasises its importance to other people. In this episode the shift of emphasis, conforming to the pattern of some of the instances in Gareth, is the ladies' reaction to the speech of the dying Balan.

'Now,' sayd Balen, 'what we are buryed in one tombe and the mensyon made over us how two bretheren slewe eche other, there wille never good knyght nor good man see our tombe but they wille pray for our soules,' and so alle the ladyes and gentylwymen wepte for pyté.

(p. 69)

Like Balin in his exclamation quoted above, Balan has his eye to the future and to the impact of his actions on others. In what at first seems to be a reversal of the principle shown in Gareth, the ladies' reaction is more an understatement than the knight's action. Balan's speech contains all the sentiment, and the description of the ladies is straightforward and objective. But basically this is the same principle as that in Gareth because it is the narrative which is objective and the character's speech which shows the emotion.

In the battle between Arthur and Accolon there is the usual careful description of the exchange of blows, after which comes a paragraph summarising the battle. The description is fairly restrained, but it ends with a subjective comment attributed to spectators of the battle.

But allwayes sir Arthure loste so muche bloode that hit was mervayle he stode on his feete, but he was so full of knyghthode that he endured the payne. And sir Accolon loste nat a dele of blood; therefore he waxte passynge lyght, and sir Arthure was passynge fyble and wente veryly to have dyed, but for all that he made countenaunce as he myght welle endure and helde Accolon as shorte as he myght. But Accolon was so bolde because of Excalyber that he waxed passyng hardy. But all men that behelde hem seyde they sawe nevyr knyght fyght so well as Arthur ded, conciderynge the bloode that he had bled; but all that peple were sory that thes two brethirne wolde nat accorde.

(p. 104)

As in the other cases of audience reaction, it is not the author who finally makes an emotional judgment, but relatively disinterested

anonymous witnesses. The 'brethirne' are not Arthur and Accolon, who have not yet discovered each other's identity, but Damas and Outelake, whose champions Arthur and Accolon are. In the summary of the battle the only really subjective judgment on the part of the author is the reference to Arthur's knighthood. It is left to the 'men that behelde hem' to judge Arthur's fighting ability. The last clause of the passage alludes to the rather feeble and indirect reason for the battle; Arthur and Accolon have been thrown together seemingly at random, each without knowing who the other is. This shift of perspective, like some others, helps to provide or reinforce the motive for the battle. Most other shifts of perspective, when the device is used for this end, concern ladies in embattled castles or at tournaments encouraging their knights. This one, however, mentions the basic conflict between Damas and Outelake--one of the many fraternal conflicts in Malory--and shows that the onlookers, rather than favouring one fighter over the other, wish that the whole battle could have been avoided. Considerable authorial sympathy is shown for Accolon here; the spectators admire Arthur but do not clamour for his victory. (Later when Accolon discovers who Arthur is, he is contrite, even though he has just confessed with great candour the scheme Morgan has put him up to. Arthur introduces himself and 'Whan Accolon herd that he cryed on-lowde, "Fayre swete lorde, have mercy on me, for I knew you nat"' (p. 107). Accolon is obviously not one of the wicked knights of the Morte Darthur; he has simply fallen into bad company. The sympathetic attitude toward him in the episode is concisely expressed in this consensus of the spectators.)

Later in the battle, literally between strokes, the Damsel of the Lake is introduced with her opinion of the battle.

But sir Arthure preced unto Accolon with his shelde and
gaff hym wyth the pomell in his honde suche a buffette
that he reled three strydes abake.

Whan the Damesell of the Lake behelde Arthure, how
full of prouesse his body was, and the false treson that

was wrought for hym to have had hym slayne, she had grete
 peté that so good a knyght and such a man of worship sholde
 so be destroyed. And at the nexte stroke sir Accolon stroke
 at hym suche a stroke that by the damesels inchauntemente
 the swerde Excaliber fell oute of Accalons honde to the
 erthe, and therewithall sir Arthure lyghtly lepe to hit and
 gate hit in his honde, and forthwithall he knew hit that
 hit was his swerde Excalyber.

(p. 105)

Arthur's reunion with Excalibur is the turning-point in the battle,
 brought about by a damsel ex machina. This turning-point is a variation
 on the pattern of the audience encouraging the knight to fight harder
 and giving him the motivation to win. The damsel's enchantment follows
 naturally after her expression of sympathy. In the course of the battle
 the reader has all but forgotten the presence of the Damsel of the Lake,
 but she is mentioned earlier just as the battle is starting. In the
 moment between the men knocking each other to the ground and the ensuing
 foot battle, 'com the Damsel of the Lake into the felde that put Merlyon
 undir the stone' (p. 103). These two interruptions concerning the damsel
 occur so quickly in the midst of the battle that no appreciable action
 is lost in the description of the fighting. In this first mention of
 her the damsel, knowing of Morgan's plot, has come for the express purpose
 of saving Arthur's life. It is significant that she is identified by an
 earlier feat of sorcery. When she appears again the narrative moves
 abruptly from the battle to the lady's thoughts and back again. Nothing
 is said of her 'inchauntemente' until it happens; she has caused Excalibur
 to fall from Accolon's hand. There is some sophistication in skipping
 the pedestrian announcement that the damsel will use magic and instead
 showing first the sympathy and then the result. As in the most artistically
 effective passages, something is left to the reader's imagination. He
 is not shown the damsel casting a spell; he does not know whether she
 does it at that moment or has preordained it. It adds greatly to the
 sense of magic that at one moment she pities Arthur and in the next moment
 the trend of battle is reversed.

Even casual shifts of focus from a scene of action to the reaction of outsiders are artistically arresting. When Uwain fights for the Lady of the Roche against two knights who have disinherited her, the subjective effect of the battle is expressed by the lady. The description of the battle, in which Uwain has taken on both knights, has progressed to the foot-battle stage when the literal description is augmented by the lady's interpretation.

And there thes two brethirne wounded sir Uwayne passyng
grevously, that the lady of the Roche wente he sholde
have deyed. And thus they fought togedyrs fyve oures as
men outraged of reson

(p. 131)

It is such a rapid shift to the lady and back that one hardly thinks of it as a real change of scene. It is as though the disembodied opinion of the lady floats over the battle and we do not really see her watching from the castle. Here the outside opinion is reduced to a qualifying clause defining the extent of the wounds. It does not break up the action at all or change the pace of the narrative; there is no interaction between the lady and her champion. It is one of the shortest and simplest uses of this device, but it is nevertheless effective in making us aware of a larger scene than the immediate battle.

The shifts of emphasis in Palomydes' battle at the Red City are definite changes of scene and conform more nearly to the pattern we have seen before: the emotional response juxtaposed with an objective description.

Thus they fought styll withoute ony reposynge two
owres and never brethid. And than sir Palomydes waxed
faynte and wary, and sir Helyus waxed passynge stronge
and doubeled his strokes and drove sir Palomydes ovir-
twarde and endelonge all the fylde.

Than when they of the cité saw sir Palomydes in this
case they wepte and cryed and made grete dolo, and the
other party made as grete joy.

'Alas,' seyde the men of the cité, 'that this noble
knyght shulde thus be slayne for oure kynges sake!'

And as they were thus wepyng and cryyng, sir Palomydes, whyche had suffyrde an hondred strokes, and wondir hit was that he stode on his fyete, so at the laste sir Palomydes loked aboute as he myght voyakly unto the conyn people how they wepte for hym, and than he seyde to hymselff, 'A, fye for shame, sir Palomydes! Why hange ye youre hede so lowe?' And therewith he bare up his shyld and loked sir Helyus in the vysoure and smote hym a grete stroke upon the helme and aftir that anothir, and anothir, and than he smote sir Helyus with suche a myght that he felde hym to the erthe grovelynge. And then he raced of hys helme from his hede and so smote of his hede from the body.

