THE SIGNIFICANCE OF "BLOOD": NOBLE DESCENT AND KINSHIP IN THOMAS MALORY’S "MORTE DARTHUR"

PAUL VALMORE ROBERGE

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF "BLOOD": NOBLE DESCENT AND KINSHIP IN THOMAS MALORY'S "MORTE DARThUR."

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, PH.D., 1978

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF "BLOOD": NOBLE DESCENT AND KINSHIP IN THOMAS MALORY'S MORTE DARThUR

by

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire
In Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
English

September, 1978
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my readers, Professors Susan Schibanoff, Terence Logan, William Jones, and Richard Desrosiers for their critical and editorial advice. I want to express special gratitude to Professor Thomas Carnicelli, my director in this work, for his tireless--it seemed--assistance in helping me find my way from intuition to thesis.

I thank also my wife, Sheila, for all those hours of patience and for her constant encouragement.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF "BLOOD"........ 1
   The Terminology of Noble Descent.............. 4
   The Terminology of Kinship.................. 10

PART ONE: NOBLE DESCENT.......................... 16
   I. THE IDEA OF NOBLE DESCENT.................... 16
      Lineage and the Noble Class.................. 26
      Knighthood and Nobility..................... 32
      Manuals of Chivalry....................... 39

   II. NOBLE DESCENT AND CHIVALRY IN THE MORTE DARThUR.. .  60
      Descriptive Formulas of Noble Lineage....... 63
      Pelleas and Garnyssh....................... 73
      Balin..................................... 78
      Tor...................................... 80
      Gareth................................... 86

PART TWO: KINSHIP............................... 91

III. KINSHIP IN THE ROMANCE........................ 91
    The Adaptation of Motifs of Kinship to
    Early Romances of Love...................... 93
    The Development of Kinship in the
    Comprehensive Arthurian Story............... 125

IV. KINSHIP IN THE MORTE DARThUR.................. 147
    Kinship and Kindreds........................ 147
    Hostilities Between Kinsmen.................. 161
    Solidarity Between Kinsmen.................. 169
    The "Naturall Love" of Kinsmen.............. 179
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Revenge of Kinsmen</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lot-Pellinor Feud</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. &quot;THE BLOODE OF SIR LAUNCELOTT&quot;</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lancelot and His Kindred</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lancelot and Galahad</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Final Tales</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF "BLOOD": NOBLE DESCENT AND KINSHIP IN THOMAS MALORY'S MORTE DARTHUR

by

PAUL V. ROBERGE

A study of the motifs of noble descent and kinship in Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur helps us to understand the romance's central chivalric theme. Noble descent, which Malory presents as the condition and source of all true knighthood, describes the existence of an inherent chivalric quality in mankind. Consanguinity, the origin of various affective motivations, offers an occasion for a dramatic illustration of the ethical superiority of this chivalric quality.

The introduction of the dissertation discusses the terminology of noble descent and kinship and distinguishes between the two concepts as they appear in the Morte Darthur. The work is subsequently divided into two parts respectively investigating noble descent and kinship; the first chapter of each part reviews the cultural background to these ideas.

Chapter I demonstrates that Malory's literary restriction of knighthood to men of noble birth does not accurately represent contemporary social fact or attitude. The connection between noble birth and chivalry is a convention of chivalric literature—the romance and the manual of knighthood—where it appears as a symbol of the antiquity, the excellence, and the inward nature of the chivalric ideal. This ideal was not
the exclusive property of the fifteenth-century aristocratic class.

Malory's use of noble descent is descriptive rather than prescriptive. His intention—examined in Chapter II—such as it appears in the stories of Pelleas, Garnauss, Balin, Gareth, and Tor, is literary, not social. The fact that Malory's true knights are necessarily descended from noble blood signifies that chivalry exists as an inherent and cogent value in man. Care must be taken not to regard the chivalry of the Nortre Darthur as an existential code.

