



Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of English Language and Literature

**COURTLY LOVE TRADITION IN MALORY'S *LE MORTE DARTHUR*
RECONSIDERED**

Meriç Tutku Özmen

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2013

**COURTLY LOVE TRADITION IN MALORY'S *LE MORTE D'ARTHUR*
RECONSIDERED**

Meriç Tutku Özmen

Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences
Department of English Language and Literature

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2013

KABUL VE ONAY

Meri Tutku zmen tarafından hazırlanan ‘‘Courtly Love Tradition in Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur* Reconsidered’’ bařlıklı bu alıřma, 13 Haziran 2013 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda bařarılı bulunarak jrimiz tarafından Yksek Lisans olarak kabul edilmiřtir.

Prof. Dr. Ufuk Ege (Bařkan)

Prof. Dr. Burin Erol (Danıřman)

Do . Dr. Huriye Reis

Do. Dr. Hande Seber

Yrd. Do. Dr. řebnem Kaya

Yukarıdaki imzaların adı geen ğretim yelerine ait olduėunu onaylarım.

Prof. Dr. Yusuf elik

Enstit Mdr

BİLDİRİM

Hazırladığım tezin/raporun tamamen kendi çalışmam olduğunu ve her alıntıya kaynak gösterdiğimi taahhüt eder, tezimin/raporumun kağıt ve elektronik kopyalarının Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü arşivlerinde aşağıda belirttiğim koşullarda saklanmasına izin verdiğimi onaylarım:

- Tezimin/Raporumun tamamı her yerden erişime açılabilir.
- Tezim/Raporum sadece Hacettepe Üniversitesi yerleşkelerinden erişime açılabilir.
- Tezimin/Raporumun yıl süreyle erişime açılmasını istemiyorum. Bu sürenin sonunda uzatma için başvuruda bulunmadığım takdirde, tezimin/raporumun tamamı her yerden erişime açılabilir.

13.06.2013

Meriç Tutku Özmen

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank my advisor Prof. Dr. Burçin Erol for her endless patience, continuous support, genuine kindness and valuable criticism that guided me not just during the preparation of this thesis, but also during my hardest times. Without her, my education and this thesis would not have been completed. With her brilliant personality and motherly nature, she made many things possible for me.

I am also grateful to my instructors in the Department of English Language and Literature at Hacettepe University for their support and contribution to my academic studies.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their love, patience and support they provided me throughout my study. I owe a great debt to my mother, who is the source of my strength and inspiration.

ÖZET

ÖZMEN, Meriç Tutku. *Malory'nin Le Morte Darthur'unda Saraylı Usulü Aşk Kavramının Yeniden Değerlendirilmesi*, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2013.

Saraylı usulü aşk, Ortaçağ Dönemi'nde toplumun şekillenmesine yardım etmiş ve karşılığında toplum tarafından şekillendirilmiş, Ortaçağ Avrupasına ait, aşığı yüceltici bir aşk kavramıdır. Bu kavramın kökleri Antik Roma dönemi edebiyatı, İspanyol-Arap şiiri ve felsefesi, Troubadour aşk şiiri, feodalizm ve Hristiyanlık gibi pek çok geleneğe dayanır. Ortaya çıktığı zaman, saraylı usulü aşk rağbet gören ve kabul edilen bir uygulamaydı. Ancak, aynı zamanda bu kavrama karşı eleştirel olan ve şüphe ile yaklaşan yazarlar da bulunmaktaydı. İngilizce'de yazılmış Kral Arthur hikayelerinin ilk tam derlemesi olan *Le Morte Darthur* adlı eserin yazarı Sir Thomas Malory de bu yazarlardan biridir.

Bu tezin amacı *Le Morte Darthur*'da Malory'nin saraylı usulü aşk geleneğine karşı olan eleştirel tutumunu incelemektir. Malory eserine üç aşk üçgeni dahil etmektedir ve her bir aşk üçgenine karşı sergilediği tutum, onun saraylı usulü aşk geleneğine karşı olan tavrını göstermektedir. Uther-Igrayne-Gorlois ve Tristan-Isolde-Mark arasındaki aşk üçgenlerini aktarırken, Malory bu ilişkilerin saraylı aşkı olmadığını vurgular. Ancak Malory, Lancelot-Guinevere-Arthur aşk üçgenini, saraylı usulü aşkın yıkıcı etkilerini göstermekte kullandığı için diğer iki aşk üçgeninden farklıdır.

Bu çalışmanın sonucunda, birbirinden farklı üç aşk üçgeni kullanarak, bu aşk üçgenleri arasındaki farklılıklara dikkat çekerek ve bu aşk üçgenlerinin saraylı usulü aşk

geleneğine nasıl uyduklarını ya da uymadıklarını göstererek Malory'nin zamanın rağbet gören kavramlarından olan saraylı usulü aşka karşı eleştirel bir duruş sergilediği kanıtlanılmıştır.

Anathar Kelimeler:

Le Morte Darthur, Sir Thomas Malory, saraylı usulü aşk, Kral Arthur efsanesi

ABSTRACT

ÖZMEN, Meriç Tutku. *Courtly Love Tradition in Malory's Le Morte Darthur Reconsidered*, Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2013.

Courtly love convention was a medieval European concept of ennobling love which helped the shaping of society and in return which was shaped by the society during the Middle Ages. The concept has its roots in many traditions such as classical literature, Hispano-Arabic poetry and philosophy, Troubadour poetry, feudalism and Christianity. Courtly love was popular and an accepted convention. However, there were also writers who were critical and suspicious of the concept. Sir Thomas Malory, whose *Le Morte Darthur* is the first collection which brings together all the Arthurian stories in English, is one of them.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine Malory's critical attitude towards the courtly love convention in *Le Morte Darthur*. Malory includes three different love triangles in his work and his treatment of each triangle demonstrates his stance towards courtly love. While relating the love triangles between Uther-Igrayne-Gorlois and Tristan-Isolde-Mark, Malory is neutral and not critical. However, the Lancelot-Guinevere-Arthur love triangle is different from the other two, as Malory uses this story to illustrate the catastrophic effects of courtly love.

This thesis, therefore, concludes that by employing three different love triangles, pointing out their differences and illustrating how they conform or do not conform to

the courtly love convention, Malory aims to present a critical stance towards courtly love.

Keywords

Le Morte Darthur, Sir Thomas Malory, courtly love, Arthurian legend

TABLE OF CONTENTS

KABUL VE ONAY.....	i
BİLDİRİM.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
ÖZET.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER I	
UTHER’S LUST, MERLIN’S MAGIC, IGRAYNE’S VIRTUE: THE BEGINNINGS OF A LEGEND.....	22
CHAPTER II	
CLANDESTINE MARRIAGES, LOVE POTIONS AND UNWORTHY KINGS: THE TRISTAN LEGEND.....	40
CHAPTER III	
LOVER, ADULTERY AND HIGH TREASON: THE DOWNFALL OF A KINGDOM.....	65
CONCLUSION.....	86
WORKS CITED.....	91

INTRODUCTION

The legend of King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table is one of the most well-known and enduring legends in the Western world. Although the characters and the settings of the adventures were of Celtic origins, they captured the interest and inflamed the imagination of the rest of the world. The proof of the width of the Arthurian legend's influence can be clearly seen in the various adaptations of the tales in many different languages which appear in nearly all periods of history.

The evolution of the legend and literature related to Britain's legendary king is complicated and covers a long span of time. From the 5th century onwards, the oral form of the legend changed into the written one and this transition is important as it made the continuation of the legend possible. The legend is believed to have originated from the Welsh oral tradition (Putter and Archibald 1).

In the Middle Ages, Arthur and his knights were thought to be part of history. Chronicles such as *Y Gododdin* (7th century), *Annales Cambriae* (970), *Life of St. Cadoc* (c 1130), *Black Book of Carmarthen* (c 1250), *The Book of Taliesin* (14th century) which includes "The Spoils of Annwn", a version of the Grail quest, and "Red Book of Hergest" (14th century) were believed to support the historicity of this legendary community. However, with the romance tradition, King Arthur and his knights lost their status as historical figures and became literary and legendary ones.

If the development of the Arthurian legend is traced, the first writer to mention Arthur and his deeds was Gildas (Wilhelm 3). His *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* (*Concerning the Downfall and Conquest of Britain*) was written around 547 and was “the only real source for much of fifth-century and early sixth-century British history” (Lane 17), although he did not give any names and dates which would help locate the events told in the work. Bede mentions Arthur in the *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation* (731), which is largely a repetition of Gildas, as Wilhelm states (4). Both Gildas and Bede are considered to be the source of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *History of the Kings of Britain* (Fulton 49; Marvin 222, 227; Lupack 341). A Latin chronicle, *Historia Brittonum* (*The History of the Britons*), which is generally attributed to the Welshman Nennius (Higham 30), is another source in which King Arthur is mentioned. The work was written in Latin around 800 AD and the details of the events are believed to be derived from the native Welsh sources, which are a small number of pre-existing texts from earlier times (Higham 31, Wilhelm 5). Nennius’s main concern was not to record the history of the land but rather to shape the past for “the specific needs of his contemporary audience, writing as a political polemicist rather than historian” (Higham 31). *The Annals of Cambria*, *The Legend of St. Goeznovius*, *The Deeds of the English Kings* (*De rebus gestis regum Anglorum*) by the Englishman William of Malmesbury are some of the other important works which mention Arthur and his deeds (Wilhelm 6).

In the case of Arthur, history and mythology have always been mixed. Even in the first chronicle that mentions Arthur, *Historia Brittonum* by Nennius, as Putter and Archibald point out, he is already larger than life, a mythical figure (3). But the next author to use

Arthur in his work, Geoffrey of Monmouth changed that by producing the *History of the Kings of Britain*, “a work that had all the semblance of true history, and included a life of Arthur from his birth to his death” (Putter and Archibald 4), a work which, as Wilhelm puts it, “combines history with legend in a highly imaginative form” (7).

The 12th century is a corner stone in the development of the Arthurian legend. Geoffrey of Monmouth and Chretien de Troyes are the two important figures from this period that affected every aspect of the legend immensely. Both of these writers were more interested in the literary aspect of the legend than the historical one, which was the subject matter of the chronicle tradition.

An early Welsh tradition, partly oral, seems to have been the source for the first “biography” of Arthur, Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *History of the Kings of Britain*, and this work was circulated widely and its influence was soon felt; “the first Arthurian chivalric romances were written in France, quickly followed by German adaptations” based on *History of the Kings of Britain* (Putter and Archibald 1). As Putter states, Geoffrey of Monmouth “invented a proud past for Britain before the invasions of foreign races” (40). His work became “the founding text of the Arthurian chronicle tradition”, and although what Geoffrey of Monmouth provided was not a true history, “medieval readers generally gave credence to it” and for a while Arthur enjoyed the unquestionable status of fact (Putter and Archibald 4). Geoffrey of Monmouth’s the *History of the Kings of Britain* is also important because, as Putter aptly puts it, “many future directions in Arthurian literature [it] glances at” such as “the emphasis on courtliness and love, the change of focus towards the adventures of individual knights and away from the fates of nations and their leaders, a taste for the supernatural, and

emancipation of story from history and the consequent reorganisation of narrative around thematic principles” (42). Wace translated the *History of the Kings of Britain* into French in his *Roman de Brut* and in turn Layamon translated Wace into English, but because Wace and Layamon believed Geoffrey of Monmouth’s accounts to be true, they did not take great liberties with the story they inherited. It was Chretien de Troyes who changed Arthurian literature.

In the 12th century, Chretien de Troyes composed the earliest surviving Arthurian romances and this romance tradition was vastly different from the chronicle tradition of the earlier times. In the chronicle tradition Arthur is the central hero, a warlike leader whereas in the romance tradition he becomes a marginal figurehead, who is only an observer for the adventures of his knights whose adventures in love and chivalry is in the foreground (Putter and Archibald 4-5).

Continuously from the twelfth century to the present day, authors and artists using various modes – romances, poetry, plays, novels, sculptures, manuscript illuminations, frescoes, paintings, operas, films, graphic novels, cartoons – have produced variations on the basic theme of the great king who saved Britain from enemies at home and abroad, conquered much of the Continent [...], and established a court which became a magnet for the best and bravest knights in the world, only to be brought low by treachery in the end, like many other legendary rulers. (Putter and Archibald 1)

Soon the legend of Arthur was one of the most important themes in literature during the late Middle Ages, along with the Trojan material and Charlemagne’s deeds. The reason why the Arthurian legend was more popular than the other major narratives can be attributed to “the remarkable flexibility and infinite expandability of the story” as the other major narratives are more restricted in their subject matters, either focusing on a single hero, like Alexander, or on a short span of a hero’s life, like Robin Hood, or on

an established collection of locations and characters, like the Trojan story, (the Troy story), or on historical context, like Charlemagne. But this was not the case with the Arthurian story. As the legend developed and the romance tradition replaced the chronicle tradition, the focus of the story shifted from the king to his knights and that provided diversity within the legend.

Another factor which helped the legend to maintain its popularity is its intertextuality. Nearly all Arthurian writers draw on earlier sources, making some changes in their sources and sometimes introducing major developments like Lancelot's love for Guinevere or the Grail quest (Putter and Archibald 2). This was what Malory did in his own version of the legend. He used many sources from different time periods and languages like the Post-Vulgate *Suite du Merlin*, the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, the Prose *Lancelot*, the French Vulgate and the Prose *Tristan*, the Vulgate *La Queste del Saint Graal*, 13th century Vulgate *Mort Artu*, and the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*. Malory uses and transform these sources to suit his needs. "Working from his French sources, Malory extracted from the interlaced stories a single, or occasionally a double, narrative thread and recounted it apart from others" (Lacy, Ashe and Mancoff 130).

The Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, which is distinguished from any other work with its detailed and realistic description of the battles, wounds and deaths, is a 14th century work which many scholars consider closer to epic than to romance. As Lacy, Ashe and Mancoff point out, it establishes Arthur "clearly and firmly as the central character, rather than as the peripheral figure he is in most romances" and the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*, a 14th century poem, draws heavily on the French *Mort Artu*, "although it either derives from variant version of the French text or perhaps condenses it and adapts it

rather freely” (123-24). For instance, for his own version of the *Tale of Sir Lancelot du Lake*, Malory makes some adaptations and while combining some episodes which he takes from the Prose *Lancelot*, he sometimes ignores what he deems not necessary for his narrative in a highly selective way. (Windeatt 89-90).

Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur* is the only medieval work attempting to tell the whole Arthurian story. Before Malory, no other writer tried to put the exceptionally diverse material in order. Works written on the Arthurian legend, mainly dealt with only a part of the material whereas Malory tried to create harmony out of what appeared to be chaos. He is generally acclaimed for having brought clarity and coherence to an extended sum of material which was borrowed from the French (Lacy, Ashe and Mancoff 131) and it is commonly accepted that his work, *Le Morte Darthur*, as Windeatt puts it, is “the dominating achievement of the fifteenth-century English Arthurian literature” (84). This work can be regarded as the result of Malory’s perception that there might be a unity that made sense of Arthur and the world of the Round Table as a whole and the outcome of this belief is an ‘Arthuriad’ in English, which covers all of the significant aspects of King Arthur’s life and reign and the history of the Round Table fellowship (Windeatt 84).

As Windeatt states “abridging and simplifying his French model, Malory outlines his cast of characters in a designedly hurried sequence of episodes, navigating an objective course through incidents heavy with implication, in the shifting negotiation between history and historicised romance that will characterise *Morte Darthur*” (86). As Lacy, Ashe and Mancoff assert, to oversimplify greatly, it can be said that *Le Morte Darthur*

consists of three main parts: the rise of Arthur, the glory of Arthur and the Round Table and the fall of the Round Table (131).

Although the popularity of the Arthurian legend and the sources which were used by Malory to create his own version of the legend are important, the central subject of this thesis is the way Malory treats the love relationships to present his criticism of the courtly love convention. Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* is his criticism of the courtly love tradition which was popular during the Middle Ages. As Gilbert puts it:

Arthurian chivalry always lies in a past discontinuous from the present or in some fantastical elsewhere, and is contemplated at a distance by consciously 'modern' commentator. Arthurian discourse therefore incorporates two distinct moral spaces, one identified as Arthurian and another portrayed as that of the text's own present. This dual vision means that Arthurian discourse is inherently ethical. (155)

Both medieval writers and modern writers were aware of this dual nature of the material they were treating. What is remarkable is the way in which they praise Arthurian ideals while at the same time they challenge and criticize them by means of "comedy, irony, parody, satire, and sometimes outright criticism [...]" (Archibald 139). D.H. Green, in his book *Irony in the Medieval Romance*, argues that irony is latent in the romance genre as a whole and existed within the romance tradition from the beginning (12). He uses Eugene Vinaver's description of medieval romance "as a questioning mode, particularly open to irony as a questioning mode of speech" (qtd in Green 390) to point out the underlying meanings within romances. From Vinaver's point of view, a medieval romance is not just a piece of work which deals with knights and ladies, but it is also a tool which can be used to examine the conventions, traditions and manners of the time it was written in. This is directly related with Green's definition which claims

that the presence of irony in romances cannot be ignored, as both definitions point to a deeper understanding of romances through close examination.

Malory's treatment of the Arthurian legend and his material is not so different from Vinaver's or Green's descriptions above. While telling the story of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, he especially focuses on different love stories to criticise the courtly love convention. The love triangles that he uses are that of Uther-Igrayne-Gorlois, Tristan-Isolde-Mark and Lancelot-Guinevere-Arthur. Although the work includes other love stories, such as Sir Gareth – Lyonesse, Sir Tristram - Isode les Blanches Mains, Lancelot – Elayne, the love triangles which are the focus of this thesis are especially significant because, apart from being the foremost and essential parts of the story, they enable the reader to see both the similarities and differences in these love affairs because they do not fit the standards of courtly love and are only tales of love and suffering.

Le Morte Darthur begins with a love triangle, Uther-Igrayne-Gorlois, and the other two dominate the rest of the plot. In all these love triangles there are some common characteristics such as the relationship between a married lady and a knight, the feudal bond between the lover and the husband, the suffering of the lover because he cannot reach his beloved, but the differences are more important than their similarities, and these differences give insight concerning Malory's attitude towards courtly love convention. Although there are three different adulterous love affairs in *Le Morte Darthur*, Malory's treatment of each story is different. While describing the relationship between Uther and Igrayne or Tristan and Isolde, Malory is neutral; he just narrates the stories. The reason for this neutrality is apparent as neither of the love stories conform

to the courtly love convention despite appearances. However, when Malory deals with the story of Lancelot and Guinevere, his attitude becomes critical; he emphasizes the destructive effects of the kind of love which Lancelot and Guinevere shares. This change in attitude can also be explained with the conformity of this love story to the courtly love convention. Guinevere is a courtly lady, through and through, whereas Igrayne and Isolde are not. Furthermore Lancelot is the courtly lover, the courtly knight, Uther and Tristan are not.

Before going into detailed analysis of the love triangles which form the plot of *Le Morte Darthur*, it will be beneficial to look into the concept of courtly love as it may shed light on the criticism. Courtly love was a medieval European conception of ennobling love which became popular in the courts in regions of France at the end of the 11th century. It was introduced into literature by the troubadours of the South of France in the early decades of the 12th century (Denomy 20).