And than were the people of the cité the myrrest people that myght be. So they brought hym to his lodgyng with grete soleapnyté, and there all the people becam his men.

(pp. 532-33)

A new element in this description is that both factions of the onlookers react strongly to the action. This expression of the battle by its opposite effect on the spectators occurs again in Tristram when Tristram's and Elias' factions are seen during a pause in the battle as 'that one party laughynge and the othir party wepyng' (p. 470). It is an externalisation of the action and a kind of extended synecdoche. The effect of the onlookers on Palomides is more explicit than the effect on most other fighters. He consciously and verbally recognises the onlookers' regard for him. These onlookers, however, are not noble ladies in a castle but common townsmen. This reversal of the battle is almost as sudden and dramatic as Arthur's triumph after the Damsel of the Lake's enchantment. Unlike the previous example, in which the audience--the Lady of the Roche--is used only to describe the seriousness of Uwain's wounds, this treatment of the audience enhances the character of Palomides. For extra emphasis a direct quotation is attributed to the 'men of the cité' collectively. Like the quotation during Beaumains' fight attributed to 'many a straunger and othir', this exclamation sets the tone of presumably many exclamations and gives, besides a visual shift, a sense of close-up. Their great sorrow and pity do not spring from the fear that Palomides will be defeated and their king will still be unavenged, but rather from a personal compassion for Palomides himself. These common people are not the churls

one sometimes finds in Arthurian romances; Palomides respects them enough to be inspired by their sorrow at his misfortunes. Inspired as much as he might be by Isode herself, Palomides quickly makes an end to the battle. The narrative commentary on the battle continues in a disinterested way, but after the decapitation the scene moves swiftly to the onlookers, who are then 'the myrrest people that myght be'. The reversal of the battle is neatly underscored by this scene of the onlookers following our previous view of them, when 'they wepte and cryed and made grete dole'. This is the same device as Liones' change in the opposite direction when Beaumains is on the point of defeat. Again the emotional interpretation of the action is left to the spectators of that action, as though we are not asked to take the author's word for the impact of the fortunes of battle, but rather we are given the testimony of witnesses.

In one of the greatest battles in Malory, that between Lancelot and Gawain in 'The Siege of Benwick', no reactions of spectators interrupt the action of the battle. There is an unusual amount of conversation between Lancelot and Gawain during the battle, and it is likely that any interruptions by the onlookers would make the battle seem fragmentary. It is perhaps two battles instead of one, for there are two sections to it separated by three weeks, during which Gawain recovers from their first bout. In effect, however, it is practically the same battle, for the interval is covered in only a few sentences. At the beginning of the first battle spectators are mentioned, but they are specifically described as being quiet, as though the awesomeness of the battle precludes physical reactions from the onlookers.

Than sir Launcelot armed hym and mownted uppon hys horse, and aythir of them gate grete spearys in their hondys. And so the oste withoute stode styll all aparte, and the noble knyghtes of the cite cam a grete numbir, that whan kynge Arthur saw the numbir of men and knyghtes he mervayle and seyde to hymselff,

'Alas, that ever sir Launcelot was ayenst me! For now I se that he hath forborne me.'

And so the covenante was made, there sholde no man
nyghe hem nother deale wyth them tyll the tone were
dede other yolden.

(pp. 855-56)

This covenant of silence does not appear in the Mort Artu, but the
corresponding stanza in Le Morte Arthur is:

Than was it warnyd faste on hye
How in world that it shuld fare,
That no man schold come hem nye
Tylle the tone dede or yolden were.
Folke with-drew them than bye,
Vpon the feld was brode and bare;
The knyghtis mette, As men it sye,
how they sette there dyntis sare.¹³

Lancelot and Gawain are more isolated from the onlookers than the
other knights whose battles I have dealt with. Unlike so many of the
other battles there is no encouragement from the battlements, no looking
up to one's partisans during a pause for breath. This point is made very
clear with Arthur's men standing 'style all aparte' and with the agree-
ment that no one shall approach them until the battle is finished. This
is a different kind of battle. The two great knights come together in
a vacuum, symbolising their separateness from and supremacy over other
knights. It is also an ironic contrast to the chaotic throng in which
Lancelot accidentally killed Gawain's brothers. While the audience makes
no effect on Lancelot and Gawain, Arthur is surprised and sorrowful at
the number of Lancelot's forces.

In the second battle, which Vinaver calls a duplication of the
first,¹⁴ a similar passage occurs as Lancelot again rides out to meet
Gawain.

And than sir Launcelot armed hym at all poyntis and
mounted uppon hys horse and gate a grete speare in hys
honde and rode oute at the gate. And bothe their ostis
were assembled, of them withoute and within, and stood

¹³J. Douglas Bruce, ed., EETS ES 88 (London, 1959), p. 84.

¹⁴Works, III, 1646.

in aray full manly, and bothe partyes were charged to holde
hem styлле to se and beholde the batayle of thes two
noble knyghtes.

(p. 859)

There is no second battle in the Mort Artu, and in Le Morte Arthur the reference to the onlookers is omitted.¹⁵

Again the awe-filled silence prevails, again the fighters are isolated. Their relationship with their audience is different from the other relationships between fighters and spectators, in that they are unreachable and not subject to any outside communication. Their battle is exclusively theirs and onlookers cannot participate in it even to the extent of registering reactions to it. The phrase 'to se and beholde the batayle of thes two noble knyghtes' suggests this tone of isolation and awe; the onlookers are only onlookers and no more. Practically everyone in Malory who is not an outright villain is called a 'noble knyght' at one time or another, but here their nobility is a tangible thing. It seems to be this nobility that obliges the onlookers 'to holde hem styлле'. The tautology of 'se and beholde' further suggests the silence of passive watching.

At the simplest level the device of audience reaction merely puts the battle into a context. It shows the importance of the battle by its impact on outsiders. The usual, but still fairly pedestrian, use is to show a turning point in the battle. This is achieved in several ways: by encouragement from ladies or townsmen, by the fighter's recognition that others are watching, or even by enchantment. The audience may react with opposite moods to mirror an abrupt change in the fortunes of battle. The most artistically interesting use of the visual shift is one which suggests complexities of personal relationships and of perspective. Among these are the various uses in Gareth which concern

¹⁵Bruce, p. 87.

the developing relationship between Beaumains and Liones and the evocation of surroundings.

From these examples of the visual shift which I have examined, a few consistent characteristics emerge. The visual shifts seem to occur either very quickly during the action or more slowly during a break in the action. When they occur quickly, like the shift to the Damsel of the Lake or the Lady of the Roche, they are parenthetical and may almost blend with the main action. As we have seen, the rapid shift to the Damsel of the Lake just before Accolon drops his sword hardly interrupts the action at all and increases the sense of her magic. When a visual shift occurs during a natural break in the main action it often carries the suggestion of being an alternate narrative while nothing is happening in the main sphere of action. As in Beaumains' battle with the Red Knight when they both lie 'astoned', the visual shift may seem to illustrate the duration of time of this inactivity in the main field of action.

The attitude of the onlookers may be either reserved and disinterested or emotionally partisan. They may agree on an objective judgment of the knight--Beaumains for example--and give the impression that disinterested strangers and even enemies admit to his prowess. This device suggests that witnesses, even hostile witnesses, can testify to the hero's ability. When the onlookers are for or against the hero--Palomides for example--they furnish a motive for him to renew his efforts, providing a convenient reason for a turning-point in a battle. They may also act as an emotional chorus in counterpoint to the main action. The general overall effect of the visual shift is to particularise the battle and the participants by registering the impression which that battle makes on various kinds of outside observers.