Chapter III, the first of the second part, argues that kinship motifs typically possess in romance a symbolic coloration. In the romances of Thomas of Britain, Chrétien, and Marie de France, kinship loses the specifically dynastic and familial themes associated with it in earlier heroic literature and is made to signify the novel theme of love. This symbolic tendency continues through the evolution of the comprehensive romances which Malory used as his sources.

Chapters IV and V show how Malory uses kinship to symbolize the survival of chivalry. Kinship may generate hostility or solidarity between family groups or within them. Yet only when familial sentiment is subordinated to chivalric ideals does the clan prosper. The so-called Lot-Pellinor feud illustrates this paradox: the attempt of Gawain and his brothers to avenge the death of their father is the source of division within the kin group itself.
The blood of Lancelot, on the other hand, preserves its identity as a kindred by being united by common chivalric attitudes. In the final tales of the *Morte Darthur*, the unity of Lancelot's kin becomes the symbol of the survival of chivalric nature and knightly community beyond the dissolution of the Round Table. The motifs of blood in Malory's *Morte Darthur* represent the endurance of an inward virtue of chivalry in spite of the mutability of particular knightly institutions.

The dissertation offers, in appendix, a genealogical chart of the important kindreds in the *Morte Darthur*. 
INTRODUCTION

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF "BLOOD"

In "Malory and the Chivalric Order,"¹ Stephen Miko proposes that the chivalric code, as Malory conceived it, is based on a set of ethical commitments which "grow out" of "more fundamental bonds," notably the bond of blood, of consanguinity. "Blood," Miko writes, "is one of Malory's favourite words, and always has a positive value."² According to Miko's view, natural principles, such as "blood," are insufficient directives for confronting evil; in order for the activities of the knights not to be "as chaotic as the evil they are meant to control, there must be some sort of rule, some control of the actions themselves. This is the primary function of the chivalric code."³ Then, when the ethical controls fail, as they seem to do in the Morte Darthur, "blood" persists as the organizational principle of the new fractionary order: "when vow clashes with vow, blood provides the method of counting sides."⁴ The chivalric code is derived from inherent natural principles which reappear when the artifice collapses on itself.

Miko's reflections are to an extent justified. The good knight, in Malory, is necessarily a man born of high blood,

²Miko, p. 211.
³Miko, p. 212.
⁴Miko, p. 212.
and there are passages in the *Morte Darthur* which indicate
that noble blood somehow induces a knight to act in a chivalric
fashion. And no knight of low blood achieves chivalric virtue.
Then too, when the knights of the Round Table take sides after
the disclosure of Lancelot's adultery, one faction is pre-
dominantly composed of Lancelot's kinsmen, which Arthur himself
calls "the noble felyshyp of sir Launcelot and hys blood."
Miko's scheme, however, misses the conceptual distinction which
exists in the *Morte Darthur* between noble blood and common
blood (consanguinity). As we will see, the concept of descent
or lineage is, as Malory uses it, in several fundamental
respects distinct from the concept of kinship; lineage cannot
be regarded as a species of kinship. Lineage is, of course,
the same sort of by-product of biology as consanguinity. What
must be seen is that when Malory generally refers to descent,
specifically noble descent, it is to a quality of descent, an
attribute equally shared by all true knights. Consanguinity,
on the other hand, describes a set of relationships different
for each knight.

We find an example of Malory's use of blood to signify
in one case "noble blood" and in the other "common blood" in
the "Tale of Sir Tristram" (the italics are mine):

"But hit is shame," syde sir Trystram, "that sir Gawayne and ye be commyn of so grete blood, that ye four bretherne be so named as ye be: for ye be called the grettyste destroyers and murtherars of good knyghtes that is now in the realme of Ingelonde. And as I have harde say, sir Gawayne and ye, his brethirne, amonge you slew a bettir knyght than ever any of you was, whyche was called the noble knyght sir Lamorak de Galys. And hit had pleased God," seyde sir Trystram, "I wolde I had bene by hym at his deth day."
"Than shuldist thou have gone the same way," seyde sir Gaherys.