Courtly love can be described as a type of love which emerged as a result of the life style in the Middle Ages and which is extramarital, adulterous, secretive and ennobling. The feudal relationship between the lover and the beloved lies at the centre of this love. The origins of courtly love cannot be traced to a single source. There are many influences which shaped the formation of the concept of courtly love and “the writings of the poet Ovid” is one of them (Parry 4). Ovid, in fact, was using courtly love satirically but it was taken seriously in the Middle Ages, which caused a situation Lewis calls “Ovid misunderstood” (7). According to Newman, “Ovid was widely read but seriously misunderstood by literal-minded medieval readers, who mistook the poet’s frivolous pseudo-maxims for sober counsel and believed that he had expounded a

system, even a science, of love” (vii). Boase evaluates the medieval reaction to the irony of Ovid’s lessons in love as “wilful” because the medieval lover “found nothing inherently ridiculous in the idea of running errands for a lady” (35). Ovid’s conception of love is sensual, extramarital and does not consider marriage as its target (Parry 4). His works *Amores* (*Amours*), *Ars Amatoria* (*The Art of Love*) and *Remedia Amoris* (*The Cure for Love*) influenced the conception of courtly love. The portrayal of love as warfare, with Cupid as the general, leading his soldiers, the lovers; the belief that the lady has an absolute power over her lover; the idea that the suffering of the lover, the hardships he encounters are ways to prove his love for the lady are some of these elements.

Another element which helped the formation of the courtly love tradition is the love poetry of 11th century Moslem Spain. “Courtly love was either imported into the south of France from Muslim Spain, or was strongly influenced by the culture, poetry and philosophy of the Arabs” (Boase 62). Parry claims that this is where “we find almost all the elements which, when combined with the ideas of Ovid, give us courtly love” (8). Hispano-Arabic poetry emphasized “the avoidance of gross satisfaction, restraint, tenderness in a ‘union of souls’”, the desire for the approval of the beloved and the ennobling power of love (Moller, “Social” 139). According to Denomy, the origin of the courtly conception of love as ennobling is to be found in Arabian philosophy and specifically in the mystical philosophy of Avicenna and Sufism (28-29). When examined closely, both Ovid and the poetry of Moslem Spain present many similarities like the description of the lover as being pale and sleepless, weeping and sighing for

his beloved, trembling in the presence of his beloved and belief in the necessity of secrecy in the affair (Parry 9).

After acquiring certain aspects from the poetry of Moslem Spain, this convention travelled to France and then to Germany, where the social conditions were suitable for its development. As Moller states

[t]he numerical increase of the nobility and knighthood provided the background for the courtly mentality. [Between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries], [f]or about 200 years, while Western society went through fundamental structural changes, there arose a need for a larger secular upper class of heavily armed knights and lay administrative personnel; during this period the nobility was an open class, both legally and in reality. (“Social” 147)

In France, overlords of the lands were weak and unable to deal with the chaotic atmosphere which was a result of the fighting barons who resisted any kind of central control. Numerous castles were built in isolated areas and these castles required their own contingent of armed knights. Likewise in Germany, due to the threat from north Italian communes, castle construction increased. With new castles, the need for castle guards, administrators, and judges had emerged (Moller, “Social” 149). This need was satisfied by promoting men from lower social ranks. In both cases, nobility had become an open class and upward social mobility was possible. Duby claims that the princes of the time intentionally encouraged the concept of courtly love as knights were the most useful but also the least malleable of the social classes and these princes used the set of courtly rules to have a control over this class (79). Courtly love was a necessary set of rules to lessen the violence of the crowd and claims that it was expected that these rules would regulate and legitimise the dissatisfaction of the turbulent male crowd by

ritualising the concept of desire and it elevated the values of knighthood and underlined the superiority of the knight in a society where the bourgeoisie was gaining prominence through monetary power (79). Courtly love enabled the preservation of the order and helped to “tame” the young knights, to control the turbulent environment as one of its key values was moderation (80).

As there was a continual rise of men to lower nobility, every castle had its own “bachelor” knights (Moller, “Social” 154). But the number of women who were available for marriage was not the same. Women could and were allowed to marry beneath their status whereas men could not. In order to avoid misalliances, the new members of the lower nobility had to marry a woman of superior social status. “The strains resulting from this situation appeared as specific manifestations of more pervasive and diffuse anxieties regarding acceptance in courtly society, which found expression in courtly lyrics” (Moller, “Social” 163). But these conditions were valid only for south-western France and southern Germany, which were less developed than the rest of these countries. In economically advanced areas, the courtly love convention had no native strength and was accepted only in its later conventionalized forms (Moller, “Social” 147).

In the 12th century, in south-western provinces of France, courtly love convention flourished due to the nobles’, knights’ and courtiers’ desire to distinguish themselves from the rest of the population (Moller, “Social” 146). As Pearson states, for the knightly society of the Middle Ages, love was a liberal education, and the Troubadours elaborated the sentiment in a way which separated the manners of the ruling class from those of the common people (8). “[T]hrough the overwhelming formative power of

northern French culture, that a ritualized public adoration of ladies in combination with servant-like actions toward them - such as granting ladies precedence, picking up their things, performing all kinds of small personal services, etc. - became a badge of social superiority for men” (Moller, “Social” 146).

Courtly love became an educational institution of the knightly class, and its rewards were acceptance as a member of the upper class, being chosen among many and favoured over others, and assurance of personal excellence (Moller, “Meaning” 47). According to Duby love is a game, an educational game, which is similar to a tournament (76). Both in love and in a tournament, the young man puts his body and life on the line to reach perfection, to increase his value as a man, to experience pleasure, to catch his adversary after breaching his defences, unsaddling him, taking him down (77). Duby likens courtly love to armed battle but says that contrary to tournament, duels and battles where equals face each other, courtly love bring together two unequal opponents, one of whom is condemned to lose because of his nature, because of the basic rules of sexuality (77). Duby claims that the efforts made to portray courtly love as ennobling and the imaginary connections of body and soul cannot conceal its true nature, which he sees as sexual (77). He states that the training towards the so-called game of love exalted the sexual desire and encouraged men to bridle this desire in order to gain more in terms of pleasure, whereas the lady was encouraged to be beautiful, to conceal her charms and then to display them, to refuse to submit herself for a long time, but also to give herself parsimoniously with caution in order to prolong the danger and the desire which will help the young lover to learn how to hold himself back and how to have a control over his body (77). Courtly love convention gave the newly

emerging knightly class a model, a guide to show them how to behave and how to gain acceptance. ‘Courtliness’ became an important trait. The list of rules a knight should follow was a long one, but it softened the rough edges of the tribal warrior and turned him into a chivalric knight in shining armour. A courtly knight should be a good conversationalist; he should be careful about the way he speaks, laughs and walks; he should be clean as this is a mark of distinction for courtly people; he should pay attention to his manners while dining; thus basically, abandoning “[t]he coarseness of the old way of life” (Moller, “Meaning” 48).

Andreas Capellanus also commented on the educational qualities of love in *The Art of Courtly Love* and describes love as such: “Love is a certain inborn suffering derived from the sight of and excessive meditation upon the beauty of the opposite sex, which causes each one to wish above all things the embraces of the other and by common desire to carry out all of love’s precepts in the other’s embrace” (28). After giving this description, Capellanus goes on to describe how true love is an ennobling experience:

Love causes a rough and uncouth man to be distinguished for his handsomeness; it can endow a man even of the humblest birth with nobility of character; it blesses the proud with humility; and the man in love becomes accustomed to performing many services gracefully for everyone. O what a wonderful thing love is, which makes a man shine with so many virtues and teaches everyone, no matter who he is, so many good traits of character! (31)

Apart from giving a definition of love and commenting on its educational side, *The Art of Courtly Love* includes dialogues which are taken from the courts of love of Marie de France and in which some characteristics of courtly love convention are revealed and

discussed. In one of these dialogues the idea of service is discussed. The courtier in the dialogue says:

For by the best selection I have chosen you from among all women to be my mighty lady, to whose services I wish ever to devote myself and to whose credit I wish to set down all my good deeds. From the bottom of my heart I ask you mercy, that you may look upon me as your particular man, just as I have devoted myself particularly to serve you, and that my deeds may obtain from you the reward I desire. (94-95)

Being in the service of the lady is one of the most important characteristics of the courtly love convention, another one being the indifference of the lady to the devotion of the lover. This is also illustrated in the same dialogue when the lady answers the lover's declaration of eternal service:

God forbid that any service done to me, *by you or anybody else*, should long go unrewarded if it comes to my attention in any way. But your request that I should consider you as my particular man, just as you are particularly devoted to my service, and that I should give you the reward you hope for, I do not see how I can grant, since *such partiality might be to the disadvantage of others who have as much desire to serve me as you have, or perhaps even more*. (95-96) (Italics are mine)

The Art of Courtly Love contains the important characteristics of the courtly love convention and the book presents these characteristics through dialogues. One of these dialogues also involves the rules of love, which aim to regulate the behaviours of the upper classes on the subject of love, giving instruction and deal with subjects such as disregard of marriage as an excuse for not loving, jealousy as an important element in love, the impossibility of a double love, respect for love's gifts, the need for maturity in the lover, pride in the loved one, secrecy in love, the winning of love, the progress of love, and the effects of love (Capellanus 184-86). Throughout the book Capellanus

discusses questions such as how love may be kept, how it decreases in intensity, how it comes to an end, what to do if one's lover is unfaithful, and gives various decisions in love cases. Capellanus's *The Art of Courtly Love* has always been regarded as the guide book of courtly love

Courtly love involved a tension between erotic desire and spiritual attainment, as Newman states, it is "a love at once illicit and morally elevating, passionate and self-disciplined, humiliating and exalting, human and transcendent" (vii). What makes this convention so important is the fact that although "it had originally nothing to do with married life or its customary preliminaries, it greatly influenced the standard behaviour of the upper classes, especially their conduct in the presence of the ladies" (Moller, "Meaning" 39), as evidenced by the rules Capellanus established.

As C.S. Lewis states that in courtly love "[t]he sentiment, of course, is love, but love of a highly specialized sort, whose characteristics may be enumerated as Humility, Courtesy, Adultery, and the Religion of Love" (2). It was "the feudal relationship between vassal and overlord which provided the lover with a model for his humble and servile conduct" (Boase 35). C.S. Lewis aptly defines the process as "a feudalisation of love" (2). In a society where nearly every aspect of life was controlled by certain sets of rules, love and marriage were not exceptions. Also the influence of Christianity did not bring about any idealisation of human love, either. As Boase states, the Church did not encourage adoration and deference of women and it did not consider sexual passion, however refined, as something noble (35). Within the bonds of holy matrimony sexuality was acceptable as long as it was only for procreational purposes but passionate love, whether it was marital or extra-marital, was regarded as wicked and morally

reprehensible. According to Lewis, it was this Christian attitude to passionate love which, together with the pragmatic nature of medieval marriages, prevented love from being connected with the married state (17).

As Pearson states, among the nobility of the 12th century, a woman's marriage had become a matter of convenience for the benefit of her family in every way and women were made things of barter (7). According to Martha Howell, up until the late Middle Ages, "the companionate marriage", which is "a form of conjugality grounded in personal choice, intimacy, and desire rather than, as had been the venerable practice, in property or more generalized socio-political relations", did not exist (17). Marriage was basically "in the service of community and kin interests" (Howell 18). Charles Donahue Jr., in his book entitled *Law, Marriage, and Society in the Later Middle Ages*, states that

marriage in the twelfth and in the three subsequent centuries, not only as a matter of secular law but also as a matter of social fact, was not the exclusive concern of the parties to the marriage. Family, financial, and feudal concerns at all levels of society and also political and military concerns at the upper levels of society dictated, in many instances, marriage choice. There is evidence that the choice of the parties, particularly of the woman, was hardly considered in many marriage dealings. (2)

As a result of such practices, marriages nearly never were undertaken for love and these circumstances affected the rise of the courtly love convention. According to Duby, marriage contracts were concluded without any regard to the feelings of the people who were supposed to be engaged and as a result, girls who had just reached puberty were handed over to aggressive men whom they did not know (78). Furthermore, the practice which separated boys and girls when they reach their seventh summer and placed them in separate universes caused further discrimination and this resulted in marriages which

were based on a cold relationship of inequality, not on mutual affection which resembles marital love (78). What partners experienced was a patronising compassion for the husband and a fearful respect for the wife at most (79).

When it comes to giving the characteristics of the courtly love convention, there are various lists. Gaston Paris, in his article “Lancelot du Lac: Le conte de la Charrette”, describes courtly love by saying that it is secretive and illegitimate, that the lover feels inferior and insecure whereas the beloved appears as a haughty, disdainful figure, in an elevated position, that the lover is tested with various tasks to prove his worth for the lady’s affection and that love is an art and a science with many rules and regulations (518-19). Denomy’s list of characteristics is clearer and encompasses all the necessary points:

the ennobling force of human love; the elevation of the beloved to a place of superiority above the lover; the conception of love as ever unsatiated, ever increasing desire; the personification of love as a god with absolute power over his army of lovers; the idea of love as a sickness with all its familiar exterior manifestations; the ceaseless fear of lover at losing his beloved, at not being worthy of her, at displeasing her; the position of inferiority of the lover and the feeling of timidity to which that feeling gives rise; the capriciousness, haughtiness and disdain of the beloved; the need of secrecy, stealth and furtiveness in the intrigue; the danger of tale-bearers. (20-21)

The effects of love must be suffering, sickness, sleeplessness, confusion and loss of speech in the lady’s presence, trembling and pallor when near the loved one, fear to make an avowal to the lady, and dread of detection by others (Pearson 7). In addition to from suffering these effects, the lover becomes the lady’s vassal and gives his absolute submission and devotion to her, he gives the lady power over his life or death, he vows his love to surpass all other things in value, he is made rich by the slightest token from

his lady, and he adores her as a divinity, commending himself to her with crossed hands and bowed head (Pearson 8). The various definitions and so called characteristics of courtly love turn the already complex concept into a contradictory one. This contradiction arises from the clash between the two aspects of courtly love. The lady is almost always the wife of another man but the lover's feelings for her and their relationship are celebrated as the source of higher morality. Such a clash can also be seen in Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*.

Le Morte Darthur is considered to be one of the most important works which deals with King Arthur and his knights because of its more or less unified structure. Malory's main aim while composing *Le Morte Darthur* was to collect all stories concerning Arthur and write "the hoole book of kyng Arthur and of his noble knyghtes of the rounde table" (883; XXI.13). As McCarthy asserts, "the *Morte Darthur* is not a novel. It is as much an anthology as a long work of prose fiction" (1). But what makes Malory's 'anthology' different from other Arthurian works is the way he uses and changes his sources. By using different sources, changing the material which he borrows from these sources according to his needs and centralizing love triangles which are part of the Arthurian legend, Malory criticizes the courtly love convention which was popular during the Middle Ages.

The aim of this thesis is to give an in depth study of the attitude of Malory to courtly love as reflected in the three love triangles he includes in *Le Morte Darthur*, which are completely different from each other.

In Chapter I, which deals with Uther-Igrayne-Gorlois triangle, the love between Uther and Igrayne will be analyzed in detail. While narrating the story of Uther and Igrayne, Malory does not make any judgements and presents the events without any comment or any apparent criticism. This is due to the fact that the affair between Igrayne and Uther cannot be considered as adultery: as Uther approached Igrayne in Gorlois' image with the help of Merlin's magic, Igrayne thought that she was performing her wifely duties. This part of the story illustrates that Malory's concern is not just adultery but the courtly love tradition.

In Chapter II, the second love triangle in the work, that of Tristan-Isolde-Mark will be dealt with. As this part of the legend was added later to the actual Arthurian literature, Malory's different treatment of the Tristan story will be illustrated with the additional information on the Celtic sources of the legend. The love of Tristan and Isolde is more complicated than the Uther-Igrayne-Cornwall relationship, but still, similar to the first love triangle, it does not conform to the courtly pattern. There are two reasons for this and one of these reasons lies in the story's Celtic origins and the other is the clandestine marriage between Tristan and Isolde.

In Chapter III, the third love triangle of *Le Morte Darthur*, that of Arthur-Guinevere-Lancelot will be examined closely. The main aim of this chapter is to show that Malory's attitude towards the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere is critical. In the famous "May passage", Malory describes what he calls "vertuose love". This kind of love is pleasing to God. It is stable, chaste, and compatible with the chivalric ideals of honor and loyalty and with marriage. But the love between Guinevere and Lancelot is not "vertuose". It is "unmesurably and oute of mesure longe" (655;

XIII.20), in Lancelot's words. Lancelot begins as a young virtuous lover, who worships his lady from afar but ends up as a courtly adulterer, who betrays his king. Malory sees Lancelot and Guinevere's love as a gradual debasement of what might have been ideal, "vertuouse love" into the sinful, adulterous courtly love he had observed in his sources.

With his different and somewhat critical attitude towards the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere, and his noncommittal portrayal of the other two love triangles, Malory shows the disastrous results of courtly love and how it caused the downfall of the utopic Round Table civilization. He tries very hard to illustrate how Igrayne and even Isolde is different from Guinevere, how what appears to be courtly love in both cases is in fact farther from being so, and how the circumstances surrounding the love stories and relations within these stories are different from the story of Lancelot and Guinevere. Unlike Uther and Tristan, who are participants in adultery but not in courtly love, Lancelot is the character in *Le Morte Darthur*, who acts in accordance with courtly values and as a result he is the representation of "the causes of the downfall of Arthur's kingdom" which are "failure in love, in loyalty, in religion" (Moorman 163).

CHAPTER I

Uther's Lust, Merlin's Magic, Igrayne's Virtue: the Beginnings of a Legend

Hit befel in the dayes of Uther Pendragon, when he was kyng of all Englonde and so regned, that there was a myghty duke in Cornewail that helde warre ageynst hym longe tyme, and the duke was called the duke of Tyntagil. And so by meanes kyng Uther send for this duk chargyng hym to bryng his wyf with hym, for she was called a fair lady and a passynge wyse, and her name was called Igrayne. (2; I.1)

Le Morte Darthur begins with an account of King Uther and Lady Igrayne's first encounter. Instead of using a scene which describes Uther's prowess as a king, or mentioning the general atmosphere of the country at the time of Uther's reign, Malory chooses to open his work with the fateful meeting of Arthur's parents and the objective which lies behind this choice is important. Malory's aim may have been to underline the fact that the beginnings of the legend and Arthur's birth are as important and crucial as the ending of the story and the death of Arthur.

The opening passage's significance is further multiplied due to the information it includes. Apart from introducing three of the major characters of the legend and the participants of the first love triangle (Uther, the duke of Tyntagil and Igrayne), the passage gives additional and substantial information concerning these characters. First of all, it is stated that this duke who resides in Cornwall "helde warre ageynst [the king] longe tyme" (2; I.1). This line establishes the duke as a potential traitor and a threat to the kingdom. Secondly, King Uther wants the duke to bring his wife with him when he comes to the court and the reason for the summons is because "she was called a fair lady" (2; I.1). The implication here is that Uther summoned Igrayne because he had

heard of her beauty before and wanted to see her for himself. Finally, as the passage provides information concerning characters, the lack of such information concerning a character is also as significant as the information which is provided. Apart from saying that Uther was “kyng of all Englonde and so regned” (2; I.1), Malory does not provide any additional insights into this character. He establishes the most fundamental facts concerning the characters and continues with the story of Arthur’s conception. But the few details he provides are valuable so as to create a solid background for this love triangle which makes it different from the others which are included in *Le Morte Darthur*.

In the light of such aspects, it can be argued that the Uther – Igrayne – Gorlois love triangle does not conform to the pattern seen in other love triangles and with the courtly love tradition, and gives clues about Malory’s attitude towards the courtly love convention of his time. The facts Malory provides for these characters can be used to support this point. These facts can be listed as follows: Uther is the king of England, Gorlois is a duke who holds war against his king and Igrayne is a beautiful and exceptionally wise woman. In other love triangles, such as Tristram – Isode – Mark and Lancelot – Guinevere – Arthur, the pattern is different from the Uther – Igrayne – Gorlois’. In these stories there is a king who is, in a way, betrayed by his most trusted knight, who loves the queen. But when it comes to Arthur’s conception, the circumstances are not the same. Uther, not Gorlois, is the king and as Gorlois “helde warre ageynst hym long tyme” (2; I.1), it cannot be regarded as betrayal.