Temporal and Spatial Shifts

Temporal shifts in focus are concerned with large leaps in time, forward or backward. The most obvious and common of these is the future, like Merlin's many allusions to the future. Generally speaking, these prophecies, both Merlin's and Malory's, and some of the backward shifts serve to put the immediate action into the context of history. They explain the origins of a character or what became of him later. Spatial shifts of focus are like the modern cinematic technique of changing from one field of action to another and back again. These changes of place in the narrative sometimes overlap with changes in time. In a large, general way the whole Book of Tristram is a spatial shift, for the story of the Morte Darthur changes to the intrigues and adventures associated with the court of Cornwall. Some shifts in place are accomplished by following messengers as they go from one court to another. When the messengers come to demand tribute from Cornwall (p. 280), we follow them back to Ireland, and the scene continues with Marhalt being sent to Cornwall as a champion (p. 281). The movement from Cornwall to Ireland and back to Cornwall is accomplished with a fluid ease unlike the sharp break in the frequent formula 'Now leave we that knight and turn we to this knight'. Something like this happens in The Noble Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius when the messengers from Rome appear at Arthur's court, and the narrative then takes them back to Lucius and his preparations for war (pp. 139-41). However, the return shift to Arthur is an artificial 'Now leve we sir Lucius and speke we of kyng Arthure' (p. 141).

When Arthur suggests to Merlin that he would like to take Guinevere as his queen, Merlin warns him of the coming entanglement with Lancelot.

But Merlyon warned the kyng covertly that Gwennyver was nat holson for hym to take to wyff. For he warned hym that Launcelot scholde love hir, and scha hym agayne, and so he turned his tale to the adventures of the Sankgreal.

(p. 71)

Just before this, at the end of the tale of Balin and Balan, Merlin has prepared the way for a later adventure, and Malory has almost got ahead of his story.

Also the scawberd off Balyne swerde Merlion lefte hit on thys syde the ilonde, that Galaad sholde fynde hit. Also Merlion lette make by hys suttelyté that Balyne swerde was put into a marbil stone stondynge upryght as grete as a mylstone, and hove allwayes above the watir, and dud many yeres. And so by adventure hit swanne downe by the streame unto the cité of Camelot, that ys in Englysh called Wynchester, and that same day Galahad the Haute Prynce com with kynge Arthure, and so Galaad brought with hym the scawberde and encheved the swerde that was in the marble stone hovyng uppon the watir. And on Whytsonday he enchevyd the swerde, as hit ys rehersed in THE BOOKE OF THE SANKGREALL.

(p. 70)

Merlin's task as caretaker of the future often involves him in setting the scene for some future event or commemorating both a past and a future event. When Balin slays Lanceor, Mark buries him and his lady, who has killed herself. Merlin contributes to the memorial the names of the two knights, Lancelot and Tristram, who will later fight at the same place (p. 54).¹⁶ Because the action in 'The Knight with the Two Swords' leads to the Quest for the Grail, there are many jumps forward in that section. Some are Merlin's predictions and some are Malory's summaries of events which are to follow (pp. 62 and 64). Merlin is understandably preoccupied with the later Quest, that watershed of the Round Table, and institutes the Siege Perilous, which he explains with a tantalising lack of details (p. 75).

The skips forward in time are usually an attempt to use later details of character to help define the present character. So after a battle between Marhalt and Gawain in which Gawain acquits himself well, the

¹⁶There is a discernable pattern in these prophecies. They often concern some calamity which will happen to or because of someone trusted. Balin will kill someone he loves (p. 47); Arthur's sword will be stolen by someone he trusts (p. 92); Arthur's wife will love another man (p. 71). The end of the pattern, for Merlin at least, is when he himself is overcome by the treachery of someone whom he has trusted (p. 93).

narrator gives a balanced over-all view of Gawain's ability by speaking from a future point of view.

For, as the booke reherseyth in Freynsch, there was this many knyghtes that overmacched sir Gawayne for all his thryse double myght that he had: sir Launcelot de Lake, sir Trystrams, sir Bors de Gaynes, sir Percivale, sir Pelleas, sir Marhaus; thes six knyghtes had the bettir of sir Gawayne.

(p. 117)

In spite of Gawain's performance in the present battle, and in spite of the seemingly unfair advantage he has over others, he is not such a perfect knight when seen sub specie aeternitatis. When Pelleas and Marhalt are made members of the Round Table, there is a quick sketching of the future.

And grete joy had kynge Arthure of sir Pelleas and of sir Marhalte, but Pelleas loved never after sir Gawayne but as he spared hym for the love of the kynge; but oftentimes at justis and at turnementes sir Pelleas quytte sir Gawayne, for so hit reherseyth in the booke of Frensh.

So sir Trystrams many dayes aftir fought with sir Marhaute in an ilande. And there they dud a grete batayle, but the laste sir Trystrams slew hym. So sir Trystrams was so wounded that unnethe he myght recover, and lay at a nunrye half a yere.

And sir Pelleas was a worshypfull knyght, and was one of the four that encheved the Sankgreal. And the Damesel of the Laake made by her meanes that never he had ado with sir Launcelot de Laake, for where sir Launcelot was at any justis or at any turnemente she wolde not suffir hym to be there that day but yf hit were on the syde of sir Launcelot.

(p. 133)

This is quite a remarkable preview of the lives of these knights. Coming at the end of 'The Tale of King Arthur', followed only by the explicit,¹⁸ it supports the contention of those critics who hold that Malory did not at this point intend to write any more. The references to the French book in this passage and the one above show the future as it already exists; that is, the future exploits of Tristram and Pelleas have in one

¹⁸This explicit contains the clue 'WHO THAT WOLL MAKE ONY MORE LETTE HYM SEKE OTHER BOOKS OF KYNGE ARTHURE OR OF SIR LAUNCELOT OR SIR TRYSTRAMS . . . ' which has led some critics to believe that Malory meant to break off at this point (see Vinaver, Works, I, xxi). If this is true, it would account for Malory's brief summary of the rest of the story, which he would not have intended to tell in full.

sense already occurred.¹⁹ Here even more than in other passages we have the sense of all facets of a knight's character existing simultaneously, not only because it does not change but because of its external existence in other writing.²⁰

Some future references are merely authorial asides, like the note about Constantine in Arthur and Lucius: ' . . . sir Cadore son of Cornuayle, that was at the tyme called sir Constantyne, that aftir was kynge aftir Arthurs dayes' (p. 142). He is mentioned again at the end of the Morte Darthur: 'Than syr Costantyn that was syr Cadores sone of Cornwayl was chosen kyng of England, and he was a ful noble knyght, and worshypfully he rulyd this royaume' (p. 882). Constantine seems not to take any active part in the Round Table except to succeed Arthur as king. That is his achievement, and it becomes his character; his succession to Arthur's throne becomes like a classical epithet, defining his character.²¹ Another striking authorial aside occurs during La Cote Male Taile's escape from the Castle Orgulus.

And whan he cam to the porsterne he founde there redy
four knyghtes, and at two the fyrst strokys he slew two
of the knyghtes and the other fledde, and so he wanne his
horse and rode frome them.

And all hit was rehersed in kynge Arthurs courte,
how he slew twelve knyghtes within the Castell Orgulus.

And so he rode on his way

(p. 346)

¹⁹The French Book rather than being a camouflage for Malory's own flights of imagination as some critics have claimed, is used as an authority for establishing the end of a character.