"Now, fayre knyghtes, than muste there have bene many mo good knyghtes than ye of youre blood."

The purpose of this study is to clarify the distinction between noble descent and consanguinity, beginning with an examination of the terminology used respectively for each motif, and to understand how Malory uses these ideas to formulate a dramatic definition of chivalry as an inherent and enduring virtue of human nature. Simply put, Malory poses associations between chivalry and blood, hereditary and common, and the object of these associations is to represent chivalry as a fundamental and indeed natural moral complex, one as inherent as blood itself. This process can be best examined by recognizing, in the structure of the investigation, the distinction between noble descent and consanguinity. The study therefore falls into two parts, each of which begins with a discussion of the cultural background of the issue. It will be seen that the "doctrine" that knightliness ensues from noble birth represents less an actual social principle than a conventional idea of the chivalric mystique as expressed, for instance, in knightly manuals of the fifteenth century. It will be seen that Malory's use of kinship motifs to dramatize aspects of the idea of chivalry has roots reaching back into the French

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prose romances, his principle sources, and even to the earliest verse romances in which formerly heroic motifs of kinship were adapted to the revolutionary theme of love. Subsequent to a background investigation, the significant function of blood with respect to chivalry in the Morte Darthur will be studied: in the first part, the relationship between noble descent and knighthood; in the second part, the chivalric significance of kinship and in particular the role of Sir Lancelot's kindred in affirming the endurance of the chivalric idea. We will see, in brief, that the motifs of blood in the Morte Darthur show that Malory regarded chivalry, despite the failings of particular knights and of the Arthurian chivalric institution itself, as an inherent and undying element of the human spirit.

The Terminology of Noble Descent

Blood, kynrede, and lynage appear rather indiscriminately in the Morte Darthur to signify either noble descent or consanguinity. For the sake of consistency I will use "kinship" to mean consanguinity whether lineal or lateral, "lineage" when speaking of the idea of descent, and "blood" generally to include consanguinity and descent. In Malory the distinction of concepts makes itself seen in a formulaic pattern: noble lineage is expressed through attributives of value (noble blood, high lineage, good kin) and kinship usually through onomastic identification (the blood of Sir Lancelot, the lineage of King Pellinor, the kindred of Joseph of Arimathea). Generally speaking, noble lineage attributed to a knight identifies him as a member of the universal chivalric legion,
whereas kinship restricts his field of identification and therefore sets him apart from knights of another kindred. This is not to say that the potential conflict between lineage and kinship becomes a dominant theme of the *Morte Darthur*. On the contrary. Though an individual knight, such as Gawain, may pursue what he conceives to be family rights so hardily as to oppose knighthood, the true sentiments and motives arising from kinship are those which conform to and promote chivalry. These sentiments can be called "true" because in the *Morte Darthur* the solidarity of a kindred is uniquely founded on a "naturall love" which has chivalric implications.

Malory employs some twenty different formulas to express noble descent and clearly prefers some variants over others, yet together these formulas signify a single, uniform reality. The most frequent formulas are of noble blood (6 occasions), of royal or kings' blood (6), a gentleman born (or similar) (4), of great blood (3), of high lineage (3), of high blood (3). The following formulas, however, appear only once or twice in the *Morte Darthur*: of gentle blood, of king's lineage, of great lineage, of good kindred, well- (or best) born, of worship born, of good men, of men of worship, of noble knights, of good knights, of noble ancestry, of gentle strain, of the strain of kings, of a noble house, of high parage. This listing gives us the only set of formulas with which Malory attributes nobility of degree to a major character short of calling him a noble man. Malory never resorts to a direct expression of degree or estate such as, conceivably, of a
high estate or of noble degree. The reference is always to a man's lineage. 6