Another pattern which Uther – Igrayne – Gorlois triangle does not conform to is the courtly love convention itself. Even the most elementary and flexible definition of the

courtly love convention cannot be applied to this relationship. When examined more closely, it can be seen that the relationship between Uther and Igrayne is far from being courtly. On the contrary, it can be argued that Igrayne's seduction by Uther can be regarded as nothing more than rape, in modern terms.

The circumstances of Arthur's birth are of Merlin's doing. In *Le Morte Darthur*, what happens is described by Merlin himself: "This nyght ye shalle lyw with Igrayne in the castel of Tyntigayll. And ye shalle be lyke the duke her husband." (4; I.2). When the modern definitions of rape are taken into consideration, what happened the night Arthur was conceived was rape. Rape is generally defined as the "unlawful sexual activity and usually sexual intercourse carried out forcibly or under threat of injury against the will usually of a female or with a person who is beneath a certain age or *incapable of valid consent*" (<http://oxforddictionaries.com/>) (Italics are mine). The key words in these definitions are "nonconsensual" and "incapable of valid consent".

The legal standards for a valid and invalid consent are fairly clear and well defined. An individual must be mentally and physically capable of granting consent. *The consent must be informed; that is the person giving the consent must understand and be knowledgeable as to what he or she is consenting.* It is vital that the consent be voluntary and given wholly of a person's free will. Typically, *the law invalidates a consent that is uninformed, has been given in ignorance, or has been obtained through force, fraud, coercion, and duress.* (*Encyclopedia of Rape*, "Consent") (Italics are mine)

When these definitions are taken into consideration, two things become clear concerning the events of Arthur conception: Igrayne was not able to give an informed consent as she was not aware that the person who came to her at night was not her husband and her consent cannot be considered as an informed one as it was "obtained through [...] fraud" (*Encyclopedia of Rape*, "Consent"). But as far as the story is

concerned, Igrayne's rape was not the first or the only rape which has a great impact on the events. Merlin, who is an indispensable figure in Arthur's conception, was also conceived as a result of rape. The circumstances surrounding Merlin's birth are important as they show many similarities to that of Arthur, which in return supports the idea that Igrayne was raped rather than wooed as a courtly lady.

From the beginning, Merlin's birth is a story of the battle between the good and evil and it involves both God and the devil. According to Post-Vulgate *Suite du Merlin*, the story begins with a meeting between demons and Satan to decide what to do to further evil on earth. Because of the birth of the saviour and the concept of redemption, no one will end up in hell. A person only has to repent to be able to enter heaven. As a result, Satan decides to create a son on earth. If this child is to have special powers, like being able to know the past, the present and the future, then people might believe him and trust him enough to follow him instead of God. The demons reach an agreement and one travels to earth to find a suitable woman to impregnate. The demon who will become Merlin's father finds the suitable woman in a convent, a nun of royal lineage. He rapes her in her sleep and impregnates her, thus giving Merlin, from the beginning, otherworldly powers.

Both parts of Merlin's lineage are important as they shape the character who will, in return, shape the legend. Merlin has a demon for a father, who had given him powers beyond that of a mortal, and a holy nun for a mother, whose purity saved him from becoming the evil creature he was supposed to be.

As a result of his mother's purity, because she was raped in her sleep without her violation, and because she was a virgin before and after that one night, Merlin is given the opportunity to choose whether he will be good or evil. [...]. Essentially, Merlin retains the gifts his father gives him, but, with God's intervention, he is also allowed to keep his mother's holiness. (Carvajal 37)

It is these abilities, the darker gifts Merlin had received from his father, which make Arthur's conception and birth possible.

Malory uses "the classical paradigm of rape in the classical fashion, replacing the immortal god's rape with a human rape that is surrounded by magic and religion to add to its validity and power" (Carvajal 32) as well as "magic and a variety of other means to lend an ethereal light to rape" (Carvajal 28). Arthur's birth is an example to this. He is conceived as a result of rape but not an ordinary one. As Hoffman puts it "[t]he trickery, the compounded deceptions, disguised violations, all the machinery required to accomplish the conception of Arthur, make Merlin's conception, a simple demonic rape, seem a model of decorum" (328). To illustrate this point, an explanation of the circumstances surrounding Arthur's birth is essential.

The birth of the legendary king of the Britons is a result of a man's desire for another man's wife. It is with "lust, deception and treachery" (Harðardóttir 3) that Arthur comes to this world. Uther sees Igrayne and immediately lusts after her: "he [Uther] made them grete chere out of mesure and desyred to have lyen by her" (4; I.2). It will not be completely true to claim that he falls in love with her.

Throughout the story, Uther's feelings for Igrayne are described only in terms of physical desire and the word "desyre" is used repeatedly. When Merlin agrees to help

Uther he has a condition: “And yf kyng Uther wille wel rewarde me and be sworne unto me to fulfille my *desyre*, that shall be his honour and profite more than myn, for I shalle cause hym to have alle his *desyre*.” (3; I.1) (Italics are mine). Throughout the conversations which take place either between Sir Ulfius and Merlin or between Uther and Merlin, it is indicated that the underlying emotion is lust and anger, not love. When Ulfius finds Merlin, he states that the king “shall have his entente and desyre” (3; I.1). Also, Merlin claims to “knowe al your [Uther’s] hert every dele promises” (3; I.2) and tells Uther that if he gives him what he wants, in return he will give Uther what he wants: “So ye wil be sworn unto me, as ye be a true kyng enoynted, to fulfille my desyre, ye shal have your desyre.” (3; I.2). In addition to this, Uther’s feelings are likened to a disease and Merlin is regarded as a “remedy” to what ails the king. When the duke leaves the court Uther falls sick: “Thenne for pure angre and for grete love of fayr Igrayne the kyng Uther felle seke”, “I am seke for angre and for love of fayre Igrayne, that I may not be hool.” (3; I.1). As a result Sir Ulfius proposes to “seke Merlyn and he shalle do yow remedy, that youre herte shal be pleasyd.” (3;I.1). Uther makes his desires known and as a result Igrayne and Gorlois flee from the court. Uther’s obsession is so intense that he is ready to wage war on the duke. But he does not achieve his goal through war; he succeeds with the help of Merlin and his magic.

As Saunders puts it “[t]he great conventions of the romance are patterns of wish-fulfilment: loss and return, separation and reunion, death and rebirth, and these are often worked out through supernatural intervention” (2). This is just the case with Uther and his desire for Igrayne: Merlin fulfils his wish in return for the child which will be born as a result of the union. In Malory, Merlin is depicted as “the most intermediate of

beings” as he is “neither devil, man, nor god, [but he] wears the masks of all three” (Wright 3). Merlin is the embodiment of magic as it is conceived in the Middle Ages: “multi-faceted, fascinating but fearful, promising but dangerous, potentially illusory but also a real possibility” (Saunders 3).

Medieval understanding of the supernatural and magic was different from contemporary times: it was not a fantasy or something which only appeared in romances or stories. It was a part of their world and religion. The concept was also shaped by many different elements: Christianity, classical gods and astrology, and legends of Celtic and Germanic gods (Saunders 3). It encompassed the Christian supernatural which included God, the devil and a spirit world; the astrological knowledge of the classical times with its firm belief that the patterns of the stars and the planets have the power to influence many aspects of the world we occupy as well as the Celtic and Germanic supernatural with its interactive realms of the færy and men (Saunders 3). But this world which includes supernatural beings and forces does not depict magic as an evil or fearful thing. “Rather, magic is practical, material, tangible, its effects most often related to the knowledge and the power of divination, or, more disturbingly, to power over the body, especially through the arts of illusion and shape-shifting” (Saunders 7) and it is this aspect of magic which made Arthur’s conception possible.

In *Le Morte Darthur*, there is an indubitable link between enchantment and destiny and Merlin is the one person who is characterised as in league with, even playing with, destiny (Saunders 238,246). It will be safe to argue that, without Merlin’s interference, many of the events which took place would have had different results or would not have

happened at all. The foundation of an ideal society which is symbolised in Camelot is only one of such events.

Without Merlin's magic and shape-shifting abilities, Uther might not have succeeded in his pursuit of Igrayne, and "[w]ithout Merlin's guidance and purpose, Uther's rape of Igrayne would become nothing more than that: a rape" (Carvajal 39). Merlin appears to help Uther when Sir Ulfius suggests that he may be able to help: "I shal seke Merlyn and he shalle do yow remedy, that youre herte shall be pleasyd" (3; I.1). Just as Sir Ulfius expects, Merlin is able to provide a solution to Uther's problem but he wants something in return: "the first nyght that ye shal lye by Igrayne ye shal gete a child on her; and whan that is borne, that it shall be delyvered to me for nourisshe thereas I wille have it" (4; I.2). Uther, consumed with lust for Igrayne and not thinking of anything else, agrees to Merlin's condition as Merlin makes a promise: "I knowe al your hert every dele. So ye wil be sworn unto me, as ye be a true kynge enoynted, fo fulfillle my desyre, ye shal have your desire" (3; I.2).

Merlin prepares the king, Sir Ulfius and himself:

This nyght ye shalle lye with Igrayne in the castel of Tyntigayll. And ye shalle be lyke the duke her husband, Ulfyus shal be lyke syre Brastias, a knyghte of the dukes, and I wil be lyke a knyghte that hyghte syr Jordanus, a knyghte of the dukes. But wayte ye make not many questions with her nor her men, but saye ye are diseased, and soo hye yow to bedde any ryse not on the morne tyll I come to yow [...]. (4; I.2)

Malory continues the narrative with "Soo this was done as they devysed" (4; I.2), underlining the deception which is going to take place and Hoffman's description of the night of Igrayne's seduction as a "night of lust, disguise, and death" (329) is not far off

the mark. He goes on to argue that “[t]he neurotic violence of Uther’s passion, a compound of lust and betrayal, and mediated by his jealousy of Gorlois as much as by his desire for Igrayne, make Arthur’s conception the initiating crime of Uther’s dynasty” (328) and claims that Malory omits the story of Merlin’s conception and birth and starts with his role in Arthur’s on purpose, “erasing the desire of demons to highlight Uther’s demonic passion for Igrayne” (328).

When Uther is compared to the conventional lover, the differences stand out. Although he has many similarities with the conventional lover (the difficulties he encounters only increases his love, he is jealous, he suffers because of love and becomes sick because he cannot have his beloved), he is not the glorious knight of the conventional courtly love triangle but the king, the lord who rules over that knight. Traditionally, the knight is in love with the lady, who is, in return, married to the knight’s lord. But in this case, the lady is married to the knight and the king is in the powerless position of the courtly knight. Furthermore, unlike the conventional courtly knight who is motivated by the beauty of the beloved, Uther is not only motivated by lust, but also by anger and jealousy. When the duke and Igrayne are called to Uther’s court it is because of what is described as the duke’s rebellious attitude: “there was a myghty duke in Cornewail that helde warre ageynst hym long tyme” (2; I.1). However, for reasons not related to the duke’s rebellion, Igrayne is asked to come to the court as well, “for she was called a fair lady and a passynge wyse” (2; I.1). After the duke and his wife leave the palace secretly Uther learns about it, he becomes “wonderly wrothe” (2; I.1). Uther’s anger, or wrath to be more precise, is just as strong as his lust. According to Murray, there is also another motivation and that is Uther’s “covet[ing] the admiration and power that Gorlois

enjoys” (24). This motivation is less obvious in Malory’s version as he gives little information concerning the duke but his other sources provide the missing pieces concerning the duke.

Uther’s motivation is not nearly as important as the relationship he has with Gorlois. This part of the Arthurian story is heavily edited by Malory to suit his purposes. As Cherevatuk asserts “[i]n characterizing his King Uther, Malory softens the morally loathsome Uther he found in the *Suite du Merlin*” (111). In the very first paragraph, Malory provides the reader with the fact that the duke has been causing problems to and fighting against the king. Such a conduct is not one that belongs to a faithful vassal. Through Malory’s depiction Gorlois is nothing more than a rebellious lord and not the loyal warrior he appears to be in the French source, *Suite du Merlin* (Cherevatuk 111). As a result, whatever action Uther takes against Gorlois, it will be an act of self-defence, an act of a king who is acting only to re-establish his authority over a wayward lord, not an act of a man who desires another man’s wife and covets whatever he has. This situation re-defines the relationship between the king and his vassal, which consists of the king’s protection in return for the vassal’s loyalty. As Gorlois no longer appears to be a loyal vassal, Uther is not bound by this code and can take action. “Furthermore, Malory’s Uther never actually plans a battle in order to end Gorlois’s life, as does the *Suite*’s king” (Cherevatuk 111).

The lord-vassal relationship is not the only concept which changes in the course of the events. The relationship between Igrayne and Uther can be anything but a case of courtly love. As Rosemary Morris states “the social conventions of courtly love have been betrayed in Uther’s violent lust for Igerne; while intensely personal to Uther, his

‘love’ depersonalizes Igerne: ‘she is merely the sexual target’” (25). It can be said that the courtly love convention served as a means to balance the society where young men cannot easily get married because getting married required a certain financial security which lacked in most young men of marriageable age. Nevertheless this is definitely not the case with Uther and Igrayne. Uther is not a knight who is only looking to gain the favours of the lady of his choosing and Igrayne is not a lady who enjoys such attentions.

Malory clearly illustrates the fact that neither Uther nor Igrayne conforms to the norms of what defines a courtly knight and a courtly lady. Uther is not a simple knight, whose highest glory is to be worthy of the love of the lady he desires and performs the most impressive acts of valour and undertakes the most romantic adventures to achieve this end. He does not show any gallantry or courtesy or deference to Igrayne of her wishes. He is not the knight just as Igrayne is not the whimsical lady encountered in other romances. She is not capricious, does not require the total devotion of a knight or appears to be coy. On the contrary, she is one of the strongest characters in the whole work. In the first passage of the work, Igrayne is depicted not only as “a fair lady” but also as “passynge wyse” (2; I.1). Malory comments on Igrayne’s reaction to Uther’s advances by saying that “but she was a passyng good woman and wold not assent unto the kyng” (2; I.1) and she counsels her husband to leave the court, so that she should not “be dishonoured” (2; I.1).

The character of Malory’s Igrayne is not weak although she is powerless due to her position in a society where men control the fates of women. As Zimmerman puts it, she, in a way, embodies “the stereotype of weak women victimized by powerful men and obedient to their will” (38). It can be argued that *Le Morte Darthur* is

a work driven by male desire, will and action, from its dramatic opening where Uther is willing to sacrifice everything for his lust for Igrayne to Arthur's death where the king chooses vengeance on Mordred over preserving his kingdom and his own life. (Jesmok 34)

From the very beginning of the work, Igrayne is described in relation with others' desires concerning her. Uther, without even seeing her, wants her to be brought to the court. She is powerless in the face of a demand from the king but when these demands threaten her 'honour' she wants to leave the court. Again, here the word 'honour' is not used either by Uther, Merlin or even by Gorlois. In the eyes of these men, Igrayne is just a woman, who cannot be dishonoured. Merlin and Uther's bargain is evidence for this belief. When Merlin assures Sir Ulfius that the king's 'desires' will be 'honoured', if the king in return gives him what he desires, he "never [notices] that this exchange of male 'desires' requires 'dishonoring' Igrayne" (Cherewatuk 112).

Despite having a powerless position in society, Igrayne "endures it all with honour and dignity, which indicates a considerable strength of character" (Zimmerman 37). She is deceived, becomes a widow and is raped in the span of an evening. Afterwards, she is left to face the consequences of Uther's deception, unaware that she is raped, and even after marrying the king is left to wonder about Uther's reaction concerning her unborn child whereas the king, instead of comforting her, tests her to see whether she will tell the truth. Even though she passes Uther's peculiar test, she has to give up her child because of a bargain she did not take any part in. According to Janet Jesmok

[a]ll Merlin and Uther's machinations cannot temper Igrayne's integrity and beautiful candor in the face of an attempted seduction, her husband's death, sexual intercourse under false pretenses with a man she hardly knows, her pregnancy and finally the loss of her child. (37)

It is not far from the fact to argue that Igrayne has a somewhat unique position in Malory. When she is first described in the work, her beauty is not her only quality which is mentioned and it is clearly stated that Uther wants her in the court because she was “*passynge wyse*” (2; I.1) (Italics are mine). As Jesmos points out “[t]he first use of the word ‘wyse’ in Malory’s *Morte* refers to the Lady Igrayne, Arthur’s noble mother, a wise woman who guides her less perceptive husband in trying to evade Uther’s adulterous designs” (36). Her wisdom and morality is stressed over and over again and she is depicted as a wise woman who guides and informs her husband about Uther’s less than honourable intentions and whose character and moral stature is carefully developed by Malory to give her words meaning and fullness (Jesmok 36-7).

In all the episodes which include Igrayne, her fidelity is not even questioned once. When questioned by Uther concerning the paternity of her baby, she gives the full account of what happened and says that she “shal ansuer unto God” (5; I.3). Unlike Uther, who does not care whether the object of his desire is married or not, faithful or not, Igrayne is completely faithful and she is “guided by a stronger sense of morality than Uther’s” (Carjaval 40). Malory reports Igrayne’s reaction to the king in definite terms: “but she was a passyng good woman and wold not assente unto the kyng” (2; I.1). She warns her husband and says: “I suppose that we were sente for that I shold be dishonoured” (2; I.1). “[Igrayne’s] aversion to the king and her anxiety regarding the impending dishonor of her virtue are clearly evidenced, particularly in Malory’s version, as she repeatedly rebuffs Uther’s advances and flees his court” (Murray 25). Malory only lets Igrayne speak when she is counselling her husband or when she is

making explanations for her pregnancy. Furthermore, whenever she makes an utterance, it is full of wisdom and integrity.

Malory's Igrayne is not only wise and virtuous, but she is also a likeable figure. She draws the narrator's and the reader's sympathy as a good wife. As the wife of the duke of Cornwall, she is faithful, never straying from the righteous path, warning her husband concerning Uther and fearing Uther's intentions. As the wife of the king, she is obedient to Uther's will, giving away her child without questioning, and honest, especially concerning the conception of Arthur even though there is a chance that Uther will not believe her. It can be argued that Igrayne embodies the ideals of femininity (chastity, submissiveness and loyalty). She remains loyal to her husband in the face of Uther's lust, tells Uther the truth when questioned about the paternity of her child and appears defenceless when confronted by the knights in Arthur's court: "I am a woman and I may nat fight" (36; I.21). She stands as a stereotype, the figure of a woman who is brutalised by powerful male egos, unlike Guinevere and Isolde, who appear to be able to control their own destinies and make decisions for themselves.