²⁰An amorous sorceress whom Lancelot has repelled receives this epitaph: 'And as the booke seyth, whan sir launcelot was departed she toke suche sorow that she deyde within a fourtenyte; and hir name was called Hallewes the Sorseres, lady of the castell Nygurmous' (p. 204) The sorceress' existence continues in a different place--the all-embracing French Book.

²¹The first reference to Constantine (p. 142) is such a murky grammatical construction that it seems that Cadore is the son of Cornwall and was at some time called Constantine. 'Cadore' seems to be an error for 'Cadors'. In the later reference Constantine is clearly the son of Cadore of Cornwall.

Between the description of the battle and his riding away (followed by a conversation between Mordred and the Damsel Maldisant outside the castle as they watch him approach), the feat he has just accomplished becomes a publicly acclaimed achievement.

A description of future fame occurs after Tristram and Lamerok have given the lordship of a conquered island to Segwarides. Segwarides goes back to Cornwall and promotes Tristram's reputation. Similarly the rest of Tristram's party go back to Brittany and spread Tristram's fame there.

And so he [Segwarides] turned into Cornwayle and tolde kyng Marke and La Beale Isode how sir Trystrames had avaunced hym in the Ile of Servayge. And there he proclaimed in all Cornwayle of all the adventures of thes two knyghtes, and so was hit opynly knowyn. But full wo was La Beale Isode whan she herde telle that sir Trystrames had with hym Isode le Blaunche Maynys.

So turne we unto sir Lamerok that rode towarde kyng Arthures courte. (And so sir Trystramys wyff and sir Keyhydyns toke a vessel and sayled into Bretayne unto kyng Howell where they were wellcom. And whan they herde of thes adventures they mervayled of his noble dedis.) Now turne we unto sir Lameroke that whan he was departed frome sir Trystrames he rode oute of the foreste tyll he cam to an ermytage.

(pp. 336-37)

Segwarides seems to have spent some time on the island, setting 'good governaunce in that valey' (p. 336), before going back to Cornwall.

Lamerok and Tristram seem to have gone their separate ways. The narrative time progresses from Segwarides' time on the island to the time he spends in Cornwall, then it jumps back seemingly to the time at the beginning of Segwarides' governorship of the island, when the other two knights leave him. Just when the narrative has changed to Lamerok's adventures there is the parenthetical summary of the trip back to Brittany; this parenthetical time seems to extend from when Segwarides was made lord and Tristram and Lamerok departed to a time well in the future, after the sailing and the telling of the adventures. At last the time returns to Lamerok and his adventures: before Segwarides goes to Cornwall, before Tristram's wife returns to Brittany, before either of them spreads Tristram's

reputation in their respective places. The shifts in time here are unusually complex, with the two jumps to future times and the two jumps back to Lamerok's departure. The shifts are also spatial, since the future events are in Cornwall and Brittany and the scene returns to the Isle of Servage.

Guinevere commands a knight-murderer to go to the Pope to receive his penance, taking the body of the murdered lady with him. He then leaves the narrative, but we are told something of his future career.

This oth he there made and so departed. And as hit tellyth in the Frenshe booke, whan he com unto Rome the Pope there bade hym go agayne unto quene Gwennyver, and in Rome was his lady buryed by the Popys commaundement. And after thys knyght sir Pedyvere fell to grete goodnesse and was an holy man and an hermyte.

(p. 208)

Again Malory appeals to the French Book when he gives the later life of a character. Such an authorial aside is made about King Mark, but the future event that is mentioned happens later in the Book of Tristram and is not merely something gleaned from a discarded bit of the French Book. Arthur requires Mark to promise to be good to Tristram, and Mark swears to, 'But for all this kynge Marke thought falsely, as hit preved aftir; for he put sir Trystram in preson, and cowardly wolde have slayne hym' (p. 456).

The climax of Tristram's battle with Marhalt for the tribute of Cornwall shows an interesting variation of narrative times. Tristram deals the final blow (with the meticulous detail that his sword stuck so fast 'that sir Trystramys pulled three tymes at his swerde or ever he myght pulle hit oute frome his hede' [p. 286]).

And there sir Marhalte felle downe on his kneis, and the edge of his swerde leffte in hys brayne-panne. And suddeynly sir Marhalte rose grovelynge and threw his swerde and his shyld frome hym, and so he ran to his shypys and fledde his way. And sir Trystramys had ever his shelde and his swerde, and whan sir Trystramys saw sir Marhalte withdrow hym he seyde,

'A, sir knyght of the Rounde Table! Why withdrawyst thou the? Thou doste thyself and thy kynne grate shame, for I am but a yonge knyght: or now I was never preved. And rather than I sholde withdraw me frome the, I had rathir be hewyn in pyese-mealys.'

Sir Marhalte answerde no worde, but yeode his way sore gronyng.

'Well, sir knyght,' seyde sir Trystrams, 'I promyse the thy swerde and thy shelde shall be myne, and thy shyld shall I were in all placis where I ryde on myne adventures, and in the syght of kyng Arthure and all the Rounde Table.'

So sir Marhalte and his felyshyp departed into Irelande. And as sone as he com to the kynge, his brother, they serched his woundis, and whan his hede was serched a pyese of sir Trystrams swerde was therein founden, and myght never be had oute of his hede for no lechecraftte. And so he dyed of sir Trystrams swerde, and that pyese of the swerde the quene, his sistir, she kepte hit for ever with hir, for she thought to be revenged and she myght.

Now turne we agayne unto sir Trystrames that was sore wounded and sore forbledde, that he myght nat within a lytyll whyle stonde.

(p. 286)

The first paragraph is a summary of the present action: Marhalt falls down and flees to his ship; and a projection to the future: Tristram keeps Marhalt's shield and sword; and then the scene slows to the point at which Marhalt 'withdraws'.²² The scene is further slowed by showing Marhalt making his way to the ship, groaning, but not answering Tristram's taunt. Tristram now reiterates the earlier authorial reference to a future time by promising to carry Marhalt's shield and sword with him. He adds that he will wear the shield 'in the syght of kyng Arthure and all the Rounde Table'. This is much more meaningful than the brief reference to his simply having it, and so is a development of the idea. This speech that Tristram shouts after the fleeing Marhalt is a victory boast and is a transition to Marhalt's arrival in Ireland. This paragraph covers a considerable amount of future time: the searching of his

²²The action is slowed here mainly through the use of direct speech. I have discussed this device above, e.g. pp. 182-83.

wounds, his eventual death,²³ and his sister's wish for revenge. This also serves the expository purpose of preparing the way for the attempted revenge of the queen when Tristram comes to Ireland and she compares his sword with the piece of metal found in Marhalt's wound. Her keeping the fragment of Tristram's sword nicely complements Tristram's battle trophies; but they keep them for different reasons, the queen as either a reminder of revenge or as evidence to find the culprit, and Tristram as the booty of his battle and as a reproach to Round Table knights. After the digression of Marhalt's return and death, the scene shifts back to the present time (that is, the time of the tribute battle) and we follow Tristram through his slow recovery, which results in his journey to Ireland to be healed. It is there that the queen of Ireland discovers that Tristram's sword matches the shard from Marhalt's wound (p. 292) and tries to wreak the revenge on him that was foreshadowed in the shift to the future in the battle scene.