Often enough Malory speaks of his male characters as noble men and noble knights with no reference to lineage. It is not always easy to decide whether Malory intends to tell us that a man is of noble degree or of noble character, but there is a sense in which this question is misleading. Any knight of noble character must also necessarily be a knight of noble degree, that is, of noble birth. Helyus and Helake, the low born foster sons of king Harsmaunce, may be described as "noble knyghtes of their handys," but like any "vylayne borne" they are bound to "destroy all the jeautylmen" about them. In most cases, "noble man," "noble knight," "man of worship," "gentleness" and similar expressions have a complex significance referring to degree and to character. It will become clearer as this study progresses to what extent Malory uses noble

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6 Malory does distinguish between the nobility and the commons, refers to the "barons" as a class and to "quenys and ladyes of astate" (839.50). These chiefly minor references have, as we will see in a later chapter, virtually no direct bearing on the chivalric framework of the Morte Darthur. D. S. Brewer writes that "all the stories are concerned with the same kind of people, and all these people are associated with the same central group, the court of Arthur. Indeed, one of Malory's great achievements is his portrayal of this passionate, limited and aristocratic society, with its own standards of success and failure." "the hole book," in Essays on Malory, ed. J. A. W. Bennett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 45. Brewer's definition of Malory's cast of characters in terms of a circumscribed class misrepresents Malory's own emphasis, not on the aristocracy of his people, but on their knighthood: it is knighthood, not aristocracy, which is said to come of high blood in the Morte Darthur.

Parage (peerage), of all the words Malory uses, least connotes descent. I include it in the listing though it describes the rank not of a knight but of the lady Lynet.
degree—always in terms of noble birth—to express the chivalric spiritual nobility of his knights.

The irregular distribution of the formulas of noble descent listed above is mainly the result of Malory's stylistic tendency to prefer certain specific phrases over others. Malory never, for instance, makes use of the expression "noble lineage." This stylistic pattern is somewhat influenced by the sources, but, because we do not possess manuscripts identical to those which Malory read, it is impossible to say what wording Malory encountered in each case. A quick survey of available texts, however, suggests that Malory's choice of terminology was not altogether determined by his sources. In the "Tale of King Arthur" lineage does not appear although the Suite du Merlin employs lignage. In the "Sankgreal," however, lignage remains lynage with a single exception: epitaphs on the tombs of martyred maidens proclaim them to be, in the Queste del Graal, "estraites de haut lignage (var. parage)," and in Malory "of kynges bloode" (1005.17). The occasion of blood here may likely be the consequence of a contextual hint: the visit to the tombs concludes the episode of the healing of the sick lady by Percival's sister's blood.

Malory's use of one formula in preference to another is incidental; the formulas are fundamentally synonymous, and the concept which they represent is unique. There are, to be

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The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances, ed. H. O. Sommer (Washington: The Carnegie Institution, 1908-16), VI, 173.35. Subsequent references to the Vulgate cycle (Sommer) will include volume number, page, and line.
sure, certain titular and functional ranks within the gentle class. Malory refers to these ranks as **estates** and tells us for example that at the tournament at Surluse there were "kynges and prynces, deukes, erlys and barownes and noble knyghtes" (653.25-26). But we have to bear in mind that with the exception of Arthur's royalty these ranks have little significance in the *Morte Darthur*: knights—and all, whatever their rank, are knights—are to be judged in their accomplishment of chivalric deeds. A king in this light is equal to a non-baronial knight. As far as it matters to chivalry, **royal lineage** is equivalent to **noble lineage**; in fact there are few important characters in the *Morte Darthur* without kings in their pedigree. The occasional comparative and superlative expression of noble descent, as "of more hyghe lynage," I will consider in a later chapter. The variety of formulas signifying noble descent in the *Morte Darthur* ought not to be regarded as evidence of hierarchical distinctions in the nature of noble blood. "Hyghe lynage" is, in Malory, a uniform and universal characteristic, productive of chivalry and the property of every true knight, who may or may not live up to its suasions.