Igrayne's language in *Le Morte Darthur* also distinguishes her from the other queens in the work. Fishman notes that women who take control of conversation are often "derided and doubt is cast on their femininity" (405). Guinevere and Isolde are prime examples for that; each queen has her own mind and is not afraid to speak their minds. They are independent and their speeches are often aggressive rather than defensive whereas Igrayne shows "a strong tendency to act interdependently" (Zimmerman 37) and her language is defensive:

I shalle telle you the trouthe. The same nyghte that my lord was dede, the houre of his deth as his knyghtes record, ther came into my castle in Tyntigaill a man lyke my lord in speche and in countenaunce, and two knyghtes with hym in lyknes of his two knyghtes Barcais and Jordans, and soo I went unto bed with hym as I ought to do with my lord; and the same nyght, as I shal ansuer unto God, this child was begotten upon me. (5; I.3)

As can be seen from her explanation to Uther, instead of taking a more aggressive approach, Igrayne chooses to defend herself even though she is not guilty of anything. Later when confronted and accused by Ulphuns, a knight in Arthur's court, as being "moste traytours unto the kynges person" (35; I.21), her defensive manner continues:

Than spake Igrayne and seyde, 'I am a woman and I may nat fyght; but rather than I sholde be dishonoured, there wolde som good man take my quarrell. But,' thus she seyde, 'Merlion knowith well, and ye, Sir Ulphuns, how kyng Uther com to me into the castell of Tyntagyl in hte lyknes of my lorde that was dede thre owres tofore, and there begate a chylde that nyght uppon me, and aftir the thirteenth day kyng Uther wedded me. And by his commaundemente, whan the chylde was borne, hit was delyvirde unto Merlioon and fostered by hym. And so I saw the childe never aftir, nothir wote nat what ys hys name; for I knew hym never yette.' (36; I.21)

Zimmerman states that "[i]n terms of conflict managing, Igrayne's words may be described as the conflict avoidance style, which is characteristic of a person with a strong tendency to act interdependently" and that her first words ("I am a woman and I may nat fyght; but rather than I sholde be dishonoured, there wolde som good man take my quarrel") "emphasizes her compliance with the era's expectations of female weakness" (37).

Another point which makes Igrayne different from the conventional courtly love lady/beloved as well as from Guinevere and Isolde is that she cannot be considered to be committing adultery. What happened at the night of Arthur's conception does not

have any part in courtly love convention as Igrayne did not know that the man who came to her that night, demanding his husbandly rights, is not her husband but a stranger in disguise. She may not have been forcefully raped “but she is tricked into believing her rapist is her husband, that she is having sex within the confines of her marriage bed, not committing adultery” (Carvajal 41). This being the case, it can still be defined as rape as “Igrayne did not know what she was doing – she is unable to give ‘informed consent’” (Carvajal 41). In terms of the definitions of rape, this situation can be classified as rape because of the lack of ‘informed consent’. According to Murray, especially in Malory’s version, Igrayne’s aversion to the king is clear from the beginning and “[t]here is little question that, had she known her ‘lover’ to be Uther, she would have objected to his advances as strenuously as she previously had at Uther’s feast” (25).

When Igrayne’s utterances and the circumstances of Arthur’s birth are analysed two things become certain: that Igrayne’s husband was dead at the time of Uther and Igrayne’s encounter and that Igrayne thought she was doing her duty as a wife should as she believed Uther to be her husband. Malory continuously stresses the fact that Arthur was not born out of wedlock and he was “borne in wedlock” (12; I.8). Merlin and Igrayne keep repeating the truth concerning Arthur’s conception; when all the kings of England come together after Arthur’s claim to the throne, they question Merlin as to why they made “that boye Arthur” their king, Merlin explains “the cause, for he is kynge Uther Pendragons sone borne in wedlock, gotten on Igrayne, the dukes wyf of Tyntigail” (12; I.8). When the kings assume that Arthur is the illegitimate son of Uther, Merlin contradicts this claim and says “after the deth of the duk be more than thre

houres was Arthur begoten, and thirteen dayes after kyng Uther wedded Igrayne, and therfor I preve hym he is no bastard” (12; I.8). Again, even before Merlin’s or Igrayne’s claims, Malory makes certain that his readers are aware of the fact that the duke was dead at the time of the conception: “So after the deth of the duke kyng Uther lay with Igrayne, more than thre houres after his deth, and begat on her that nyght Arthur” (4; I.2). Although both Merlin and Igrayne underline the three hour time period to prove Arthur is not Gorlois’s but Uther’s son and that he is not illegitimate (Butvin 43), their claims are also helpful to note that Igrayne’s relationship with Uther cannot be considered adultery. To be more precise it is not adultery for Igrayne, but it is for Uther as he was aware of all the facts and did not know Gorlois was dead (Murray 26).

In conclusion, it is can be stated that, although Uther-Igrayne-Gorlois love triangle appears to be a fine example of courtly love, it cannot be further from the truth, especially in Malory’s work. Although Uther appears to be the conventional courtly knight who becomes sick with the love of his beloved and who yearns to be in her presence, in reality, he is the lord who has the power to make things happens as he wishes, as can be seen in the way he managed to lie with Igrayne. Furthermore, Igrayne is not the courtly lady Guinevere is, using her beauty and power over the powerless knight. She is hesitant but not coy, beautiful but not cruel, and always faithful to her husband. She is coerced and tricked by Uther. None of the characters in this love triangle conform to the tradition. Malory takes great pains to emphasise the discrepancies between other love triangles and this one to illustrate that his treatment of Tristan-Isolde-Mark and, particularly, Lancelot-Guinevere-Arthur stories are critical of the convention which dominated the Middle Ages. Instead of a powerful and confident

queen, like Isolde and Guinevere, Igrayne is a somewhat weak and dependent woman, who is afraid to be labelled as an adulteress and says God is her witness that she is telling the truth. In no part of the work does Malory criticise Igrayne. She is a good and loyal woman, and “[w]ithout magical power, [she] must navigate a treacherous world in which even the forces of good, like Merlin, both use and abuse her person” (Jesmok 37). “The Hoole Book of Kyng Arthur and of his Noble Knyghtes of the Rounde Table” (883 XXI.13) begins with “the noble Igrayne, who, regardless of tricks and coercion, always keeps her dignity and tells the truth” (Jesmok 40) and King Uther whose “intemperance in his desire for Igerne is the beginning of the degeneration of the Round Table and Camelot” (Murray 27). Their story foreshadows the impending doom and the events to come as well as serving as a foil to the other love triangles in the work to make Malory’s criticism harsher.

CHAPTER II

Clandestine Marriages, Love Potions and Unworthy Kings: the Tristan Legend

In his “The Book of Sir Tristram” Malory provides the only extant 15th century narrative treatment in English of the Tristan story (Windeatt 90). The extent of the book, which consists of one third of *Le Morte Darthur*, underlines the importance Malory sees in it. It can be claimed that “The Book of Sir Tristram”, as Windeatt states, “stand[s] for the extended summer of Arthurian chivalry at the heart of his Arthuriad, between Arthur’s youthful conquests and the inception of the Grail quest” (91).

Similar to the Uther-Igrayne-Gorlois love triangle, the love relationship between Tristan and Isolde also appears to conform to the norms of courtly love. As Koplowitz-Breier suggests, “the basic form of the *Fin’amors*” that is “the king-husband, the queen-wife, and the knight-lover” (2) can be applied to “The Book of Sir Tristram de Lyones”. Actually, the Tristan legend has more characteristics which suggest that it can be considered as a case of courtly love: Mark is a king who is married to Isolde the Fair, who in return falls in love with a knight, Tristan. However despite the fact that the first glimpse into the legend suggests that it can fit into courtly love convention, there are many other factors which make the story not suited to be courtly. The Pictish origins of the legend, Malory’s “uncourtly” portrayal of the lovers, Mark’s portrayal as a villain and the possibility of a clandestine marriage between the lovers make Malory’s version of the Tristan legend not suitable to be considered as courtly love.

The theories concerning the origins and the background of the Tristan legend are various and this gives rise to problems in analysing certain aspects of the relationship between the characters. Although the legend is generally associated with Cornwall, Drustan is a Pictish name and Drust, son of Tallorcan is a Pictish king in the late 8th century (Radford 72, Lupack 371). According to Lacy, Ashe and Mancoff's account, Drust is a Pictish royal name, with such variants as Drostan, and the Welsh adapt it into Drystan and sometimes Tristan. Therefore, it has been argued that the nucleus of the Tristan legend is Pictish (303). Another related theory is that the Irish hero Fionn MacCumhail, who has an impressive band of warriors, may be the source for the Tristan and Isolde story as Fionn loses his beautiful young wife Grainne to one of his men, Diarmid (Putter and Archibald 8). This theory seems to support Joseph Bedier's idea that the adulterous triangle which forms the basis of the Tristan story is from Celtic sources (115,159), who claims that by means of proper names that the tradition, in some form or other, must have passed from Pictland through Wales and Brittany into France and England (Loomis 416).

John H. Fisher, in his article "Tristan and Courtly Adultery" investigates the possibility of Pictish origins of the legend and claims that the Tristan legend has "the cultural background in which adultery might seem to be approved" (152). He claims that the "Pictish society might provide us with a setting in which ceremonial adultery was socially acceptable" (156). Fisher identifies "Tristan (Drystan ab Tallwch in the *Mabinogion*)" with "Drest filius Talorgen who reigned over the Picts from A.D. 780 to 785" and continues his argument by saying that "[a]mong the Picts down to the ninth century the sister's son inherited the throne, after the brothers of the Pictish ruler. As a

result, the king was not allowed to marry. This would explain the relationship between Mark and Tristan before Mark's marriage" (154). He also claims that such a tradition, a matrilineal and a polyandrous one, would have been unacceptable to the patrilineal Christian Celts and as a result they would have adapted the story to a Cornish setting and the polyandrous domestic arrangement may have been attributed to a supernatural agency, the love potion (Fisher 156). Lacy, Ashe and Mancoff also argue that the traditions of Celtic queenship, which were no longer understandable in the Middle Ages, were dealt with and they go on to explain that "a Celtic queen was her husband's equal, in some ways superior, and could take lovers as a king could take concubines. Transplanted into the context of medieval wifely duty, the story becomes different" (324). With her healing skills and fierceness when defending Tristan, as Zimmerman points out, "La Belle Isode of *Le Morte Darthur* also still bears a slight resemblance to her prototype of a warlike enchantress of the ancient Celtic legends" (68). Even with the changes which were made in the core of the legend, sufficient part of the old tradition may have survived, as Fisher asserts, to give the Tristan story "a significance quite unlike that of classical or other Celtic love stories" (156).

Although some critics, such as Rumble and Moorman, claim that the reason why Malory included a relatively detailed version of the Tristan legend is to prove that there is a general decline in the Round Table society and the values they uphold, "lest the adulterous love between Lancelot and Guenevere be thought an anomaly – a single flaw in an otherwise perfect world" (Rumble 146), the evidence which can be found within the work which supports otherwise. It is true that, as Moorman states, Malory robs the legend of its courtly glamour (172), but as Schueler argues "the curtailment of courtly

glamour in the affair of Tristram and Isode, rather than having pejorative effect, tends to humanize the lovers” (54). Malory’s intention when he included Tristan and Isolde may have been to use them as a foil to Lancelot and Guinevere, and that might be the reason why he takes such pains to compare Lancelot and Tristan, Guinevere and Isolde, Arthur and Mark.

Malory makes an effort to illustrate the similarities between Tristan and Lancelot by putting them in a class of prowess by themselves and by building up a deep friendship between them that has no counterpart in the French romances. Whenever Tristan is mentioned within the context of knighthood, a comparison between Lancelot and Tristan is not far behind: “the man called now moste of proues excepte sir Launcelot” (364; IX.15), “the hardyeste knyght in batayle that now ys lyvyng excepte sir Launcelot” (580; X.88). The same thing applies for Lancelot too; whenever some other knight mentions Lancelot’s worth as a knight, the Tristan comparison follows: “the man in the worlde excepte sir Trystramys that I am moste lothyst to have ado withall” (361; IX.14).

While the comparisons between the two knights are striking, Malory’s intention might have been to contrast them at a deeper level, especially in terms of the adulterous situations in which each finds himself involved (Schueler 55,58). As Schueler aptly puts it:

Why did Malory take such care to compare the two knights? The answer [...] is that he wished, at a deeper level, to contrast them. No one can miss the surface similarities between Tristram and Lancelot, and the connections that Malory established between them make us all the more aware of the relatedness of their situations. Both are the greatest of the earthly knights,

both are pledged to the service of their respective lords, and both are enmeshed in adulterous relationships with their lords' wives, relationships which eventually drive them to madness. Yet at every point, Malory has exploited these similarities only in order to underline the fact that the situations of the two knights are not similar at all. (58)

This dissimilarity is also underlined by the fact that although Tristan is established as a good and able knight in the beginning of the tale, the description of his identity as a lover is postponed. Notwithstanding the fact that he promises to be Isolde's knight as long as he lives when he is leaving Ireland, he seems to forget Isolde, falling in love with Sir Segwarides' wife and even marrying Isolde of the White Hands. While Isolde's love is obvious, "the joy that La Beale Isode made of sir Trystrames ther myght no tunge telle, for of all men erthely she love hym moste" (311; VIII.23), Tristan chooses his duty as a knight and gives Isolde to Mark: "this is my desyre: that ye woll gyff me La Beale Isode to go with me into Cornwayle for to be wedded unto kynge Marke, myne uncle" (311; X.24). King Anguish's, that is, Isolde's father, reaction to Tristan's wish is one of dismay: "I had lever than all the londe that I have that ye wolde have wedded hir yourself" (311; VIII.24). Although he wishes Tristan to be the one who marries Isolde, he gives Isolde to Tristan saying "to do with hir what hit please you, that is for to sey, if that ye lyste to wedde hir yourselff, that is me leveste; and yf ye woll gyff hir unto kynge Marke your uncle, that is in your choyse" (311; VIII.24). Tristan does not change his mind and Isolde marries Mark.

Another major factor which underlines the fact that the two knights are not much alike despite the appearances is their difference in the knightly and political world of the Arthurian realm. As Hodges aptly puts it, Tristan is "a provincial knight", at least politically (8). Lancelot takes part in the great English war and he is Arthur's

companion which results in his involvement in national politics whereas Tristan stays in Cornwall and tends to stay away from Arthur's court, even to the point of being averse to the idea of joining the Round Table (Hodges 8). Even though Hodges defines Tristan as a provincial knight due to the fact that his concerns are more local when compared to Lancelot, he also points out the fact that "[h]e is not even simply Cornish. Trystram serves many lords: Mark in Cornwall, Arthur in England, Angwysch in Ireland, and Howell in Brittany, switching back and forth as convenient" (18). This differentiates him from Lancelot completely, who is devoted and loyal to only one king who is Arthur. When confronted with Arthur's desire that he "abyde in [his] courte" (427; X.6), Tristan says he "is lothe, for [he has] to do in many contreys" (428; X.6). According to Hodges, "[t]o deal with many 'contreys' requires a different kind of chivalry than dealing with one royal court, and Trystram's career shows more concern with individual advancement and personal alliances than with national service" (85). Even so he is a remarkable knight and a man of amazing feats, as he himself points out when Mark exiles him from Cornwall:

'Grete well kyng Marke and all myne enemyes, and sey to hem I woll com agayne whan I may. And sey hym well am I rewarded for the fyghtyng with sir Marhalt, and delyverd all hys contrey frome servayge. And well am I rewarded for the fecchyng and costis of quene Isode oute off Irelande and the daunger that I was in firste and laste. And by the way commyng home what daunger I had to brynge agayne quene Isode frome the Castell Pleure! And well am I rewarded whan I fought with sir Bleoberys for sir Segwarydes wyff. And well am I rewarded whan I faught with sir Blamoure de Ganys for kyng Angwysch, fadir unto La Beall Isode. 'And well am I rewarded whan I smote down the good knyght sir Lamerok de Galis at kynges Marke's requeste. And well am I rewarded whan I faught with the Kyng with the Hondred Knyghtes and the kyng of North Galys, and both thes wolde have put hys londe in servayge, and by me they were put to a rebuke. And well am I rewarded for the sleynge of Tauleas, the myghty gyaunte. And many othir dedys have I done for hym, and now have I my waryson! 'And telle kyng Marke that many noble knyghtes of the Rounde

Table have spared the barownes of thys contrey for my sake. And also, I am nat well rewarded whan I fought with the good knyght sir Palomydes and rescowed quene Isode frome hym. And at that tyme kynge Marke seyde afore all hys barownes I sholde have bene bettir rewarded.’ (376; IX.22)

Although the different portrayal of Tristan and Lancelot as lovers and as knights is significant, the crucial difference between Lancelot and Tristan is the issue of loyalty. The feudal system was basically about the loyalty between a king/lord and his vassals. This was the foundation of the system. In the Arthurian legend, Lancelot is a vassal of King Arthur, who, by all accounts, is the embodiment of knightly and kingly virtues whereas Tristan is a vassal of King Mark, who is everything Arthur is not: a coward, deceitful, treacherous man in Malory’s version. Furthermore, there is also the matter of courtly love and the loyalty of a knight to his lady. A knight should honour and obey his beloved lady above anybody else. As a result, this creates conflicting loyalties for Lancelot and Tristan as they are supposed to be loyal both to their lords and their ladies. In their cases, this does not seem possible because of the fact that their ladies are the wives of their kings. Nevertheless, when Malory’s account is taken into consideration, as Schueler asserts, he half suggests that in Tristan’s case there is not much loyalty of any kind, much less a conflict of loyalty, to be concerned about (59). This can be explained through the knightly typology Malory uses in *Le Morte Darthur*.

Beverly Kennedy, in her article “Adultery in Malory’s *Le Morte D’Arthur*”, investigates the knightly typology Malory uses in his work, which, she claims, affected the way he dealt with the theme of adultery. Malory’s treatment of adultery in *Le Morte Darthur* appears to be a function of his typology of knighthood. According to Kennedy, there are three types of knighthood (Heroic Knight, Worshipful Knight and True Knight) and each type has a different understanding of what constitutes knightly honour and has a

different attitude toward committing adultery (63). According to this typology, each knightly type is defined primarily by his sense of honour and the most dramatic way in which he exhibits that defining sense of honour is through his sexual behaviour, especially his behaviour concerning adultery (Kennedy 63). Kennedy lists Gawain as an example of the feudal ideal of Heroic Knighthood, Lancelot as an example of the religious ideal of True Knighthood, and Tristram, the knight most like Arthur himself, as an example of the late medieval courtly and secular ideal of Worshipful Knighthood and states that the Worshipful Knight defines honour as a matter between individuals rather than as a matter concerning the family, like the Heroic Knight does, or as something between himself and God, like the True Knight (Kennedy 64,66). As the Worshipful Knight regards adultery as a serious moral offense in part because it entails the breaking of the mutual trust on which the matrimonial bond is based but sees no wrong in committing adultery with a married woman who is a willing partner, so long as he himself is not obligated to be loyal to her husband as his kinsman, lord, vassal or retainer (Kennedy 67). However, this does not appear to be the case with Tristan and Isolde as Mark is both Tristan's uncle and his king. Kennedy claims that Malory altered the narrative of Tristram's love for Isode "so that Tristram is able to preserve his 'worship' despite the adultery" (65)

Tristan's affair with Isolde was not his first one as he had a relationship with a married lady before: the wife of Sir Segwarides. This affair was the one which started the decline in the relationship between Mark and Tristan: "But as longe as kynge Marke lyved he loved never aftir sir Trystramys. So aftir that, thoughe there were fayre speche, love was there none" (297; VIII.14). Despite having had an adulterous relationship with

another knight's wife, Tristan was able to preserve his "worship". From the ethical point of view of a Worshipful Knight, Segwarides is not deserving of loyalty because he is the son of a Saracen king, an infidel, thus lacking proper loyalty to God. A man who lacks loyalty to God is not a man of honour and, therefore, cannot be dishonoured (Kennedy 67).

Although Tristan's affair with Lady Segwarides may be somewhat justified through the explanation that Tristan did not have any loyalties toward a Saracen and that he does not consider it as dishonour, it is quite a different matter when it comes to his relationship with Isolde, Mark's wife. Mark is not only his uncle, but also the person who made him knight and now retains him in his court. As a result, within the framework of the knightly typology, Tristan cannot be disloyal to Mark, without losing his "worship". Again, Malory changes the French prose *Tristan* in many and substantial ways so that in his version Tristram and Isode are both able to avoid dishonour by remaining loyal to their lord until such time as Mark proves by his treachery that he no longer deserves their loyalty when he sends Tristan to Ireland with the hopes that he will be killed there, or when he sentences Isolde to be burnt at stake without so much as a trial (Kennedy 68).