One of the uses Malory puts this device to recalls the sophisticated methods of some modern novels. In Gareth the defeated Red Knight is required to go to Arthur's court (p. 241). He leaves Beaumains and Linet, and the scene changes to the court, where he tells how he was defeated. There are comments by Arthur and Lancelot, and the scene goes on for about half a page. But then the scene changes abruptly back to Beaumains and Linet, and the story takes up presumably about the place where it left off when the Red Knight left them. There follow Beaumains' adventures of being sent away from Liones' castle, having his dwarf stolen, recovering it at Liones' castle, being allowed to stay at the castle, and twice battling the mysterious knight whose head Linet repairs. At a convenient pause in the action, as Gareth is recovering from his second bout with the mysterious knight, the scene changes again to Arthur's

²³Marhalt's death is mentioned in an earlier shift to future time: cf above, p. 223.

court, where the earlier scene of the Red Knight's coming to court seems to be repeated (pp. 250-51). 'Seems', because many of the details are different and the two scenes could occur at entirely different times. The second scene is at Pentecost, when the king holds court at Carlion, but no special time is given in the first scene. But both times the Red Knight introduces himself and is received as though it is his first time at court; for this reason I believe that both descriptions pertain to the same visit to court. In the first scene his reception at court consists mainly of Arthur and Gawain wondering who Beaumains really is and Lancelot admitting that he knows but will keep the secret. In the second scene the conversation is much more about the Red Knight's loyalty to the Round Table. It is likely that this is simply a thematic division of one scene into its two important aspects---Beaumains' identity and the Red Knight's submission to the Round Table.

Most of the important shifts in time are forward, but there are some flashbacks. Just as in 'The Knight with the Two Swords' there are references forward to the Quest for the Grail, so there are references from the Quest back to the earlier period. Merlin leaves the sword and scabbard for Galahad (p. 70), and Galahad refers to the episode later.

'Now have I the swerde that somtyme was the good knyghtes Balyng le Saveaige, and he was a passynge good knyght of hys hondys; and with thys swerde he slew hys brothir Balan, and that was grete pité, for he was a good knyght. And eythir slew othir thorow a dolorous stroke that Balyn gaff unto kyng Pelles, the whych ys nat yett hole, nor naught shall be tyll that I hele hym.'

(p. 632)

This comes so long after the Dolorous Stroke that it seems to have happened generations before (except that both narrative times are during the reign of King Arthur). Galahad's remarks are partly about the future, too, as he links the past cause of the Grail Quest with his present role as prophesied Quester and with his future miracle of healing the wounded king.

I have already discussed the flashback in 'La Cote Male Taile' (above, pp. 193-95 and 224-25). The battle, previously seen from the hero's point of view, is spoken of by a defeated knight. Malory describes the battle: '... he gryped his swerde in his honde and put his shyldre fayre before hym, and thorow the thyckyst pres he thryled thorow' (p. 346). La Cote Male Taile briefly describes how he has escaped from the castle (p. 346), and then a messenger sent to confirm the story hears that 'he hath slayne here twelve of oure beste knyghtis ...' (p. 347). It is not only a shift in time but in place and perspective, rounding off the episode with the rueful tribute of the defeated knights. Finally, when the messenger returns with this story, Mordred delivers a laudatory speech about La Cote Male Taile to the sceptical Lady Maldisant. The hero is seen by the author, by himself, by the enemy knights, and then by someone who did not observe the action but makes a judgment based on what he has heard (from the hero and from the messenger, who has heard the defeated knights). From every vantage point La Cote Male Taile is an extraordinary knight, and even those who did not see his dramatic escape from the castle are able to judge accurately that he is an excellent knight.

The most notable effects of temporal and spatial shifts of focus in Malory are the sense of the inexorable working of the plot and a sense of simultaneity and self-containedness. Events in different places happen simultaneously; events in the same place happen at different times. Future events are attached to present and past events; what is prophesied comes to pass. Characters have a solidity, so that later, after the present time, they still have an existence somewhere. In other places events occur which have a bearing on the present action. The knight who goes to Rome and becomes a hermit (above, p. 226) has a future existence outside the Morte Darthur, as do other characters who are treated more

fully in the 'French Book'. The sense of self-containedness and inter-relatedness of the Arthurian world stems both from the impression of simultaneity of action and from this idea that things happen at future times that are related to (if not always caused by) events in the present or past.

V. CONCLUSION

In Malory there is the illusion of characterisation more than real characterisation. Because the identity of a character is considered so important, there seem to be intrinsic distinctions between one knight and another. In the confusions over identity, characters speculate on the identity of another character, and their speculation alone suggests that there is a way of recognising the strange knight by his appearance or fighting ability. A great issue is made of the fact that one knight is indeed himself and not another knight. Among the Arthurian knights it is a considerable error to mistake one man for another. This 'identity' may seem rather meaningless, for it usually means only that one name is attached to a knight rather than another name, and his whole identity rests on his individual name and, often, the fame of previous exploits.

Another suggestion of the reality of character is reality in the narrative as a whole. The small representative detail, or conversely, the sense of a vague or chaotic environment, seems realistic and makes the characters in the action seem real. The 'chronicle style' of apparently trying to present every known detail suggests truth by its earnest meticulousness. The impressionistic style, on the other hand, by its imprecision and loose ends, seems realistic in terms of human perception. The element of chance in the knights' wanderings suggests that episodes similar to those reported are occurring in other places, unreported. As a result a new dimension is added to the Morte Darthur, and it seems to be a narrative picked out from a larger whole, containing alternative possibilities. Not only are things said to happen in other parts of the Morte Darthur itself, but the knights go off on vague errands which keep them out of the plot for a while, and things even happen outside the

Morte Darthur, involving the same characters, in the 'French Book'.

Characterisation in the Morte Darthur began long before Malory took up his pen. Malory's characters are enveloped by a larger reality, in which other Arthurian material participates; the 'French Book' contains other parts of Malory's potential story which he did not choose to tell. Even if Malory's 'French Book', which seems to contain so many details, and his Morte Darthur could be combined, there would probably still be a sense of fragmentation. Speaking of medieval art in general, Arnold Hauser describes an 'impulse into the unlimited, this inability to be content with any conclusion'.¹ 'Since Gothic days all great art, with the exception of a few short-lived classicist movements, has something fragmentary about it, an inward or outward incompleteness, an unwillingness, whether conscious or unconscious, to utter the last word. There is always something left over for the spectator or reader to complete.'² Certainly the Morte Darthur has an attractive fragmentary quality, which implies that the plot is in some ways self-generative and not manipulated by the narrator. The narrator is not so much an inventor as a chronicler.

Because the material of the Morte Darthur is static, the movement of it is one of uncovering rather than of growing. It is like a painted screen which does not move, but may seem to if the viewer moves. Most of the expression of character is a statement of identity, a discovery of motives, a description of action and choices, and where it most approaches 'development', a revelation of the extremes a character (like Gawain) may be driven to by circumstances.

¹The Social History of Art. From Prehistoric Times to the Middle Ages, trans. in collaboration with the author by Stanley Godman, Routledge Paperbacks, no. 29 (London, 1962), p. 217.

²Hauser, p. 120.

Appendix A:

THE PROBLEM OF UNITY IN MALORY

The great controversy began with the discovery of the Winchester manuscript in 1934. Before that, critics assumed that the *Morte Darthur*, available only in the version edited by Caxton, was a complete entity containing a single, though discursive, story. The manuscript, however, indicated by very final-sounding explicits at the end of some of the well-delineated sections that the volume previously thought one book was in fact several independent, loosely connected stories. Professor Vinaver describes the importance of the Winchester manuscript as 'not so much because of what it contained, but because of what it suggested, because of a hitherto unsuspected structural principle which it revealed'.¹ One of the most important crucies in the discussion is the first explicit, which comes at the end of the Tale of King Arthur. In it Malory says, 'Who that woll make any more lette hym seke other bookis of Kynge Arthure or of sir Launcelot or sir Trystrams'.² Vinaver interprets this to mean 'that when he finished writing it he had little hope of finding "any more books of Arthur, Lancelot, or Tristram"'.³ Furthermore, 'The works which follow claim no continuity of narrative, still less of composition'.⁴ However, Vinaver, apparently distinguishing between the historical circumstances of the composition and the composition itself, adds, 'The view that Malory wrote eight separate romances does not imply that there are

¹Works, I, xlv.