Malory's indiscriminate use of **blood**, **lineage**, and **kindred** to signify consanguinity and noble descent is not exceptional. In Chaucer's "Legend of Lucretia," for example, Tarquinius is urged "by linage and by right" to "doon as a lord and as a verray knight" (*LGW* 1820-21). Elsewhere Chaucer uses **lineage** to signify a specific bloodline, as in the "Knight's Tale": "Of his lynage am I and his ofspryng" (*CT* A 1550). In the same tale Palamon speaks of "oure kynrede" (*CT* A 1286)
while the heroine of "Troilus and Criseyde" recognizes that Diomede comes "of noble and heigh kynrede" (TC 5.979). Blood, however, signifies, in Chaucer, only a quality of birth: "blood roial," "worthy blood of aucetrye," "gentilesse of blood."

Notably, Malory never uses blood, lineage, or kindred without qualification to signify noble birth although such a usage would have been possible. In the C-text of Piers Plowman, for example, the poet compares the counterfeit hermits of his day with the true hermits of primitive Christianity:

For hit beb bote boyes • bollers atten ale,
Neyper of lynage, ne of lettrure; ne lyf-holy as eremites,
That wonede whilom in wodes • with beres and lyones.
Some had lyf-lode of here lynage • and of no lyf elles. . . .
All þese hole eremytes • were of hye kynne,
For-soke londe and lordshep • and lykynges of þe body.8

Today's boisterous hermits lack the lynage (= hye kynne) of their ancient predecessors. Lydgate, writing of Charles, king of Jerusalem and brother of St. Louis, comments on "his roial hih lynage . . . Seith he was boren of the blood of Fraunce,"9 that is, of the royal blood of France. Likewise in Lydgate's Troy Book Priam condemns the Greeks for having abducted his sister and forced her to become a concubine: the Greeks "ne spare nouther blood nor age."10


The students of Malory's style have pointed out his practice of constant evaluation. Mark Lambert writes that "worth, quality, and value are part of the texture of these worlds; they are felt as things in the scene described, rather than as a viewer's judgement of that scene." Malory's formulations of noble lineage reflect his perception of the world of the romance as an enhanced world, a heightened reality, a world in which the attribute counts as much as the substance. The real meaning of noble birth is innate knighthood: royal, noble, gentle, worshipful, great, good, and high, the attributes associated with lineage, define the inherent chivalric worth of Malory's knights.

The Terminology of Kinship

While the formulas of noble descent are variant expressions of a single concept, the terms of kinship signify actual bonds, defined or indefinite, between characters, or the set of kinsmen itself. It is less a question of what Malory means by his vocabulary than of how he uses it.

Blood and kindred can, as we have seen, in some cases be defined as an inner quality. In other instances these words represent a specified kindred, a material group of characters:

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12 In Kindred and Clan in the Middle Ages (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1913) Bertha S. Phillpotts makes a distinction between what she calls "clan" and "kindred." The first is defined as an organized group based on agnate relations, and the other as a more fluctuating group marked by bilateral descendence. According to these categories the Arthurian family groups are more properly kindreds than clans.
"And for that jantyll batayle all the bloode of sir Launcelott loved sir Trystrames for ever" (411.6-8).

"That aspyed sir Lamerok, that kynge Arthure and his blood was so discomfite" (663.10-11).

"And that other seyde he wold have the rule of her, for he was hir kynnesman and wolde lede hir to hir kynne" (114.33-35).

Sir Palomydes "rode to kynge Arthurs syde, where was kynge Carados and the kynge of Irelonde, and sir Launcelottis kynne, and sir Gawaynes kynne" (524.23-25).

In certain expressions blood and kindred denote the idea of consanguinity rather than the kin-group:

"She was thy cousyns wyff, sir Howell the Hende, a man that we call nyghe of thy bloode" (199.1-2).

"Yet shall I make myne avow aftir my power that of good men of armys aftir my bloode thus many I shall bring with me" (190.1-3).