Malory sets Mark as an effective foil character to Tristan and Arthur. He is compared with Tristan in terms of knighthood and companionship, and with Arthur in terms of kingship. He is no longer the warrior he was at the beginning of the legend and the concept of honour is depicted by Tristan, and sometimes by Arthur (Heikel 28). Tristan is the better lover and the better knight; when he asks King Anguish to give Isolde to Mark as a wife, the king protest by saying "I had lever than all the londe that I have that

ye wolde have wedded hir yourself” (311; VIII.24). “Although subordinate in Cornwall, Trystram is superior to Mark in national influence and thus (love aside) a better match for Isode” (Hodges 90).

Malory establishes the relationship between Tristan and Mark early on. Their first encounter occurs when Tristan comes to Mark’s court to defend Cornwall from Ireland’s champion, Sir Marhalt. From the moment Tristan sets foot on Mark’s court, his loyalty and bravery is unquestioned. He becomes the champion of Mark and the Cornish court and does many deeds in Mark’s name. Malory continues to omit all the indications of a sexual liaison between Tristan and Isolde which are to be found in his French source as Kennedy points out (68). Tristan’s loyalty does not waver until Mark betrays his nephew, even not then. The only reason Mark sent Tristan to Ireland to fetch Isolde was because he expected Tristan to be killed by the Irish to avenge the death of Sir Marhalt:

So whan this was done kynge Marke caste all the wayes that he myght to dystroy sir Trystrames, and than imagened in hymselff to sende sir Trystramys into Irelonde for La Belle Isode. For sir Trystrames had so preyed her for hir beaute and goodnesse taht kynge Mark seyde he wolde wedde hir; whereuppon he prayed sir Trystramys to take his way into Irelonde for hym on message. And all this was done to the entente to sle sir Trystramys. (304; VII.19)

It is clear from the passage that Mark never expected Tristan to return and therefore never intended to marry Isolde.

Despite the fact that he never expected to have Isolde as wife, Mark becomes quite jealous of his young and beautiful wife. When Sir Andret tells him he saw Tristan and

Isolde talking in a window, “kyng Marke toke a swerde in his honde and cam to sir Trystrames and called hym ‘false traytowre’, and wolde have stryken hym” (323; VIII.32). Tristan leaves the court after this incident, but he eventually agrees to return to his uncle’s service. The peace in the court seems to be re-established until the episode of the magical horn. The horn was initially sent to Arthur by Morgan le Fay with the intention of exposing Lancelot and Guinevere’s relationship. Sir Lamorak, who holds a grudge against Tristan, forces Sir Driant to deliver the horn to Mark’s court instead of Arthur’s. “[T]he horne had suche a vertu that there myght no lady nothir jantyllwoman drynke of that horne but yf she were trew to her husbande; and if she sholde spylle all the drynke and if she were trew to her lorde she might drynke thereof pesible” (326; VIII.34). Of the hundred women who drink from the horn, only four manage to drink without spilling and the queen is not one of them. As a result Mark condemns all to be burned at the stake, without any further inquiry or judicial procedure. Fortunately, the barons are able to prevent the burning, but, as a result of Mark’s betrayal of Isolde by condemning her to be burned, the lovers start seeing each other in earnest: “*Than sir Trystrames used dayly and nyghtly to go to quene Isode evir whan he myght*’ (327; VIII.34) (Italics are mine). Malory’s implication cannot be clearer: the lovers no longer feel any loyalty towards a husband, an uncle, a king, who tried to have them killed without any evidence other than Morgan le Fay’s questionable chastity test. As Kennedy states

[b]y the ethical standards of the Worshipful Knight, Mark’s acts of treason have broken the social ties which bound his nephew and his wife to be loyal to him and have also dishonored him. Therefore, just like Tristram’s adultery with Segwarides’ wife [...], Tristram’s adultery with Mark’s wife is not dishonorable, for the king’s own treachery and consequent lack of honor made it impossible either to dishonor him or to be dishonored by behaving

towards him in a manner which would otherwise be dishonorable. Neither does the adultery dishonor Isode, given Mark's prior treason against her [sending her to the stake to be burned]. (Kennedy 69)

Malory's alterations are not just limited to the episodes mentioned above. As Moorman has also asserted, Malory has drastically reduced the courtly material found in his sources mainly in order to reduce the size of the legend, but partly also in order to change the nature of the Tristan story (172). The earlier accounts of the legend tended to be more focused on the obsessive and destructive passion of Tristan and Isolde, which was depicted as distressful, alienated, secretive and corrupt. However, later accounts preferred a much lighter version of the story, in which the adventures of the lovers mirrored and paralleled those of other characters, especially Lancelot and Guinevere's (Windeatt 90). This is also the case with Malory. As Moorman states, it can be seen clearly throughout the work that Malory systematically strips the legend of its courtly glamour and yet at the same time preserves the adulterous actions of the lovers in order to enforce a comparison with Lancelot and Guinevere (172).

By robbing the story of its courtly glamour, Malory also makes his characters more human and less courtly. As Schueler points out, "[t]he tragic heroine of the Thomas poem, and the courtly lady of the French prose romance are both discarded" (59). Malory's Isolde becomes a more attractive figure, rather than the heartless courtly lady, through an understatement of her stylized characteristics as a courtly heroine. She meets and falls in love with Tristan before she marries Mark and dotes almost lavishly on Tristram, and the love potion only enhances her love for Tristan, but it does not cause her to love him. One of the more important alterations that Malory makes in the legend is to omit the murder of Brangwayne, who takes Isolde's place in the French sources so

that Mark does not understand that Isolde is not a virgin. In Malory's version Brangwyne and Isolde share a certain camaraderie and Isolde never orders the murder of her handmaiden only to protect her secret. In other versions of the legend, as Isolde is not a virgin, Brangwyne takes her place in Mark's bed and afterwards Isolde gives orders to kill her. Even when Tristan marries another Isolde, La Bella Isolde invites Tristan to bring Isolde of the White Hands to court, instead of shunning them both. She asks only to be near him.

Isolde's language also supports the less courtly lady image Malory tries to portray. In what Zimmerman identifies as "the powerless language", she uses an elevated form of address and even an extensive apology when faced with Tristan's displeasure: "'Myne owne lorde,' seyde La Beall Isode, 'for Goddys sake, be ye nat displeased wyth me, for I may none othirwyse do'" (560; X.77). Zimmerman explains the importance of Isolde's speech as follows:

'Myne owne lorde, is a form of address more appropriate for a person of higher status, yet on a social scale Isode "outranks" Trystram, for he is a knight and she is the Queen of Cornwall. Likewise, her apology is unnecessary, as she has done nothing wrong. Perhaps Isode is being excessively polite to erase the status difference between her and her beloved Trystram. (44)

As Isolde is the queen, she may be intentionally weakening the force of her words so that they would not sound like orders. Be that as it may, this humble and unassuming attitude is not that of a courtly lady. In courtly love convention, the knight is the humble one whereas the lady appears to be the ruler, the decision maker, the authority. Isolde definitely does not appear as the courtly lady who does not have any concerns as to whether she offended her knight or not. She is willing to apologise for an imagined

slight in order not to displease Tristan. When compared to Guinevere, who appears to be the femme fatale of *Le Morte Darthur*, Isolde is “a rather colorless and passive creature” (Schueler 64). Furthermore, as Davidson maintains, “[Isolde’s] power lies largely in the impact of her beauty upon men, and it is seldom intentional. Malory does add a moment of byplay in which she seems conscious of the impact she can have on others [...]” (24).

[E]ven when Tristram becomes mad on her account, it is because of a misunderstanding, not any wrong-doing on her part. From beginning to end of the Tristram section, she is consistently described as a doting leman, and Malory does not even remotely suggest any moral disapproval of her conduct. If anything, she is, by his standards, a "good" courtly lady, no more troublesome than his sources allowed him to paint her. (Schueler 64)

Tristan is also made less of a courtly hero and more of an ordinary knight. Like Isolde, Tristan falls in love long before he drinks the potion, and forgets La Bella Isolde and marries Isode of the White Hands. When King Howell of Brittany is in need of help, he summons Tristan as he is considered to be the finest knight on the land. After Tristan “slew the erle Grype his owne hondys, and mo than an hundred knyghtes”, he “was reseyyved into the cyte worshipfully with procession” (330; VIII.36). With the influence of the king and his son, Tristan married the other Isolde, Isolde of the White Hands. As Vinaver asserts “Tristram’s first duty is to knighthood, and his fidelity to Isode only serves as an occasional illustration of his chivalrous conduct” (1447).

King Mark is also another character who is changed in *Le Morte Darthur*. Although Malory’s alterations are towards the good in the cases of Tristan and Isolde, Mark’s character is tarnished and he appears to be a coward, a murderer, a complete villain. According to Moorman, the reason behind this is to make the adultery of Tristan and

Isode more human, more understandable (173). As for McCarthy, he states that the logical thing for Malory to do while presenting the love triangle would be to make the husband sufficiently cruel and an older man who can be contrasted with the younger knight to draw the readers sympathy, but in “The Book of Sir Tristram de Lyones”, Mark is so much more: “he is the positive blackguard who (almost) makes us overlook the illicit nature of the love of Tristram and Isolde, and throughout the book he forms a clear contrast to the uprightness of the hero” (33).

Malory does more than besmirching Mark’s character. As Lupack asserts, good knights are compared to each other and contrasted with those who are less worthy and the same principle applies to the knights as lovers and to kings as rulers and worthy men (139). Just as Tristan acts as a foil to Lancelot in terms of knighthood and being a lover, Mark acts as a foil to Arthur and both men are compared as kings. “He is the picture of corrupt kingship, the man who uses public power for personal gain [and in this sense] the black to Arthur’s white” (McCarthy 33). Through the mouth of Sir Lamerok, Malory clearly states that “the honour of bothe courtes be nat lyke” (334; VIII.38). While Arthur is depicted as a king who takes joy and pride in the achievements of his knights, Mark is depicted as jealous, mean-spirited, and treacherous, “a fayre speker, and false thereundir” (444; X.15). According to Cooper, “Mark’s readiness to say fair words while planning evil deeds is especially condemned [...]” (196). He gives Tristan a drink which makes him fall asleep and puts him to prison (501; X.50), counterfeits letters from the pope (502; X.51), orders Tristan to challenge a battle weary Sir Lamorak (325; VIII.33), “for this kynge Marke was but a murtherer”(434; X.10). He even kills his own brother because of his jealousy: “Whan kynge Marke wyste this he

was wondirly wrothe that his brother sholde wyne suche worship and honour. And bycause this prynce was bettir beloved than he in all that contrey, and also this prynce Bodwyne lovid well sir Trystram, and therefore he thought to sle hym”(472; X.32). In McCarthy’s words “throughout the book King Mark is a byword for villainy. The occasional tarnished knighthood of Gawain in the central books pales in significance beside the persistent shoddiness of Mark, whose only fellow among Round Table knights is Meliagaunt” (79).

Even among his own barons, Mark is not respected or favoured. Although he has some condemning proof against Tristan and Isolde, he cannot take any action towards them because of the interference of his barons. They oppose Mark’s decision to burn Isolde and the other ladies of the court who could not pass the chastity test of the horn and will not allow Mark to execute Tristan, instead they force him to send Tristan on exile. In each and every conflict, they take Tristan’s side. As a result, reaching the conclusion that “Mark is despised not because he is a cuckold, but because he is a bad knight” (Edwards 47) would not be wrong. Malory makes a similar comment through Sir Lamorak:

Cornewayle, wherein there dwellyth the shamfullist knyght of a kynge that is now lyvyng, for he is a grete enemy to all good knyghtes. And that prevyth well, for he hath chased oute of that contrey sir Trystram that is the worshipfullist knyght that now is lyvyng, and all knyghtes spektyh of him worship; and for the jeleousnes of his quene he hath chaced hym oute of his contrey. Hit is pité [...] that ony suche false kynge cowarde as kynge Marke is shulde be mached with suche a fayre lady and a good as La Beale Isode is, for all the worlde of hym spekyth shame, and of her grete worship as ony quene may have. (431; X.8)

Throughout *Le Morte Darthur*, “the villains are marked by destructive hatred, unable either to love the good or to put any social or political bonds above their own jealousy” (Cooper 196), and Mark’s portrayal is entirely dominated by his personal animosity towards Tristan. As a result “The Book of Sir Tristram de Lyones” becomes “the exploration of the knightly fellowship and the envy and the treachery that results when fellowship is absent” (Lupack 139, Lynch 98). In Moorman’s words, by altering his sources, Malory “whitened the character of Isode by eliminating her role in the attempted murder of Brangwayne, humanized Tristan (and, of course, Isode) by having him fall in love with Isode long before the administration of the love potion, and thoroughly blackened the character of King Mark so that the lovers may have some measure of sympathy” (88).

As a result of the depiction of Mark’s character as a treacherous king, “cowardly kyng Marke” (442; X.15), Tristan and Isolde’s relationship is somewhat justified and the moral problems which would be expected to follow such an affair do not seem to matter. Neither Malory nor his critics seem to consider this part of the story morally problematic. Apart from the fact that Mark is portrayed as a total villain, the circumstances of Tristan and Isolde’s meeting for the first time also remove the lovers from the domain which is occupied by Lancelot and Guinevere: “Contradicting early twelfth century versions of the Trystram–Isode romance, here [*Le Morte Darthur*] the relationship is described as having begun well before King Mark has had any opportunity to hear about Isode” (Koplowitz-Breier 10). The lovers meet and fall in love before any encounter between Mark and Isolde takes place. Furthermore, according to Koplowitz-Breier, the first parting scene between Tristan and Isolde may be

interpreted as an agreement between them, or even, a clandestine marriage ceremony (4).

After Isolde heals Tristan's wound, which he got when he fought Sir Marhalt, and before he returns to Cornwall, the lovers exchange promises and rings:

‘Madam,’ seyde sir Trystramys, ‘ye shall undirstonde that my name ys sir Trystrames de Lyones, gotyn of a kynge and borne of a quene. And I promyse you faythfully, I shall be all the dayes of my lyff your knight.’
 ‘Gramercy,’ seyde La Beale Isode, ‘and I promyse you there agaynste I shall nat be maryed this seven yerys but for your assente, and whom that ye woll I shall be maryed to hym and he woll have me, if ye woll consente thereto.’
 And than sir Trystrames gaff hir a ryng and she gaff hym another [...].
 (294; VIII.12)

Tristan swears an oath of lifelong fidelity to Isolde and she in turn promises not to marry without his consent for seven years, and rings are exchanged between them before his departure. Before promising to be his knight for the rest of his days, Tristan makes sure to identify himself as fully as possible. This, in a way, resembles the marriage ceremonies, where both the bride and the groom identify themselves.

The words exchanged reveal an arrangement between the couple, but its exact nature is unclear (McCarthy 26, Koplowitz-Breier 14). It is a possibility that they refer to a marital arrangement to be carried out in the future. As Cherewatuk states, “[a] vow made in future tense indicates the partner’s intent to wed; that taken in present tense indicates that the couple are wed, particularly if consummation follows the vow” (6).

Furthermore

[a]ccording to the precepts of canon law this Exchange constitutes an agreement to marry, but because the agreement must be confirmed at a future date, it is not consent *per verba de presenti* (in words said in present tense) but *per verba de futuro* (in words said in future tense). A decree of Pope Alexander III, known as *Veniens ad nos*, declared that there were two ways for a couple to legitimize their marriage: by a voluntary decision to marry immediately (*per verba de presenti*) and by a decision to marry at some future date (*per verba de futuro*). The difference between them is that *per verba de futuro* the marriage became valid only after consummation. (Koplowitz-Breier 14-15)

What is more important than the words is the exchange of rings, which again brings to mind a marriage ceremony in which after exchanging vows, the couple exchange rings. As Koplowitz-Breier explains, the exchange of vows followed by an exchange of rings implies far more than simple courtesy, indicates a private marriage ceremony and in itself signifies marriage, so that no verbal confirmation is necessary (15). According to Hostiensis, an Italian canonist of the 13th century, the act of exchanging rings constitutes a marriage contract even without verbal confirmation, a contract to be fulfilled in the future and he compares the act of giving a ring to giving an advance in a commercial exchange as the advance implies the commercial contract to be sealed, so the giving of the ring implies that the marriage contract is sealed (qtd. in Kelly 449). Although, according to Hostiensis the exchanging of rings is enough to conclude a marriage, according to Pope Alexander III, marriage that takes place by consent *per verba de futuro* must also be consummated (Koplowitz-Breier 16).

The consummation of the marriage between Tristan and Isolde in *Le Morte Darthur* is a little vague when compared to other earlier version in which Brangwayne had to take Isolde's place to prevent Mark from learning that his bride lacked virginity. Despite the ambiguity surrounding the consummation, Malory hints at a certain possibility. When the lovers are on the ship on their way to Cornwall, they accidentally drink the love

potion which was prepared by Isolde's mother to ensure the security of the marriage between Isolde and Mark. The potion is said to ensure the everlasting love of the couple.

The function of the love potion has long been discussed. This plot element appears in the earlier versions of the legend, but in various ways. In some of these versions, like Bérroul's *Tristan*, the effect of the love potion wears off after some time passes. Malory also adds the twist of the potion but he does not use it like the earlier versions: "[T]he love potion of the *Le Morte Darthur* neither inflames passion without substance nor bases it upon hatred (as in several early versions), but imbues an existing love with a lifetime connection" (Koplowitz-Breier 12). As a result, in *Le Morte Darthur*, the love potion does not have any importance concerning the relationship between Tristan and Isolde: their affair is not the product of a magic potion. Although Malory uses the theme of the love potion, he makes it clear from the start that the love which grows between Tristan and Isolde has its roots before the couple drink the potion. When Tristan was in Ireland, in Isolde's care, they started to form a sort of affection: "And therefore sir Tramtryste kyste grete love to La Beale Isode, for she was at that tyme the fayrest lady and maydyn of the worlde. And there Tramtryste lerned hir to harpe and she began to have a grete fantasy unto hym" (288; VIII.9). This scene takes place long before the preparation of the potion, or even before Mark hears about Isolde.

In spite of the fact that the potion is not the cause of the love between Tristan and Isolde, it is the reason why the lovers consummated their love, "cementing a love which had already been burgeoning" (Karr 246). Although Malory explicitly states, early on in the story that a love has blossomed, after the lovers drink the potion,

[...] they lowghe and made good chere and eyther dranke to other frely, and they thought never drynke that ever they dranke so swete nother so good to them. *But by that drynke was in their bodyes they loved aythir other so well that never hir love departed, for well nother for woo. And thus hit happed fyrst, the love betwyxte sir Trystrames and La Beale Isode, the whyche love never departed dayes of their lyff.* (312; VIII.24) (Italics are mine)

Although Malory employs magic, it is nothing like the dark and harmful magic of Morgan le Fay: it is what Corinne Saunders categorises as white magic and natural in her book *Magic and Supernatural in Medieval English Romance*. She claims that the portrayal of the love potion as natural magic and the one who prepares it, Isolde's mother, as a physician, not a sorcerer, enabled the romance writers to present Tristan and Isolde's love in more positive terms (132). Both Isolde and her mother are described as "noble surgeons" (288; VIII.9) and although the ingredients of the potion is never told, as the people who prepare it are powerful practitioners of natural and healing magic, it is implied that the magic is another form of natural magic and the intentions behind the preparation of such potion is not malignant: Isolde's mother only wanted to secure her daughter's marriage to Mark. The description of the potion, "hit semed by the coloure and the taste that hit was noble wyne" (311; VIII.24), in natural terms also helps to enforce this conclusion. "Just as the potion employs natural ingredients, herbs and wine, but combines them to unnatural effect, inciting love arbitrarily, so the experience of love is rooted in natural instincts and desires but these are manipulated, manifesting themselves with unnatural, arbitrary, and ultimately tragic force" (Saunders 134). Malory reduces the importance of the love potion for the love of Tristan and Isolde and portrays their love as natural, without any interference from outside: "But the joy that La Beale Isode made of sir Trystrames there myght no tunge telle, for of all men erthely she loved hym moste" (311; VIII.23).