²Works, I, 130.

³Works, I, xxi.

⁴Works, I, xxxvi.

any serious discrepancies in their portrayal of characters or that there are no links and similarities to be found between them'.⁵ This explanation also accounted for the reappearance of 'dead' knights in later tales.

He ruins a great many of his critics' arguments by agreeing with them:

'Unity of characterization and even unity of moral purpose there may well be'.⁶ This seems to represent a more generous position than the one he adopted sixteen years earlier when he said, '... tous les romans que Malory composa par la suite étaient, dans son esprit, des oeuvres isolées, ayant, certes, un caractère commun, mais ne devant point constituer un ensemble cohérent'.⁷ Professor Lumiansky also stresses the dual nature of the unity question. He maintains that Malory's book should be read as a critical unit, but that the historical question of unity is whether Malory began his writing and continued through several sections with the intention of producing a 'whole book'. The historical question 'can contribute mightily to any critical analysis, but . . . cannot alter basically the existence of a final critical unity for the book'.⁸

Most of the other proponents of Lumiansky's dissenting view demonstrate the critical unity of the work as a way of proving the historical unity. The premise of their arguments is that if Malory's changes in his sources make the stories more compatible with one another, then he must have changed them for that reason, and therefore he intended from the beginning to write a coherent volume. Accordingly, there is no lack of evidence that (1) the explicits tend to point forward to the next section, (2) the introductions of most sections contain links with preceding material,

⁵Works, I, xlii-xliii.

⁶Works, I, xliii.

⁷'Le Manuscrit de Winchester', (Extrait d'une communication faite au 3^e Congrès Arthurien), BBSIA, III (1951), p. 79.

⁸'The Question of Unity in Malory's Morte Darthur', Tulane Studies in English, V (1955), p. 32.

(3) the treatment of the sources seems meant to establish overall unity and consistency, and (4) an 'apparent purpose governs the internal chronology of the book'.⁹ No one disagrees that there is a certain amount of unity in the common theme and subject. It has also been adequately shown that there is what may be called a mutual awareness among the stories; there are allusions both to future events and to past events.

The principal disagreement seems to be about relative terms. Everyone agrees that there is some sort of connection between the stories, and everyone admits that there are discrepancies and awkward unconnected sections. Vinaver has said that the component tales are presented in the Winchester manuscript as separate, clearly divided stories; he concludes that they were therefore written separately and intended as a series of individual stories having to do with Arthur and his court. Vinaver's opponents have enumerated examples of what I have called a mutual awareness among the stories, and examples of consistency in characterisation, tone, and even chronology. They have cited these examples as proof of unity, without, however, probing very deeply the kind of unity they mean, other than that defined by their examples. The question is whether connectedness and consistency mean 'unity'. This sort of unity does not seem to be quite the same thing Vinaver means when he speaks of the separateness of the tales.

What is meant by 'unity' and what degree of it is expected? There seems to be an insistence on the part of many readers to have the stories either 'unified' or 'not-unified'. Why can the stories not have both qualities? C. S. Lewis rightly points out, 'It is our imagination, not his [Malory's], that makes the work one or eight or fifty'.¹⁰ What,

⁹Lumiansky, 'The Question of Unity in Malory's Morte Darthur', p. 31.

¹⁰'The English Prose Morte', in Essays on Malory, ed. J.A.W. Bennett (Oxford, 1963), p. 22.

after all, are the criteria for literary unity? A volume of poetry may be called unified if it has a consistent theme and tone; a sonnet cycle may be thought unified even though each sonnet is also an individual entity; there is no proof in the text of Tristram Shandy that Sterne knew in the beginning how he was going to end it.¹¹ I should prefer to discard this question of 'unity' as a 'unitary fallacy' and speak instead of cohesiveness or coherence. This seems more nearly what most critics mean when they speak of 'unity'. It is what D.S. Brewer means when he says that 'it is impossible to avoid the impression of unity which the whole book makes upon the reader'.¹²

To be sure, there is genuine disagreement about the effect of Malory's writing. Vinaver shows how the stories were probably not written in the order in which they appear in both Caxton's edition and the Winchester manuscript.¹³ Robert H. Wilson, however, believes that at some point in Malory's composition of the stories he arrived at a unifying overall plan.¹⁴ These two statements are not absolutely contradictory, but a clear disagreement lies behind them. Vinaver maintains, as part of his argument, that some of the books may have been written in their traditional order, but that there is nothing to prove it. But Wilson says pointedly that 'regardless of whether some tales were first written separately, linkages indicate that they are to be read in succession'.¹⁵ He surmises that in the beginning Malory made only minor changes in his sources to harmonise them, but later a 'growing conception of how his tales were to

¹¹This may sound like a questionable statement. Surely, however, the inevitable impression is that Sterne was writing somewhat at random.

¹²'Form in the Norte Darthur', Medium Aevum, XXI (1952), p. 15.

¹³Works, I, li and ff.

¹⁴'How Many Books Did Malory Write?' University of Texas Studies in English, XXX (1951), p. 2.

¹⁵'How Many Books Did Malory Write?' p. 3.

fit together was increasingly responsible for changes producing unity.¹⁶ The culmination of Wilson's argument is the verdict that Malory's unity is only 'retrospective and incomplete' and that it is valuable to consider the tales as separate with differing key ideas but not independent; they should be interpreted in the light of their inter-connections, 'partly reflecting central conceptions in Malory's mind'.¹⁷ This is a definite shift from Wilson's earlier reaction to Vinaver's edition, when he said only that it was 'no longer possible to assume that the whole work was intended as unified or that Malory at a given point knew what he was going to do later'.¹⁸

C.S. Lewis' remark on this subject is worth pursuing: 'Wherever there is a matter (historical or legendary) previous and external to the author's activity, the question, "One work or many?" loses a good deal of its meaning'.¹⁹ Indeed, there was an order to Malory's material before he came to it. Even in the chaotic jumble, there was a beginning with Uther Pendragon and an ending with Mordred and Avalon. The salient themes were all there before Malory took up the tale. If Malory had not begun with Uther Pendragon, Uther Pendragon would still have existed. If Malory's Arthur had died from falling off his horse, Mordred would still exist as a menacing figure and a symbol of Arthur's folly. Malory's arrangement is his own, but it exists in the context of the larger arrangement of the pre-existing tradition.

Conversely, Malory's work may also be regarded as self contained. If we allow the contradiction that other very similar things were written on the same subject and concerning the same characters, we may conceive of Malory's work as a unit. His unity is part of the larger one of all

¹⁶ 'How Many Books Did Malory Write?' p. 21.

¹⁷ 'How Many Books Did Malory Write?' p. 23.

¹⁸ Review of Works, MP, XLVI (1948-49), p. 137.

¹⁹ 'The English Prose Morte', p. 21.

Arthurian literature, just as his separate stories are both self contained and part of a larger structure. This is not a perfect analogy, of course, because Malory's cycle overlies his source cycles, while the stories, considered together, suggest a progression; the relationship between the 'part' and the 'whole' is not the same in both cases.