McCarthy states that the sexual aspect of relationships was not Malory's central concern and, therefore, he showed "a soldierly lack of fuss about sex" (55). He asserts that moral concerns were rarely ever involved and the modern embellishments concerning sexual matters were almost always lacking. He concludes: "If Malory tells us that a man and a woman are in bed, what is there to add?" (55). Although Malory tends to be ambiguous when it comes to the physical aspects of the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere, as McCarthy asserts, "there is no discreet ambiguity surrounding the love of Tristram and Isolde" (62) and the splendour of their love is something to be proclaimed openly (28). The first time they consummate their relationship when they drink the potion is an example to this.

Malory describes a first-time event which has taken place and which is an expression of love between Tristan and Isolde. Since the couple is already established as madly in love with each other since their first meeting, it must be assumed that what Malory refers to when he says "thus hit happed fyrst, the love betwyxte sir Trystrames and La Beale Isode" (312; VIII.24) is the sexual act, their first time together, which is something openly stated in most early versions of the story. Also, later in the book, when Sir Driant brings Morgan le Fay's horn to Mark's court, Isolde is one of the women who cannot pass the test, showing clearly that she had not been true to her husband. Thus, as Koplowitz-Breier explains, the marriage of Tristan and Queen Isolde, consummated after drinking the love potion, must be deemed valid, in which case Isolde could not have legally married King Mark (16).

The same thing may apply to the marriage between Tristan and Isode of the White Hands. When Tristan goes to Brittany to heal from his wounds, he is healed by King

Howell's daughter, another Isolde, "a woman of noble bloode and fame" (330; VIII.36). King Howell liked and admired Tristan very much, "[s]o by the grete meanes of the kyng and his sonne there grewe grete love betwyxte Isode and sir Trystrames" (330; VIII.36). In Brittany Tristan "had allmoste forsakyn La Beale Isode" because he "had such chere and ryches and all other plesaunce" (330; VIII.36). Malory's choice of words, "forsakyn", shows that the relationship between Isolde the Fair and Tristan is not just a passing fancy, and, as a result can garner a severe reaction from Lancelot:

Fye uppon hym, untrew knyght to his lady! That so noble a knyght as sir Trystrames is sholde be founde to his fyrst lady and love untrew, that is the queene of Cornwayle! But sey ye to hym thus [...] that of all knyghtes in the worlde I have loved hym most and had most joye of hym, and all was for his noble dedys. And lette hym wete that the love betwene hym and me is done for ever, and that I gyff hym warnyng: from this day forthe I will be his mortall enemy. (331; VIII.36)

When Isolde the Fair writes a letter to Guinevere, "complaynyng her of the untrouthe of sir Trystrames" (333; VIII.37), Guinevere comforts her, treating Isolde the Fair as the wife who is betrayed by her husband and Isolde of the White Hands as a sorceress who stole the husband away. Guinevere tells Isolde the Fair not to be sad "for she sholde have joye aftir sorow: for sir Trystrames was so noble a knyght called that by craftes of sorsery ladyes wolde make suche noble men to wedde them. 'But the ende', queene Gwennyver seyde, 'shulde be thus, that he shall hate her and love you bettir than ever he dud.'" (331; VIII.37).

Despite Lancelot, Guinevere and Isolde the Fair's belief that he was not true to his lady, Tristan never consummates his marriage to Isolde of the White Hands:

And so whan they were a-bed bothe, sir Trystrames remembirde hym of his olde lady, La Beale Isode, and than he toke suche a thoughte suddeynly that he was all dismayed, and other chere made he none with clyppyng and kyssynge. As for fleyshely lustys, sir Trystrames had never ado with hir: suche mencion makyth the Freynshe booke. Also hit makyth mencion that the lady wente there had be no plesure but kyssynge and clyppyng. (330; VIII.36)

Although he was not loyal to Isolde the Fair in the beginning by marrying and almost forsaking her, at the end he remains faithful to Isolde the Fair. His virgin wife never knows that there are other pleasures to the marriage bed other than kissing and cuddling, and she is left behind when Isolde the Fair summons him and his wife to the court. The distinction between Tristan's two Isoldes is explained by Hodges as such: "one whom he loves secretly, with private consummation but public deception; the other his acknowledged wife, but privately a virgin (101-02).

To conclude, all the alterations Malory had made to the Tristan legend illustrates the fact that he was trying to make the love between Tristan and Isolde acceptable somehow. Although, on the surface, the story of Tristan-Isolde-Mark fits "the prototype of the courtly epic love triangle" (Heikel 14), it is actually "a departure from stylized courtly love" (Fritscher 18). Their story is what Hodges describes as "a triangle of good knight, bad king, and queen" (100) and the narrative within the book supports this idea. Malory's portrait of Mark is very different from the earliest sources and slightly altered from the unsavoury character of the French sources. As Kerr puts it, "[i]n the earliest times, before the beginning of medieval romance, we meet with a general and warrior playing an important part in early Keltic legends, March the captain and the master of the swineherds (37), but Malory makes Mark "an out-and-out villain" (Pearsall 93), and does his best to disparage his reputation even more. The answer to the question why did

Malory put so much effort to portray Mark the way he did is simple: “since Mark is a corrupt and wicked king, Tristram is not obliged to serve him, and so his adulterous behavior has no dire consequences” (Schueler 60). Also, the changes in the characters of Tristan and Isolde are important. Instead of portraying them as perfect knight and the perfect courtly lady, Malory makes Tristan a somewhat provincial knight who is more concerned with his achievements than he is with love and national politics, an opposite to Lancelot, and Isolde as a woman who is not as assured of her powers as a female as Guinevere and who is more than ready to welcome her lover who had married another so that she can be close to him. The clandestine marriage between the lovers and the love potion are other two factors which make this love triangle different from others and which makes it not suitable to be considered a case of courtly love. As Tristan and Isolde can be considered as married before Mark even knew Isolde, the physical aspect of their relationship cannot be regarded as adultery. Furthermore, the marriage between Mark and Isolde cannot be binding as one of the parties was already married and had consummated that marriage with the help of the love potion. Although there are some claims that the potion is the reason behind the love between Tristan and Isolde, Malory makes it quite clear that the couple starts falling in love long before the preparation of the potion. The only function of the potion in Malory’s version is to “[affirm] what has already been decided by destiny” (Saunders 243).

CHAPTER III

Love, Adultery and High Treason: the Downfall of a Kingdom

The love story of Lancelot and Guinevere has always been the most well-known and most popular part of the whole Arthurian legend, and there have been many different versions of and approaches towards the story. It is generally acknowledged that “Chrétien [de Troyes] was the first writer to place Guinevere in a courtly and adulterous relationship with Lancelot” (Grady 2). After the lovers’ appearance in the 12th century work *Le Chevalier de la Charette*, which was written by Chrétien de Troyes, many adaptations followed suit. Malory’s own *Le Morte Darthur* is important among these adaptations as it portrays a different side of the love between King Arthur’s best knight, Lancelot, and his queen, Guinevere.

Courtly love convention is an inseparable part of the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere and in a way their relationship redefines the convention. The earlier French sources did not have any qualms in relaying the adulterous affair between Lancelot and Guinevere. Beverly Kennedy argues that this may be due to a matter of taste, as “overly refined and courtly sentiments” (64) appealed to the French aristocratic audiences; a matter of morality, as French were more liberal in sexual matters; and a matter of patriotism, as “French aristocratic audiences were not offended by the portrayal of Arthur as *roi fainéant* [“do-nothing king”, “lazy king”] and a hapless cuckold” (64). However, this was not the case for Malory as he had a different audience and different sensibilities. Although Malory includes other love triangles, as analysed in previous chapters, his portrayal of the Lancelot-Guinevere-Arthur love triangle significantly

differs from the others. When delivering the Uther-Igrayne-Gorlois part of the legend, he makes it clear that although there is a love triangle, it definitely does not conform to the courtly love convention and when conveying the love of Tristan and Isolde, he strips the legend of its courtly glamour and illustrates that no matter how close the story seems to be following the dictates of courtly love, the truth is just the opposite. Nevertheless when it comes to the story of the legendary Lancelot and Guinevere “instead of ignoring or distorting or even merely reducing the courtly love material he found there, [Malory] set[s] out to exploit the paradoxical nature of courtly love in order to define and emphasize one of the chief failures of Arthur’s court” (Moorman 165).

Unlike Tristan who is a “worshipful” knight but who can forget about his lady and marry another, Lancelot is faithful to Guinevere throughout *Le Morte Darthur*. The only time he has any kind of relationship with a woman is because of an enchantment which makes Lancelot think he is sleeping with Guinevere (XI.3, XI.8). He is always her loyal servant, going to her rescue whenever she needs her and he puts Guinevere’s wishes and desires above his own (XIX.4, XIX.7, XX.8). He goes mad when he is confronted by Guinevere’s jealousy and rage (XI.8). He is the ideal courtly knight just as Guinevere is the courtly lady. Malory’s queen is a complex character but still possesses the basic characteristics of a courtly lady. As Grady asserts, Guinevere “possess[es] a specifically feminine type of strength” (30) which allows her some control over the knights of the Round Table, especially Lancelot. She banished Lancelot from the court several times, over minor quarrels. She can be insanely jealous of Elaine of Corbenic and Elaine le Blank one moment because of their relationship with Lancelot and accuse Lancelot of treating Elaine le Blank poorly and causing her death another moment. As Lacy, Ashe

and Mancoff state “[t]he Queen is high-handed and callous towards him, as the conventions of courtly love require” (328) and “occasionally cruel” (320). Malory makes Guinevere “la belle dame sans merci” whereas he portrays Isolde, another medieval queen who is having an affair, as a woman who can accept the fact that her lover has forsaken her and married another.

Just as the portrayal of Tristan and Isolde in this manner is intentional, so is the characterization of Lancelot and Guinevere as well as the nature of their relationship. Moorman aptly puts that Malory was not confused about the concept of courtly love as his predecessors were and to him the adulterous courtly love was atrocious:

[Malory] sets out in the *Morte Darthur* to show how this tragic confusion of earlier times contributes to the destruction of the Round Table civilization. Thus Malory consistently reduces those sections of his sources which extravagantly glorify courtly love lest his reader misconstrue his intent and think him in agreement with the attitudes of the French writers; yet he is careful to preserve the core of such passages in order to demonstrate the tragic effect of courtly love upon his characters. (165)

As Edwards states “[t]he warning about adultery is something Malory has added, with the effect of putting the entire marriage, from its inception, under suspicion” (44). The suspicion Edwards mentions refers to Merlin’s warning in the beginning of *Le Morte Darthur*: “But Merlyon warned the kyng covertly that Gwennyver was nat holsom for hym to take to wyff. For he warned hym that Launcelot scholde love hir, and sche hym agayne [...]” (71; III.1). When the barons insist on Arthur taking a wife to ensure the stability in the kingdom, Arthur chooses Guinevere as his queen because he loves her and because her father, King Leodegrance, “holdyth in his house the Table Rounde” (71; III.1). Arthur’s choice is determined both by sentiment and politics as when Arthur

marries Guinevere, she brings as her dowry “the Table Rounde with the hondred knyghtes” (72; III.1).

With the help of Guinevere’s dowry, the ideal society in Camelot is established. She does not just bring the symbolic Round Table as dowry, but she also brings the hundred of the one hundred and fifty knights who occupy the Table. These knights take an oath, known as the Pentecostal Oath, which is the embodiment of the code of chivalry:

than the kyng stablysshed all the knyghtes and gaff them rychesse and londys; and charged them never to do outrage nothir morthir, and allwayes to fle treson, and to gyff mercy unto hym that askith mercy, uppon payne of forfiture of their worship and lordship of kyng Arthure for evirmore; and allwayes to do ladyes, damesels, and jantilwomen and wydowes socour: strengthe hem in hir ryghtes, and never to enforce them, uppon payne of dethe. Also, that no man take no batayles in a wrongefull quarell for no love ne for no worldis goodis. So unto thys were all knyghtis sworne of the Table Rounde, both olde and younge, and every yere so were they sworne at the hyghe feste of Pentecoste. (91;III.15)

King Arthur’s orders are clear; the knights of the Round Table must avoid murder and treason, they must show mercy, they must be the champions of women and they must not take part in wrongful quarrels, neither for love nor for worldly goods. This is the order which Guinevere helped establish and this is the order Lancelot is part of. He is not just a part of the chivalric order but he is considered to be the best knight of the Round Table. However, his love for Guinevere and their relationship results in Lancelot’s breaking the Pentecostal Oath and the destruction of Camelot.

In “The Poisoned Apple” episode, when Guinevere is accused of poisoning Sir Patrise, who mistakenly ate the apple intended for Sir Gawain (XVIII.3), Lancelot arrives at the last minute to defend Guinevere and when Arthur thanks him for coming to the queen’s

rescue Lancelot replies that he had promised Guinevere “ever to be her knyght in *ryght othir in wronge*” (755; XVIII.7) (Italics are mine). What Lancelot promises is not just to be the queen’s champion, but to be her champion whether she is right or wrong. This statement directly contrasts with the Pentecostal Oath which clearly states that a knight should “take no batayles in a wrongfull quarell for no love ne for no worldis goodis” (91;III.15). Lancelot keeps his promise to Guinevere to be his champion in several occasions but he fails to keep his promise to the Round Table. Through Lancelot’s broken promise Malory shows the negative and destructive effects of courtly love. Lancelot chooses to honour his role as Guinevere’s knight, a role which is in accordance with the courtly love convention, instead of choosing to be a knight of the Round Table.

Lancelot’s role as the courtly knight also makes him a traitor. His relationship with Guinevere results in him being labelled as a traitor, as can be seen in the accusations of Sir Mordred and Sir Agravaire: “he is a traytoure” (819; XX.2), “Thou traytoure, sir Launcelot” (821; XX.3) and “Traytoure knyght!” (822; XX.3, 823; XX.4). By law, any adulterous relationship with the queen is considered to be high treason (Koplowitz-Breier 4, Jurovics 40). The same can also be applied to Tristan as his relationship with his queen is also treasonous. However, as pointed above, Malory’s attitude towards these two love triangles is different and, in Koplowitz-Breier’s words, he has a “double standard” (4). The reason behind this double standard can be explained with the differences between the two kings: “because King Arthur is a just and righteous king, Lancelot and Gwennyvere’s affair is immoral, but because King Mark is a treacherous king, Trystram and La Beale Isode’s affair is justified” (Koplowitz-Breier 4). Beverly Kennedy, in her article “Malory’s Lancelot: ‘Trewest Lover, of a Synful Man’”, makes

a similar argument: “Tristram and Isode may be able to justify their adultery by secular standards of honor and loyalty because Mark is a traitor and a coward, but Lancelot and Guinevere could never justify such a betrayal of the noble and honorable king Arthur” (422). Lancelot and Guinevere’s situation is, in this case, not similar to that of Tristan and Isolde due to the fact that Arthur is portrayed as honourable and just, and there could be no justification for betraying such a person. Lacy, Ashe and Mancoff claim that he “is rare among literary characters as having an unfaithful wife without losing dignity” (319). Lancelot and Guinevere are condemned for their love whereas Tristan and Isolde are celebrated because Lancelot and Guinevere “shamed a better man than any of them” (Wilhelm 23).

Another better man who is wronged, and killed, because of courtly love is Sir Gareth, the younger brother of Gawaine, Gaheris and Agravaine. As Jurovics states, “Gareth represents the outstanding example of a successful, married knight in *Le Morte Darthur*, and therefore in some respects appears a better man than Lancelot” (30). Malory’s “Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkeney” is a love story different from the major tales in *Le Morte Darthur*. Many critics agree on the fact that this section of the work is quite possibly Malory’s own invention and his only original tale (Cherewatuk 2, Moorman 169). It serves, as Gerin states, as an “index of the noblest elements of the chivalric ideal – and an effective way to contrast the loves that will later wither the flower of chivalry” (111) and “as a commentary upon love and the behavior of lovers, the main purpose of which is to present a natural, untutored affection, very different from the artificial, conventionalized l’amour courtois” (Moorman 169).

Gareth's tale is a story of the type called "the fair unknown" or "the belle inconnu" (Moorman 169, Cherewatuk 4). While Arthur is feasting in a city called Kinkenadon, a young man, "the goodlyest yonge man and the fayreste that ever they all sawe" (212; VII.1), enters leaning on two men as if he has difficulty in standing upright or walking and asks Arthur to grant him three gifts. He says: "And they shall nat be unresenablé asked but that ye may worshypfully graunte hem me, and to you no grete hurte nother losse" (213; VII.1). His first wish is to be given a year's worth of food and he claims that he will make his other two wishes a year later: "the tothir two gyfftes I woll aske this day twelve-monthe, wheresomever ye holde your hyghe feste" (213; VII.1). Arthur grants him his wish and gives him to Sir Kay, who places him in the kitchens and gives him the name "Beawmaynes", "fair hands" (213; VII.1). Gareth serves in the kitchens for a year without complaining. When a damsel appears in Arthur's court, seeking help for her lady, Gareth makes his other two wishes: "that ye woll graunte me to have this adventure of this damesell, for hit belongyth unto me" and "that sir Launcelot du Lake shall make me knyght, for of hym I woll be made knyght and ellys of none" (215-16; VII.3). The damsel, Lynet, is revealed to be the sister of Dame Lyonesse who is besieged within Castle Perilous by the Red Knight of the Red Lands. Gareth saves Lyonesse and the couple eventually get married.

What is important in the tale is the depiction of the couple as simple lovers, far away from the intrigues of courtly love. Gareth's remark to the Red Knight that his pursuit of Lyonesse is "but waste laboure, for she lovyth none of thy felyshyp, and thou to love that lovyth nat the is but grete foly" (237; VII.16) shows how far he is from the concept of courtly love "which insists that the true lover press his suit in spite of any rebuffs he

might receive” (Moorman 170). After Gareth defeats the Red Knight and goes to see his lady, whom he defended and won, he encounters a treatment which is in accordance with courtly fashion; Lyonesse tries to send Gareth away to prove his love: “Go thy way, sir Bewmaynes, for as yet thou shalt nat have holy my love unto the tyme that thou be called one of the numbir of the worthy knyghtes. And therefore go and laboure in worshyp this twelve-monthe, and than ye shall hyre newe tydyngis” (242; VII.19). Gareth’s response is most uncourtly, as instead of accepting his lady’s verdict and trying to prove his love, Gareth says “I have nat deserved that ye sholde shew me this straungenesse. And I hadde wente I sholde have had ryght good chere with you, and unto my power I have deserved thanke. And well I am sure I have bought your love with parte of the beste bloode within my body” (242; VII.19). This response results in a change in Lyonesse’s manner; although she still insists on the “laboure in worshyp” (242; VII.19) for twelve months, she declares herself in a manner not suitable for a courtly lady: “And trust me, fayre knyght, I shall be trewe to you and never betray you, but to my deth I shall love you and none other” (242; VII.19).

Moorman argues that the “Tale of Gareth defines the Lancelot-Guinevere relationship by contrast” whereas “the Tristan section works by comparison and allusion to accomplish the same end” (172) and “[i]f read in context, Gareth is clearly a commentary on *l’amour courtois* and is so placed as to contrast with the adulterous affairs of Lancelot and Tristan” (171). This statement is further supported by the place of the story within the work. Malory chooses to insert the tale between “The Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake” and “The Book of Sir Tristram de Lyones”: “Coming as it does between the first, deceptively innocent signs of courtly love in Lancelot and the

actual adultery of the ‘Tale of Tristram,’ the ‘Tale of Gareth’ sheds light forward and backward” (Moorman 169).

“The deceptively innocent signs of courtly love” Moorman mentions are Malory’s ambiguity towards the physical aspect of the relationship between Lancelot and the queen, and the lack of any definite definition of the affair. When Malory first introduces Lancelot, he talks about how he has increased his “worship” and says that “he is the fyrste knyght that the Freynsh booke makyth mencion aftir kynges” (180; VI.1). As a result, when Malory states “[w]herefore quene Gwennyvere had hym in grete favoure aboven all other knyghtis” (180; VI.1), it seems quite natural that the queen should favour the bravest and the ablest knight in the kingdom. The rest of the statement is less easier to pass off as a natural part of a relationship between a knight and a queen, but when evaluated from a courtly point of view, it is perfectly normal that “he loved the quene agayne aboven all other ladyes dayes of his lyff, and for hir he dud many dedys of armys and saved her from the fyre thorow his noble chevalry” (180; VII.1). This is exactly the duty of a courtly knight: to love a lady until the end of his life and to serve her as a knight. In the course of his various adventures, Lancelot sends the opponents he defeated to Camelot where they shall “yelde you unto quene Gwennyvere and putte you all three in hir grace and mercy” (197-98; VI.11), which “positions him as the courtly lover who gains worship through service and who sends his vanquished opponents back to court as proof” (Cherewatuk xxi).

Many critics agree on the fact that Malory depicts the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere as committed yet pure in the beginning (Armstrong 183, Cherewatuk 43, Grady 29). Cherewatuk states that Malory leaves the beginning of the story in the dark

but in the middle of *Le Morte Darthur* nearly everybody is aware of and openly acknowledges the couple's closeness (43). Grady makes a similar comment by saying that although the lovers did not commit adultery until later on, their courtly relationship was emphasized from early in the story (29).

Although the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere is not a secret, there is a diplomatic and delicate silence until Agravain and Mordred openly accuse the queen with adultery (Lacy, Ashe and Mancoff 328). Malory does not openly talk about the affair but "allows it as an implication, mentioned by others" (Windeatt 90). Lumiansky states that the episodes which include various characters talking about Lancelot's love for Guinevere is original with Malory (89) and Cherewatuk states that although Lancelot's encounter with the four queens, the anonymous damsel and the sorceress Hellawes appear in Malory's sources, the nature of their conversations is entirely new as they neither bemoan Lancelot's commitment to the queen nor mention Guinevere in Malory (xxii). The mentioned episodes are when Lancelot is abducted by the four queens to be seduced, "no lady have thy love but one, and that is quene Gwentyvere" (183-84; VI.3); when he saves the damsel from Sir Perys de Foreste Savage, "hit is noysed that ye love quene Gwentyvere, and that she hath ordeyned by enchauntement that ye shall never love none other but hir, nother none other damesell ne lady shall rejoyce you" (194; VI.10); and when he encounters Hellawes the Sorceress who intends to use Lancelot's dead body for her pleasure, it is explicitly stated that "but there may no woman have thy love but quene Gwentyver" (204; VI.15). Another episode which links Lancelot's name to Guinevere's as a lover is in Isolde's conversation with Sir Palomides. Isolde says to Sir Palomides: "'Than take thy way [...] unto the courte of

kyngre Arthure, and there recommaunde me unto quene Gwenvyvere and tell her that I sende her worde that there be within this londe but four lovers, and that is sir Launcelot and dame Gwenvyver, and sir Trystrames and quene Isode.” (323; VIII.31). Koplowitz-Breier considers this conversation as “the most convincing statement about the nature of the relationship known to exist between Gwenvyvere and Lancelot” and says that “[w]hen La Beale Isode parallels the relationship between Lancelot and Gwenvyvere with that of Trystram and herself, only one conclusion can be drawn – that they were known to be lovers” (6).

Malory’s ambivalence towards the sexuality of the affair is frequently commented on and it is evidenced by his alteration and exclusion of the eroticism of his sources as well as by the language he uses, which removes the kind of language and emotion considered to be suitable to the courtly love convention (Edwards 51). In the whole work, there are a few instances when the lovers can be found in an intimate situation. One of them takes place when Lancelot goes to Guinevere’s rescue when she was abducted by Sir Meliagrance. After Meliagrance surrenders to Lancelot, they feast and everyone goes to bed. That night Lancelot climbs into Guinevere’s chamber and spends the night there: “sir Launcelot wente to bedde with the quene and toke no force of hys hurte honde, but toke hys pleasaunce and hys lykyng untyll hit was the dawnyng of the day” (801; XIX.6). While removing the bars outside the queen’s chambers to enter, Lancelot cuts his hands. As a result, he leaves blood stains on the bed which leads Meliagrance to accuse the queen of sleeping with one of the wounded knights in her room. According to Cherewatuk, “[a] convention in romance going back to Béroul’s *Tristan* equates a bloodied bed with illicit sex, the stained sheets indicating the loss of virginity” and she

claims that Malory had a knowledge of this convention and “[h]e employs it in the only scene in the entire *Morte Darthur* in which Lancelot and Guenevere are seen in bed together, the chamber scene in Mellyagaunce’s castle, to indicate the lovers’ guilt” (15). Other than this scene and the one where Lancelot goes to the queen’s chamber to talk and gets caught by Agravaine and Mordred (XX.2-3), there is no mention of any intimacy between Lancelot and the queen. Koplowitz-Breier reaches the conclusion that the reason why Malory is ambiguous when it comes to the possibility of any sexual contact between the lovers is Guinevere’s married state when their love affair began. Unlike Isolde who met and fell in love with Tristan before she married Mark, Guinevere was already married when she met Lancelot and says that “Malory’s vagueness is understandable” (17).

The rules of Andreas Capellanus may also be helpful in interpreting Malory’s ambiguity. In his *The Art of Courtly Love*, Capellanus gives a list of rules, the rules of love. The list consists of thirty-one rules and one of them is quite useful in providing an alternative explanation to Malory’s vagueness. Capellanus claims that “[w]hen made public love rarely endures” (185) and this is more or less the case with Lancelot and Guinevere. Throughout the span of nearly thirty years, they were lovers but nobody, least of all Arthur, seemed to have any problem concerning the matter. Lancelot’s presence beside Guinevere is an accepted fact and Arthur even scolds Guinevere during “The Poisoned Apple” episode, when she says she does not know where Lancelot is. Arthur’s reaction is quite interesting:

‘What aylith you,’ seyde the kynge, ‘that ye can nat kepe sir Launcelot uppon youre syde? For wyte you well,’ seyde the kynge, ‘who that hath the sir Launcelot uppon his party hath the moste man of worship in thys worlde

uppon hys syde. Now go youre way,' seyde the kynge unto the quene, 'and requyre sir Bors to do batayle for you for sir Launcelottis sake.' (749; XVIII.4)

Lancelot's unspoken role as Guinevere's champion is stressed by the king himself and he tells the queen to go ask Sir Bors to fight for her "for Launcelottis sake" (749; XVIII.4). After Agravaine and Mordred make the relationship known, it starts to disintegrate. Arthur cannot pretend ignorance and the situation of the lovers changes drastically. Maybe Malory's purpose for being vague was to emphasize the courtly characteristics of the relationship.

There are many instances in the work which clearly illustrate Malory's disinclination to speak of sexual matters and the most well-known one is the famous "May passage", in which Malory compares the love in Arthurian times to his own times and says that they are not the same (Edwards 51). The passage is quite long and starts as follows:

And thus hit passed on frome Candylmas untyll after Ester, that the moneth of May was com, whan every lusty harte begynnyth to blossom and to burgyne. For, lyke as trees and erbys burgenyth and floryssshyth in May, in lyke wyse every lusty harte that ys ony maner of lover spryngith, burgenyth, buddyth, and floryssshyth in lusty dedis. For hit gyvyth unto all lovers corrayge, that lusty moneth of May, in somthyng to constrayne hym to som maner of thyng more in that moneth than in ony other monethe, for dyverce causys: for than all erbys and treys renewyth a man and woman, and in lyke wyse lovers callyth to their mynde olde jantylnes and olde servyse, and many kynde dedes that was forgotyn by neclygence. (790; XVIII.25)

Malory starts by describing how May, that is spring, brings life and colour to nature and then extends his definition to include love and people's hearts. Just like Nature, human hearts are also revived and bolstered with courage, remembering the good and kind things which were done for them.

For, lyke as wynter rasure dothe allway arace and deface grene summer, so faryth hit by unstable love in man and woman, for in many persones there ys no stabylité: for we may se all day, for a lytyll blaste of wyntres rasure, anone we shall deface and lay aparte trew love, for lytyll or nowght, that coste mucche thyng. Thys ys no wysedome nother no stabylité, but hit ys fyeblenes of nature and grete disworshyp, whosomever usyth thys. (790; XVIII.25)

Whereas love, kind and gentle deeds are equated with spring, instability is equated with winter, which marks and demolishes Nature. It is destructive.

Therefore, lyke as May moneth flowryth and floryshyth in every mannes gardyne, so in lyke wyse lat every man of worshyp florysh hys herte in thys worlde: firste unto God, and nexte unto the joy of them that he promysed hys feythe unto; for there was never worshypfull man nor worshypfull woman but they loved one bettir than another; and worshyp in armys may never be foyled. But firste reserve the honoure to God, and secundely thy quarell muste com of thy lady. And such love I calle vertuose love. (790-91; XVIII.25)

According to Malory, the knight should fight first for God and second for the lady; the service of a lady must come after the service of God, and that is what he considers as “vertuose love” (790; XVIII.25). However this is not the only feature of “vertuose love”: “It is essentially stable. It is essentially loyal. It is essentially not promiscuous and not impetuous. This true love is likened [...] to May, in which month new life returns to the world, the same old world [...]. The old love, after whatever winter, is revived.” (Davies 462). Malory’s “trew love” or “vertuose love” is characterized by one key word: stability and the idea of “measure” is the mark of virtuous love (Davies 465,466).

According to Moorman, “vertuose love” is the ideal of love and represents the way things may have been, with stability and chastity as its virtues and in harmony with

chivalric ideals and with marriage, whereas courtly love is the reality and illustrates the ways things have gone wrong, with instability and adultery as its vices (167). Moorman claims that “the whole story of Lancelot and Guinevere is thus seen by Malory as a gradual debasement of what might have been ‘vertuose’ love into the adulterous relationship he observed in his sources” (167). Malory’s virtuous love does not demand virginity, chastity or abstinence like the purely spiritual love which is necessary to be successful in the Grail Quest, but it promotes mutual fondness and desire in the form of marriage, which combines the worldly and the spiritual in one body (Jurovics 28).

By Malory’s standards, Lancelot is not a virtuous knight and he himself confesses to a hermit “how he had loved a quene unmesurably and oute of mesure longe” (655; XIII.20). The keywords in Lancelot’s confession are “unmesurably” and “oute of mesure”. When Malory describes “vertuose love”, he continually emphasizes the importance of stability and moderation. However, Lancelot’s love for the queen was never stable and moderate. Furthermore, during this confession scene, Lancelot makes another statement which puts him in direct contrast with the virtuous lover. He says: ““And all my grete dedis of armys that I have done for the moste party was for the quenys sake, and for hir sake wolde I do batayle were hit ryght other wronge. And never dud I batayle all only for Goddis sake, but for to wynne worship and to cause me the bettir to be beloved, and litill or nought I thanked never God of hit.”” (655-56; XIII.20). The best knight in the kingdom has always been Guinevere’s knight. His promise to the queen “ever to be her knyght in *ryght othir in wronge*” (755; XVIII.7) (Italics are mine) invalidates his Pentecostal Oath and excludes him from the concept of “vertuose love”.

A virtuous lover should serve God first and his lady second, but Lancelot always serves Guinevere first, even when she is wrong.

Lancelot's devotion to Guinevere also results in his failure in the Grail Quest. He learns from the hermit, to whom he confessed his love for Guinevere, "that were it not for his sin, he would have neither physical nor spiritual peer" (Jurovics 32) and, according to Reid, he fails "not because of lack of nobility, but because he is dedicated to another noble but more earthy type of love" (90). It can be argued that one of the functions of the Grail Quest is to show that the values the knights of the Round Table uphold is not enough for them to succeed in every quest they encounter. Of all the knights, only three of them succeed (Galahad, Percival and Bors) in the Grail Quest and they are all virgins. In Jurovics' words, "Malory's work shows that this quest did not result in the permanent ennobling of all the Round Table knights. Most of them belonged to the world" (33).

During the Grail Quest, Lancelot evaluates his relationship with the queen and with the hermit's advice, he decides to stay away from her. He returns from the quest determined to end his relationship with the queen but he "began to resorte unto quene Gwenivere agayne and forgate the promyse and the perfeccion that he made in the queste" (744; XVIII.1). Malory further criticizes Lancelot by saying that "had nat sir Launcelot bene in his prevy thoughtes and in hys myndis so sette inwardly to the quene as he was in semynge outewarde to God, there had no knyght passed hym in the queste of the Sankgreall" (744; XVIII.1). However, Lancelot fails in the Grail Quest and fails to keep the promise he made during the quest because "ever his thoughtis prevyly were on the quene" (744; XVIII.1). They renew their relationship and "loved togydirs more hotter

than they dud toforehonde” (744; XVIII.1) which resulted in drawing the attention of the people in the court, especially Sir Agravaine’s.

When Lancelot notices the rumours circulating about his relationship with the queen, he attempts to protect Guinevere from the repercussions of their action by avoiding her company but Guinevere gets jealous and upset, “waxed wrothe with sir Launcelot” (744; XVIII.1), and summons him to her chambers to speak. Her “wrathful complaint” (Gaylord 79) is a sign showing that Guinevere’s transformation to a courtly lady is progressing fast: ““Sir Launcelot, I se and fele dayly that youre love begynnyth to slake, for ye have no joy to be in my presence, but ever ye ar oute of thys courte, and quarels and maters ye have nowadayes for ladyes, madyns and jantillwomen, more than ever ye were wonte to have beforehande.”” (744; XVIII.1). Lancelot’s genuine desire to protect Guinevere “incur[s] Guenevere’s wrath” (Armstrong 177) and makes her jealous. Even after Lancelot explains the situation, Guinevere chooses to ignore the warning behind Lancelot’s actions and orders him to leave the court:

‘Sir Launcelot, now I well understonde that thou arte a false, recrayed knyght and a comon lechourere, and lovyste and holdiste othir ladyes, and of me thou haste dysdayne and scorne. For wyte thou well, now I undirstonde thy falsehede I shall never love the more, and loke thou be never so hardy to com in my syght. And ryght here I dyscharge the thys courte, that thou never com within hit, and I forfende the my felyship, and uppon payne of thy hede that thou se me nevermore!’ (745; XVIII.2)

In Lancelot’s own words “[t]hys ys nat the firste tyme [...] that [the queen] have ben displese with [him] causeles” and he says that although he ever must suffer her, she does not care about the sorrows Lancelot endures (782; XVIII.20). Edwards describes Guinevere as “imperious, impulsive, and sometimes witty” and states that “[s]he

exercises her power by exiling Lancelot on several occasions, usually when she is in a jealous rage. Her power is that absolute power of the beloved in the courtly love tradition, which is revealed as merely the power to reject; the exercise of that power labels her as capricious, cruel and arbitrary in the view of her husband and other knights” (50).

The character of Guinevere, according to Barron, changes little in the Arthurian romance and remains fixed, “defined by her adultery, circumscribed by her sins” (11). She takes Lancelot for granted and becomes more and more demanding, “the aging courtly heroine, jealous and nagging” (Moorman 174). She is lustful, inconstant, jealous, petty and “shrewishly capricious” (Windeat 98, Barron 11). She accuses Lancelot of betraying her with Elaine of Corbenic, becomes furious with him for wearing Elaine le Blank’s sleeve for the tournament and then when Elaine le Blank commits suicide, rebukes Lancelot for his unkindness to Elaine and suggests that “he myght have shewed hir som bownté and jantilnes whych myght have preserved hir lyff” (781; XVIII.20). After banishing Lancelot from the court, she “lete make a pryvy dynere in London unto the knyghtes of the Rownde Table, and all was for to shew outwarde that she had as grete joy in all other knyghtes of the Rounde Table as she had in sir Launcelot” (746; XVIII.3), which results with the death of Sir Patrise and Lancelot’s rescue of Guinevere. When Meliagrance abducts Guinevere, it is again Lancelot who saves her who is greeted with the question “why be ye so amoved?” (798; XVIII.5). “Malory used these conflicting acts and emotions to demonstrate that Guinevere, like many ladies in courtly relationships, was fickle” (Grady 44).

Guinevere also fits Grady's definition of the woman's role in a courtly relationship, which she argues was twofold: "traditionally, she held all the power in such a relationship, deigning to give approving glances and soft words to a knight or nobleman who gave her gifts and performed feats of prowess for her. On the other hand, medieval romance writers often portrayed her as fickle or greedy, abusing her emotional hold over her lover, or in other such misogynistic fashions" (42). Barron, similarly, argues that Guinevere's unfaithfulness is a well-known fact, she is constantly suspected when something goes wrong, as evidenced by her position in "The Poisoned Apple" episode (32-33). Nobody thinks twice before accusing Guinevere, and Bors agrees to defend her on the condition that he can step down if another worthy knight appears to defend the queen.

The only character who openly and severely criticizes the queen is Elaine of Corbenic and also she is the reason why Guinevere gets into a jealous fit. Elaine is the daughter of King Pellès, who wanted his daughter to sleep with Lancelot as the king knows that Galahad will be born from this union, who is among the three knights who complete the Grail Quest. As Lancelot's love and devotion to the queen is known, King Pellès uses enchantment on Lancelot to achieve his purpose (XI.2). Lancelot goes to bed with Elaine, thinking her to be Guinevere and gets her pregnant. When Guinevere learns that Lancelot had slept with another woman and fathered a child from her, she becomes furious. Lancelot manages to calm her by telling her that he was made to sleep with Elaine because of an enchantment. However, when the same thing happens again, and within Guinevere's hearing distance (XI.8), she scolds him and banishes him again: "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!” (594; XI.8). As Jessica Grady states, “not only did Guinevere banish Lancelot from the court for periods totaling at least twenty years”, causing Lancelot to go mad for a period, but she also “prevented him from succeeding in his quest for the Holy Grail”, as Lancelot’s mind was occupied with the thought of the queen instead of his quest (39). Elaine of Corbenic is the character who confronts Guinevere when Lancelot goes mad:

‘Madame, ye ar gretly to blame for sir Launcelot, for now have ye loste hym, for I saw and harde by his countenance that he ys madde for ever. And therefore, alas! madame, ye have done grete synne and youreselff grete dyshonoure, for ye have a lorde royall of youre owne, and therefore hit were youre parte for to love hym; for there ys no quene in this worlde that hath suche another kyng as ye have. And yf ye were nat, I myght have getyn the love of my lorde sir Launcelot; and a grete cause I have to love hym, for he hadde my maydynhode and by hym I have borne a fayre sonne whose name ys sir Galahad. And he shall be in hys tyme the beste knyght of the worlde.’ (594; XI.9)

Guinevere’s reply is to banish Elaine from the court and threaten her not to search for Lancelot as “hit woll be hys deth” (595; XI.9).