If any literature should be called 'organic' it is surely the hardy and unpredictable Arthurian plant. It has vined luxuriantly, even around unrelated things that were not originally part of it. Separating the cycles of Arthurian romance and the stories within the cycles is like untangling history. We may speak of Scottish, British, or European history as though they were separated by clean dividing lines. Of course they overlap in various ways, contain smaller divisions, and are contained in larger divisions. If we keep in mind the imperfect basis of our assumption that sections of history are divisible, we may still profit from considering them separately. To consider them separately is only to accept an artificial convention in order to examine details and the structure of smaller units. Malory's work is separable from, but contained in, the larger subject encompassing Geoffrey of Monmouth and T.H. White. The larger subject is so diverse and immense that it must be divided in order to be studied at all. Malory's work is not so large or diverse, and has a well-defined beginning and ending (if we accept the reservation that there are other possible beginnings and endings). We should look at Malory's reworking with the same sympathy and the same near disregard for sources with which we look at Shakespeare's Hamlet, which we consider an original play, not a perversion of Saxo Grammaticus. It is unreasonable to pour Malory into moulds of our own devising and not to allow him to tell his story his own way. D.S. Brewer expresses this idea forcefully: 'Knowledge of sources can be of inestimable value, but in no author more than in Malory is it important to keep clearly to the main principle of literary criticism (as different from literary

scholarship): that in the last analysis a work of art is to be considered in itself alone, as art, independently of author and source. . . . All that counts is the way it obeys its own laws, in the way the work itself holds and shapes the reader's imagination'.²⁰

The discovery of the Winchester manuscript was mainly a typographical discovery. It indicated a new presentation of the tales and a new way of regarding their inter-relationship. It did not change the text appreciably or even the traditional order of the stories. From this point of view, the discovery still did not alter the earlier appraisal of Vinaver's: ' . . . les abréviations de l'auteur produisent un effet artistique qu'on chercherait vainement dans ses modèles. Elles créent l'unité dramatique de l'oeuvre'.²¹ The discovery changed our own internal concept of Malory's work, as though the Shakespeare authorship theories were proved true and we had to think of Bacon as the author of King Lear. King Lear would be no different for all that.

In the end, if one has an analytic mind one will see Le Morte Darthur as a collection of pieces. If one has a synthetic mind and looks for unity one can easily find it. It is important to keep in mind that Malory may not have intended a unified work, but the much more important consideration must always be the effect of the finished work. One of the principal arguments against 'unity' is the explicit, Malory's alleged intention of writing separate stories. But, as D.S. Brewer points out, the first explicit is canceled by the linking passage in the second book; 'the explicit cannot be considered as breaking the essential continuity of the story through the two romances'.²² Even if Malory himself had

²⁰Form in the Morte Darthur', p. 15.

²¹Je Roman de Tristan et Iseult dans l'oeuvre de Thomas Malory (Paris, 1925), p. 14.

²²Form in the Morte Darthur', p. 18.

stated unequivocally that his stories were completely unrelated and not meant to be read in a series, it would not make them any more or less connected than they now stand. Even if we took the position that the explicit's were Malory's genuine view of his own work, these opinions would be more the province of biography than of literary criticism. Perhaps the main difference between the 'unity' of Malory and the 'unity' of the several volumes of Tristram Shandy is that we have known all along about Sterne's several volumes, but we have only recently found out about Malory's.

Appendix B:

SOME SYMBOLS IN THE OLD FRENCH

QUESTE DEL SAINT GRAAL

Throughout the Queste del Saint Graal there runs a complex of themes which links the Round Table society to the Graal society. Briefly, the comparisons are effected through the two tables--the Round Table and the Graal table--and references to food. The Round Table itself seems to be used mainly for meals, apart from its symbolism of the fellowship. At the beginning of the Queste when the knights are all together, we see them at the feast of Pentecost. Later when the Round Table is symbolised in Gauvain's dream, the scene is a pasture where the bulls feed at a hayrack.¹ The hermit who explains the senefiance leaves no room for doubt:

Par le rastelier devons nos entendre le Table Reonde:
car ausi come ou rastelier a verges qui devisent les
espaces, ausi a il a la Table Reonde colombes qui devisent
les uns des sieges des autres . . . Au rastelier menjoient
cent et cinquante torel . . . Par les toriaux doiz tu
entendre les compaignons de la Table Reonde . . .
(pp. 155-56)

The first appearance of the Graal occurs when the company is seated at table. It is interesting, considering the later comparison with bulls, that the knights 's'entreteresgardoient autresi come bestes mues' (p. 15). The immediate impression of the Graal is that of a magical serving dish. The Graal then moves about and serves everyone 'de tel viande come chascuns desirroit' (p. 15). That is the first appearance of the Graal. It is known to be a 'Saint Vessel' because it has been prophesied and

¹La Queste del Saint Graal: roman du XIII^e siècle, ed. Albert Pauphilet, GFMA (Paris, 1965), p. 149. All quotations are taken from this edition.

because of the eerie appearance of it, but the food it serves is not the Eucharist, but very earthly food. Part of the movement of the Queste is just this change in the Graal from a receptacle of literal food to a spiritual chalice; it changes as its searchers grow from earthly to spiritual beings. The great link between the two aspects of the Graal is the principle of nourishment, both physical and spiritual.²

I believe that it is not too fanciful to suggest that the dinner scene in which the Graal first appears resembles the Last Supper. It is a general, artistic resemblance to be savoured in passing and not laboriously explained by a hermit. Arthur's banquet, like the Last Supper, is a feast at a great turning point--before a great moral trial. Arthur's feast marks the end of the old, pre-Quest Round Table society. Since at the Last Supper Jesus speaks of his betrayers, it is surprising but satisfying to find Arthur saying to Gauvain (after Gauvain has sworn to seek the Graal), 'Gauvain, Gauvain, vos m'avez trahi!' (p. 21). Arthur, however, is not the 'Christ-figure' of the piece, but rather Galahad. These ironic reversals add to the sense of artistry in the scene. If there were an exact one-to-one correspondence, the scene would be no better than the didactic visions and adventures of the later Queste. One of the finest of these touches is that Arthur's followers are not going out like the Disciples to teach, but to be taught. The Last Supper motifs of Arthur's feast complement the religious atmosphere of the prelude to the Quest, and also increase the sense of doom and foreboding which Arthur feels and expresses. It is true, as Charles Williams points out, that Galahad is not to be identified with Christ.³ Nevertheless, Galahad is surely meant to be Christ-like. According to Mme. Lot-Borodine,

²Myrrha Lot-Borodine, 'Le Symbolisme du Graal dans l'Eistoire del Saint-Graal', Neophilologus, XXXIV (1950), p. 72.

³'Malory and the Grail Legend', The Dublin Review, CCXIV (1944), p. 148n.

in the earlier Estoire del Saint-Graal the Siege Perilleux was the seat of the Lord at the Last Supper 'et c'est pourquoi il doit attendre Jésus-Christ ou bien son substitut'.⁴ Gauvain says of Galahad, '... et vos et nos le devons servir come celui que Diex nos a envoie por delivrer nostre païs des granz merveilles et des estranges aventures ...' (p. 11). It is ambiguous whether 'come celui que' means 'like the one' (i.e. Jesus) or 'as the one' (i.e. Galahad has been sent by God). I believe Gauvain means that Galahad has been sent by God because of the reference to 'nostre païs and 'estranges aventures', but whichever is the exact sense, Galahad is closely linked to Jesus. There is also a certain irony about the question of Galahad's parentage. The queen knows that Lancelot is Galahad's father, but she asks Galahad anyway. 'Et il li respont qu'il ne set pas tres bien cui filz il fu' (p. 20). Certain general similarities between Galahad and Jesus have been established, and now Galahad's uncertainty contrasts ironically with the all-important consciousness of the Son of God of his Father.

The significant thing about food during the Quest is that it is a symbol of carnality. Food and drink must be avoided. It is a commonplace for a knight to go without food altogether: 'Si [Galahad and a damsel] chevauchierent le grant chemin tout le jor en tele maniere qu'il ne burent ne ne mangierent' (p. 198). Often the knight, like Lancelot on the ship, is fed miraculously with manna. Or he may refuse food from his host and ask instead for bread and water. It is in any case praiseworthy and holy to give up food and so mortify the flesh. Yet, at the same time, the spiritual qualities of the Graal must be illustrated by an appeal to worldly sensations, as when it serves delicious food.

There is a comparable ambivalence concerning another object: beds. In the scene of Bors's temptation, the luxurious bed gives the tower away as a device of the devil.

⁴ 'Le Symbolisme du Graal dans l'Estoire del Saint-Graal', p. 72.

Et quant il est en pur cors, si li aportent un riche mantel forré d'ermine et li metent au col, et l'asissent en un blanc lit et le confortent tuit et l'esmoevent a fere joie, tant qu'il li font oublier partie de sa dolor [of his brother's supposed death]. En ce qu'il entendoient a lui recomforter, a tant es vos une damoisele si bele et avenant qu'il paroît en li avoir toute biauté terriane; et fu si richement vestue com s'ele eust a choïs esté de toutes les beles robes dou monde.

(p. 180)

'Paroît' is certainly a significant word, for things are emphatically not what they seem. The ermine, the bed, and the beautiful lady wearing beautiful clothing all give the impression of voluptuous luxury, which is soon shown to be a device of the devil. It is a sinister richness. However, on the nef merveilleuse de Salomon Percival, Galahad, and the damsel see a richness of cloth and metalwork, as well as a bed, that compares with the scene with Bors. The colours and textures of the ship's furnishings are emphasised, and the bed is described:

Et quant il ont cherchié partout, si resgardent ou cors de la nef et voient un mout riche drap estendu en guise de cortine, et par desoz un mout bel lit grant et riche.

Galaad vint au drap, si le sozlieve et resgarde desoz; et vit le plus bel lit qu'il onques veist. Car li liz ert granz et riches, et avoit au chevet une corone d'or mout riche, et as piez avoit une espee qui mout estoit bele et clere, et fu ou travers dou lit trete dou fuerre bien demi pié.

(p. 202)

In the first case the bed is part of the apparatus of diabolical enticement. It is suggestive both of excessive luxury and of the sin of lechery, to which Bors is to be tempted. But in the second case the richness of the bed is suggestive of religious mysteries because of the nature of the ship and the crown, sword, and spindles, whose significance is explored at length. (Another significant bed is Arthur's when Galahad lies in it before the Quest begins. Charles Williams suggests that this is an important scene, for 'there lies in the king's bed that which is the consummation and the destruction of the Table'.)⁵ I believe that

⁵ 'Malory and the Grail Legend', p. 151.

there is a great similarity between these two symbols, the Graal and the bed, for both are used in opposite but strangely compatible ways. The bed in the ship, like the Graal, is symbolic of deep religious mysteries. Because deep religious mysteries can be approached only by symbol and metaphor, the Graal is described in literal, earthly terms (i.e. the delicious food). The bed, easily a negative symbol, is used together with richly worked materials to convey a sense of divine opulence and mystery. Both the bed and food motifs are connected with carnality and abstention from worldly appetites. Abstention results in a purification which brings a knight closer to the Graal. The intriguing imagery suggests several vague ideas. One sort of food is, if not sinful, certainly not far from it, but the viande celestiel represents the profound secrets of the Christian Revelation. The writer had the problem of having to describe spiritual phenomena in physical terms to make it understandable and vivid, and therefore having to compromise the spiritual element. But there is also great irony in the different levels of food. In a slightly blasphemous way, the miracle of Transubstantiation is compared to ordinary, odorific, sensually-appealing food.

One or the other of the two tables--the Round Table and the Graal Table--is often before us and the implicit relationship between them is always there. But in the background is the third table--the table of the Last Supper. Mme. Lot-Borodine speaks of the 'table du Graal, faite à l'imitation-mémoire de celle de la dernière Pâque du Christ avec les douze'.⁶ When Percival is lectured by his aunt, the recluse, she explains that there are three principal tables in the world. 'La premiere fu la Table Jhesucrit ou li apostre mengierent par plusor foiz' (p. 74). Afterwards, the second was 'une autre table en semblance et en remembrance de lui. Ce fu la Table dou Saint Graal . . .' (p. 74). Joseph d'Arymacie is to preside over this table 'ausi come s'il fussent a la Ceinne' (p. 75).

⁶'Le Symbolisme du Graal dans l'Estoire del Saint-Graal', p. 67.

Finally comes the Round Table, which signifies the world (p. 76). There is a clear chronological order to them and there is also the order of movement from the establishment of Christian truth or revelation to the discovery of it, the middle phase being the secular life, from which the search for Revelation starts.

Because the Graal is something to be sought and discovered little by little, it is, besides a mystical chalice of the Mass, a symbol of the gradual discovery of Christian truths. It is true that because of its 'oeuvre d'initiation' the Graal should be considered 'non seulement comme la source des multiples dons divins, mais encore comme le foyer de l'essentielle croyance chrétienne'.⁷ The Graal, however, remains a nebulous symbol able to accomodate many interpretations and be all of them or none of them. One critic praises the ambiguity of the Graal and sees it as the essence of fiction, as opposed to logical discourse.⁸ The Graal varies in nature and function during the Queste, but as it changes, so change the questers, who gradually grow toward an understanding of the mysteries which the Graal represents. Their growth is paralleled by the change from the serving dish at the Round Table to the mystic Eucharistic chalice of the Graal table.

⁷Lot-Borodine, p. 76.

⁸Frederick W. Locke, The Quest for the Holy Grail: a Literary Study of a Thirteenth Century French Romance, Stanford Studies in Language and Literature, No. 21 (Stanford, 1960), p. 6.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

I have tried to use abbreviations sparingly. To avoid confusion I have not abbreviated the various studies published by the Universities of Tennessee, Texas, and Tulane.

<u>Archiv</u>	<u>Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen</u>
<u>BBSIA</u>	<u>Bulletin Bibliographique de la Société Internationale Arthurienne</u>
<u>BJRL</u>	<u>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</u>
<u>CFMA</u>	<u>Les Classiques Français du Moyen Age</u>
<u>EETS OS; ES</u>	<u>Early English Text Society Original Series; Extra Series</u>
<u>ELH</u>	<u>A Journal of English Literary History</u>
<u>GRM NF</u>	<u>Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift Neue Folge</u>
<u>JEGP</u>	<u>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</u>
<u>MLN</u>	<u>Modern Language Notes</u>
<u>MLQ</u>	<u>Modern Language Quarterly</u>
<u>MLR</u>	<u>Modern Language Review</u>
<u>MP</u>	<u>Modern Philology</u>
<u>MS</u>	<u>Mediaeval Studies</u>
<u>NQ</u>	<u>Notes and Queries</u>
<u>RES</u>	<u>Review of English Studies</u>
<u>RP</u>	<u>Romance Philology</u>
<u>RR</u>	<u>Romanic Review</u>
<u>SP</u>	<u>Studies in Philology</u>
<u>TLF</u>	<u>Textes Littéraires Français</u>
<u>ZAA</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik</u>
<u>ZRPh</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie</u>

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