In a conclusion, Malory, by using the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere, shows time and time again that the courtly love convention is destructive, both on a personal and national scale. As a matter of fact, Lancelot and Guinevere are the only two people who had some pleasure and even that is for a brief period of time. As Grady asserts, “no other Arthurian characters benefited from their relationship, and one girl, Elaine, was ruined socially (due to becoming pregnant by Lancelot, who then refused to marry her)” and another died of a broken heart because Lancelot could not return her love, and there were “in addition to the more obvious tragic consequence of the

kingdom's downfall that came about from the public revelation of Guinevere and Lancelot's relationship" (40). Both characters are so associated with the concept of courtly love and adultery that it is nearly impossible to think of Lancelot without thinking of Guinevere or their love. As Cooper aptly puts,

“[t]hat he loved someone else's wife usually defines [Lancelot's] life: remove that, and one would expect there to be no reason left for his fictional existence, and he has no alternative 'historical' life within the tradition of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Lancelot without adultery would seem to be as impossible as Robin Hood without outlawry, or Captain Ahab without the whale. (59)

Such love is fated for disaster, both on the personal and political level, yet both Guinevere and Lancelot cannot give up their commitment until it is too late. As a result, “[t]he bride whose dowry had created the Round Table eventually is called by that same body ‘a destroyer of good knyghtes’” (Cherewatuk 42). She is portrayed as both beautiful and wicked by Malory (Barron 33), and also as a fickle woman who is in a courtly relationship that helped lead to the kingdom's eventual downfall (Grady 2). Malory's definition of “vertuose love” and the introduction of Gareth, the virtuous lover, make it hard not to judge the love of Lancelot and Guinevere harshly. As Moorman states, “one of the great causes of the downfall of Arthur's court is a failure in love, or rather a triumph of the wrong kind of love” (166), the kind of love which makes Lancelot suffer spiritually, mentally and physically, and eventually leads him to kill a knight whom he loves above all else. Moreover, because of his love for Guinevere, he fails in the Grail Quest and becomes traitor against his sovereign lord, King Arthur, who is never portrayed as anybody less than honourable.

CONCLUSION

King Arthur and his knights have always been the subjects of legends and mystery. Throughout the ages, these stories were passed from one generation to another, in different countries and different languages. What started as history, turned into a legend in Arthur's case. The chronicle tradition made Arthur a part of English history but with the romance tradition, the historical figure of the Roman warrior, left his place to the legendary king of Britain. Transforming from the oral tradition to the written one, the legend ensured its continuity and popularity, and with the help of certain writers such as Chretien de Troyes, King Arthur and the Round Table became one of the most important romances of the Middle Ages, overshadowing Charlamagne and Achilles.

Among all the works written during the Middle Ages and about King Arthur, what makes Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* different is its vision of a complete Arthuriana. Until Malory, no writer ever tried to make a compilation of the vast material concerning Arthur and his knights. Malory managed to accomplish the task of making sense of the complex material of the Arthurian legend. His work is noteworthy as it is the first work in English to have the complete story of Arthur and it is the first work which attempts to put things in order chronologically.

In order to make a complete collection, Malory had to use many different sources from different time periods and different languages. Like all other Arthurian writers, he drew on earlier sources and made some changes in these sources for his own narrative and purposes, creating his own version of the legend. Some of the changes he made also

served another purpose: they illustrated Malory's attitude towards the courtly love convention, which can be described as critical and analytical.

The concept of courtly love was not just important for Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, but it was also an important piece of the cultural puzzle of the Middle Ages. What was considered to be the set of rules of love for the upper classes in the Late Middle Ages started out as a way to balance an instability within the society in the Early Middle Ages. This instability was the result of the way of living brought upon by feudalism, which put limited number of women in close quarters with vast number of knights. Furthermore, not all of these knights were financially secure enough to take a wife and even if they were, there were not enough eligible women. Courtly love convention helped to bring an harmony to this situation. By elevating the married lady and asserting that love cannot be found in marriage, it provided the newly emerging knightly class with a purpose. This purpose was to be worthy of the lady's love and to serve her. Furthermore, by trying to be worthy, the knights had to educate themselves to soften the roughness of the medieval warrior.

The idea of service came from the writings of the poet Ovid, whose ironical attitude toward this kind of love was ignored by the medieval readers. Along with the writings of Classical writers, the poetry and philosophy of the 11th century Moslem Spain influenced the formation of the courtly love convention, with the importance it attaches to spiritual and ennobling aspect of love. Feudalism and Christianity, two key concepts of the Middle Ages, also had immense influence on courtly love. Feudalism shaped the concept into its final form, with the lord-vassal relationship, which found its reflection in the relationship between the lover and the beloved of the courtly love convention.

Christianity and the cult of Virgin Mary further influenced the status of the beloved and contributed to the process which turned her into an object to be worshipped.

The behaviour of a courtly lady, therefore, was one fitting to someone in such a position: a haughty, disdainful figure, in an elevated position. The lover, however, feels inferior and insecure, and he is tested with various tasks to prove his worth for the lady's affection. He becomes the lady's servant in all things, another version of the feudal relationship between the lord and the vassal, and suffers because of her love. Suffering is an essential part of the courtly love convention: a lover's affection is measured by how pale he looks and how much he suffers from sleeplessness. These are some of the important characteristics of the courtly love convention which was a big part of the social life during the Middle Ages and which critically treated by Malory.

Sir Thomas Malory criticises courtly love and he does this with the three love triangles he includes in his work. Malory puts two major (Tristan-Isolde-Mark and Lancelot-Guinevere-Arthur) and one minor (Uther-Igraine-Gorlois) love triangle at the centre of his work. By centralizing love triangles which are the part of the Arthurian legend, Malory draws attention to courtly love within the legend. There are also some other love stories in the work such as the story of Gareth and Lyonessee, and Lancelot and Elaines, but the focus is on the ones which appear to be courtly and even the "courtly" love stories, the focus is not on the adultery but it is on details which makes a couple courtly or not.

The beginning, the middle and the ending of *Le Morte Darthur* are dominated by love triangles. It starts with the Uther-Igraine-Gorlois, progresses with Tristan and Isolde's

story and ends with the destruction of Lancelot and Guinevere's adultery. Although the first triangle does not dominate the plot as the others do, this does not make it any less important. It is the story of Arthur's conception and illustrates how the lust of a man can be devastating. Uther's lust for Igraine causes the death of Igraine's husband, Gorlois, and ultimately it leads to the destruction of the idyllic Camelot.

However, in the story of Uther and Igrayne, it is obvious that neither the couple nor the circumstances of their relationship fit into the pattern of courtly love convention. It is essentially the story of a powerful king who lusts after the wife of one of his barons and kills the baron to take what he wants. Igrayne is a victim throughout the story, not the haughty beloved of the courtly love stories and Uther is not the enthusiastic lover who devotes himself to his lady but a powerful man who uses force to achieve his goals.

Similar to Uther and Igrayne, Tristan and Isolde do not possess the characteristics to be considered as a courtly couple and despite the appearances, Tristan and Isolde's love is not courtly either. Although the story and the characters carry some of the characteristics of courtly love such as the lord-vassal relationship between the lover and the husband, what makes the Tristan legend unique and not fit to be a case of courtly love is the relationship between Tristan and Isolde. As there is a high possibility of a clandestine marriage between the lovers, their relationship is the violation of one of the rules of courtly love: that "love cannot exert its power between two people who are married to each other" (Capellanus 106). Furthermore, the Pictish origins of the Tristan legend, which provides a matrilineal and polyandric background, moves this love story further away from the realm of courtly love.

The final triangle of *Le Morte Darthur*, the love story of Lancelot and Guinevere, has always been the most well-known part of the Arthurian legend and the courtly love convention is an inseparable part of their story. Unlike the other two love triangles Malory includes, the Lancelot-Guinevere-Arthur triangle carries nearly all of the characteristics of the courtly love convention. By using all the courtly elements from his sources, except for the physical aspects of the relationship, Malory takes advantage of the contradictory essence of the courtly love convention to underline failures of such practices through the destruction of Camelot. Lancelot's role as a courtly knight contradicts his role as a knight of the Round Table and this contradiction results in his failure to succeed in the Grail Quest. Although he is the ideal courtly knight, his success as such does not bring him any joy; he goes mad because of Guinevere's whims and plays a part in the destruction of the society he was supposed to uphold.

The fall of Camelot and the destruction of the Round Table were the result of the failures in love, loyalty and religion, and all these failures are merged in the character of Lancelot. He is a failure in love, as he chooses the wrong kind of love. Instead of accepting Elaine's love and leading a peaceful life, he chooses adulterous courtly love which is personified in Guinevere. He is a failure in loyalty, as his loyalty towards Guinevere makes him a traitor against his king. He betrays King Arthur on many levels; as a man, as a knight and as a vassal. Finally he is a failure in religion, as shown in the Grail Quest, and his failures in love and loyalty leads to his failure in religion. Through the characters of Guinevere and Lancelot, and their doomed love, Malory criticizes the courtly love tradition which he sees only as a destructive force; ruining good knights and ideal societies.

Works Cited

Primary Sources

Malory, Thomas. *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*. Ed. Eugène Vinaver. London: Oxford UP, 1954. Print.

Secondary Sources

Archibald, Elizabeth. "Questioning Arthurian ideals." *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*. Ed. Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. 139-153. Print.

Armstrong, Dorsey. "Rewriting the Chronicle Tradition: The Alliterative *Morte Arthure* and Arthur's Sword of Peace." *Parergon* 25.1 (2008): 81-101. Print.

Barron, Natania J. *Courtly Contradictions: A Case for Guenevere*. Thesis. University of North Carolina, 2007. *ProQuest*. Web.

Boase, Roger. *The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love: A Critical Study of European Scholarship*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1977. Print.

Burnley, David. "Courtly Love." *Courtliness and Literature in Medieval England*. London: Longman, 1998. 148-76. Print.

- Butvin, Susan M. *Fathers, Sons, and Dynastic Kinship Patterns in Malory's Le Morte Darthur*. Diss. Kent State University, 2002. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*. Web.
- Capellanus, Andreas. *The Art of Courtly Love*. Trans. John Jay Parry. New York: Columbia UP, 1990. Print.
- Carvajal, Cheryl Jean. "And from Thy Wombe a Famous Progenie": Rape and Motherhood in Arthurian Legend, Spenser's Faire Queene and Early Modern Drama. Diss. East Central University, 1993. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*. Web.
- Cherewatuk, Karen. *Marriage, Adultery and Inheritance in Malory's Morte Darthur*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006. Print.
- Cooper, Helen. "The Book of Sir Tristram De Lyones." *A Companion to Malory*. Ed. Elizabeth Archibald and A. S. G. Edwards. Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996. 183-202. Print.
- Donahue, Charles. *Law, Marriage, and Society in the Later Middle Ages*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2007. Print.
- Davidson, Roberta. "Reading Like a Woman in Malory's *Morte Darthur*." *Arthuriana* 16.1 (2006): 21-33. *Arthuriana*. Web.

- Davies, R. T. "Malory's "Vertuose Love"" *Studies in Philology* 53.3 (1956): 459-69. *JSTOR*. Web.
- Denomy, Alexander. *The Heresy of Courtly Love*. Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1965. Print.
- Donahue, Charles. *Law, Marriage, and Society in the Later Middle Ages*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2007. Print.
- Duby, Georges. *Erkek Ortaçağ: Aşka Dair Ve Diğer Denemeler*. Trans. Mehmet Ali Kılıçbay. İstanbul: Ayrıntı, 1991. Print.
- Edwards, Elizabeth. "The Place of Women in the *Morte Dathur*." *A Companion to Malory*. Ed. Elizabeth Archibald and A. S. G. Edwards. Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996. 37-54. Print.
- Fisher, John H. "Tristan and Courtly Adultery." *Comparative Literature* 9.2 (1957): 150-64. *JSTOR*. Web.
- Fritscher, John J. *Sex and Magic in King Arthur's Camelot: A Textual Investigation of Religion and the Supranatural in Malory's Morte D'Arthur*. Diss. Loyola University, 1967. Chicago: Loyola University Libraya, 1967. *Jack Fritscher, Ph.D.* Web. <<http://jackfritscher.com/PDF/NonFiction/mdarthur.pdf>>.

- Fulton, Helen. "History and Myth: Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*." *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*. Ed. Helen Fulton. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. 44-57. Print.
- Gaylord, Alan. "Back from the Queste: Malory's Launcelot Enrages Gwenyvere." *Arthuriana* 16.2 (2006): 78-83. *Arthuriana*. Web.
- Gerin, Wilfred L. "The Tale of Gareth: The Chivalric Flowering." *Malory's Originality*. Ed. R. M. Lumiansky. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1964. 99-117. Print.
- Gilbert, Jane. "Arthurian ethics." *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*. Ed. Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. 154-170. Print.
- Grady, Jessica. *Power, Courtly Love, and a Lack of Heirs: Guinevere and Medieval Queens*. Thesis. Marshall University, 2009. *ProQuest*. Web.
- Green, D. H. *Irony in the Medieval Romance*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979. Print.
- Harðardóttir, Unnur Heiða. *The Gentle Touch of Ruin: The Influence of Women in Malory's Le Morte Darthur*. Thesis. University of Iceland, 2010. Print.
- Heikel, Julie Anne. *Constructing Chivalry: The Symbolism of King Mark in Wagner's Tristan und Isolde*. Thesis. McGill University, 2007. *ProQuest*. Web.

- Higham, N. J. "Early Latin Sources: Fragments of a Pseudo-Historical Arthur." *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*. Ed. Helen Fulton. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. 30-43. Print.
- Hodges, Kenneth. *Forging Chivalric Communities in Malory's Le Morte Darthur*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Print.
- Hoffman, Donald L. "Malory's Tragic Merlin." *Merlin: A Casebook*. Ed. Peter Goodrich and Raymond H. Thompson. New York: Routledge, 2003. 324-33. Print.
- Howell, Martha C. *The Marriage Exchange: Property, Social Place and Gender in Cities of the Low Countries, 1300-1550*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1998. Print.
- Jesmok, Janet. "Guiding Lights: Feminine Judgment and Wisdom in Malory's *Morte Darthur*." *Arthuriana* 19.3 (2009): 34-42. *Arthuriana*. Web.
- Jurovics, Raachel. "The Definition of Virtuous Love in *Le Morte D'arthur*." *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 2.1 (1971): 27-43. *Project Muse*. Web.
- Karr, Phyllis Ann. *The Arthurian Companion: The Legendary World of Camelot and the Round Table*. Oakland: Chaosium, 1997. Print.

Kelly, Henry Ansgar. ““Clandestine Marriage and Chaucer’s *Troilus*.” *Five Papers on Marriage in the Middle Ages*. Ed. John Leyerle. London: California UP, 1973. 435-57. Print.

Kennedy, Beverly. “Adultery in Malory’s *Le Morte D’Arthur*.” *Arthuriana* 7.4 (1997): 63-91. *Arthuriana*. Web.

---. “Malory’s Lancelot: ‘Trewest Lover, of a Synful Man.’” *Viator* 12 (1981): 409-56. *JSTOR*. Web.

Kerr, John Edward. “The Character of Marc in Myth and Legend.” *Modern Language Notes* 9.1 (1894): 15-20. *Arthuriana*. Web.

Koplowitz-Breier, Anat. “The Naked Truth, or Why in *Le Morte Darthur* La Beale Isode May Be Naked but Queen Gwenyvere May Not.” *Mirator* May (2005): 1-18. *Glossa*. Web.

Lacy, Norris J., Geoffrey Ashe, and Debra N. Mancoff. “An Arthurian Glossary.” *The Arthurian Handbook*. 2nd ed. New York: Garland, 1997. 275-360. Print.

Lane, Alan. “The End of Roman Britain and the Coming of the Saxons: An Archaeological Context for Arthur?” *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*. Ed. Helen Fulton. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. 15-29. Print.

- Lewis, C.S. *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1958. Print.
- Loomis, Roger Sherman. "Some Names in Arthurian Romance." *PMLA* 45.2 (1930): 416-43. *Project MUSE*. Web.
- Lumiansky, R. M. "The Relationship of Lancelot and Guenevere in Malory's "Table of Lancelot"" *Modern Language Notes* 68.2 (1953): 86-91. *JSTOR*. Web.
- Lupack, Alan. *The Oxford Guide to Arthurian Literature and Legend*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007. Print.
- Lynch, Andrew. *Malory's Book of Arms: The Narrative of Combat in Le Morte Darthur*. Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997. Print.
- Marvin, Julia. "The English Brut Tradition." *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*. Ed. Helen Fulton. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. 221-34. Print.
- McCarthy, Terence. *An Introduction to Malory*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 1991. Print.
- Moller, Herbert. "The Meaning of Courtly Love." *The Journal of American Folklore* 73.287 (1960): 39-52. *JSTOR*. Web.

- Moller, Herbert. "The Social Causation of the Courtly Love Complex." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 1.2 (1959): 137-63. *JSTOR*. Web.
- Moorman, Charles. "Courtly Love in Malory." *ELH* 27.3 (1960): 163-76. *JSTOR*. Web.
- Morris, Rosemary. "Uther and Igerne: A Study in Uncourtly Love." *Arthurian Literature IV*. Ed. Richard Barber. Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 1985. 70-92. Print.
- Murray, Susan E. "Women and Castles in Geoffrey of Monmouth and Malory." *Arthuriana* 13.1 (2003): 17-41. *Arthuriana*. Web.
- Newman, Francis X. *The Meaning of Courtly Love*. Albany: State University of New York, 1969. Print.
- Parry, John Jay. "Introduction." *The Art of Courtly Love*. By Andreas Capellanus. Trans. John Jay Parry. New York: Columbia UP, 1990. 3-24. Print.
- Pearsall, Derek. "Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*." *Arthurian Romance: A Short Introduction*. Malden: Blackwell, 2003. 83-109. Print.
- Pearson, Lu Emily. "Petrarchism." *Elizabethan Love Conventions*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966. 1-74. Print.

Putter, Ad. "Twelfth-century Arthur" *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*. Ed. Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. 36-52 Print.

Putter, Ad and Elizabeth Archibald. "Introduction." *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*. Ed. Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. 1-18. Print.

Radford, C.A. Raleigh. "Romance and Reality in Cornwall." *The Quest for Arthur's Britain*. Ed. Geoffrey Ashe. St. Albans: Paladin, 1976. 59-77. Print.

"Rape" *Oxford Dictionaries*. Web. <<http://oxforddictionaries.com>>.

Reid, Margaret J.C. *The Arthurian Legend: Comparison of Treatment in Modern and Medieval Literature*. London: Methuen & Co, 1970. Print.

Riddy, Felicity. "Contextualizing *Le Morte Darthur*: Empire and Civil War." *A Companion to Malory*. Ed. Elizabeth Archibald and A. S. G. Edwards. Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996. 55-74. Print.

Rumble, Thomas C. "The First Explicit in Malory's *Morte Darthur*." *Modern Language Notes* 71.8 (1956): 564-66. *JSTOR*. Web.

Saunders, Corinne J. *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010. Print.

Schueler, Donald G. "The Tristram Section of Malory's *Morte Darthur*." *Studies in Philology* 65.1 (1968): 51-66. *JSTOR*. Web.

"Consent." Smith, Merrill D., comp. *Encyclopedia of Rape*. Westport: Greenwood, 2004. Print.

Windeatt, Barry. "The Fifteenth-Century Arthur." *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*. Ed. Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. 84-102. Print.

Wright, Thomas L. "'The Tale of King Arthur': Beginnings and Foreshadowings." *Malory's Originality*. Ed. R. M. Lumiansky. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1964. 1-17. Print.

Zimmerman, Yekaterina. *Female Discourses: Powerful and Powerless Speech in Sir Thomas Malory's Le Morte Darthur*. Diss. University of Florida, 2005. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*. Web.