"My fadir is com of Alysaundirs bloode that was overleder of kynges" (231.11-12).

"Fayre dere brother," seyde he, "remembrir of what kynne we be com of, and what a man is sir Launcelot de Lake" (408.23-24).

(except for the Lancelot group which is somewhat male-dominated), but the distinction—whatever its anthropological roots—has no real significance in the Morte Darthur. Malory is clear in assigning individual knights to kin groups. The kindred is defined by its given membership.
—"He had reson to proffer hym lodgyng, mete, and drynke, for that proffer com of his bloode, for he was nere kyn to hym than he wyste off" (295.32-34).^{13}

This last passage, from "Gareth" and as far as we know original to Malory, refers to the motivation behind Gawain's generosity towards his brother Gareth, whom he does not recognize. The passage suggests that Malory saw kinship as something more than a relational circumstance, an occasion for motives of affection, honor, or personal history. Common blood, like noble bloods, is part of the basic make-up of a character. A principal theme of "Gareth" is the moral ascendency of chivalry, founded on noble blood, over the demands of consanguinity: having demonstrated by his chivalrous actions that he is "com of full noble bloode," Gareth forsakes the company of his brothers whom he sees as too murderously prompt in avenging offenses to the kindred. Nevertheless the thematic interplay between noble lineage and kinship is, throughout the Morte Darthur, a more complex matter than simple right against wrong.

We find therefore several instances in which the terminology of blood serves to identify a character according to his kindred and according to his degree. In other words, gentility depends on a known and noble pedigree. Prior to knighting Gareth, Lancelot requires him to reveal "of what kyn ye be borne." Gareth replies that he is "brothir unto sir Gawayne of fadir syde and modir syde," and Lancelot rejoices

^{13}"Kynde" also appears in the sense of kin, concerning Gareth's family: "of what kynde ye ar com" (331.8).
that he "sholde be of grete bloode" (299.21-30). Likewise throughout the "Tale of Gareth", Gareth, an example of the Fair Unknown, demonstrates his noble birth through noble action, and the subsequent discovery of his kyn is a revelation not only of parentage but of gentility. For the purpose of analysis I have emphasized the conceptual distinctions between noble lineage and kinship, yet these ideas are not always functionally divorced in the Morte Darthur. The use of blood, kindred, and lineage to express either of these ideas strengthens their affiliation at the level of terminology.

There is nothing remarkable about Malory's terminology of kinship. Like the specific kinship patterns themselves this terminology tends toward consistency and exactitude, an effort at accuracy which succeeds despite the sometimes eclectic character of the context. Apart from one notable exception, Malory's specific vocabulary of kinship offers few problems of definition, and these are all due to the potentially indefinite meaning of cousin. Unless a relationship is more accurately defined, either in the Morte Darthur or its sources, it is occasionally difficult to say whether cousin (or the formulas nye cousin or nere cousin) signifies a first cousin or simply a kinsman. In nearly every case, however, the ambiguity concerns a relationship between minor characters and one whose accurate definition has no bearing on the narrative. An important exception, the relationship between Lancelot and the brothers Bors and Lyonel, will be examined in the fourth chapter.

In cases where the exact genealogical connection between two characters is known, we find that Malory uses cousin (alone or with nye or nere) to denote a first cousin, a nephew, or a niece. Ywain and Ider are called "nere cosyns unto the Conquerrour (=Arthur)" (189.21-22); Ywain is the son of Morgan, Arthur's half-sister, and Ider is Ywain's son. It is possible though unlikely that Malory was unaware of the exact relationship of Ywain to Arthur when he composed "Lucius," where this reference appears. In any case, Gawain, clearly Arthur's nephew in "Lucius" (206.9), is addressed as "fayre cosyn" by
the relationship between Lancelot and his kinsmen Bors and Lionel, there is scarcely any doubt as to what kind of relationship exists between consanguinous knights. Malory defines a given relationship at his earliest opportunity and sometimes repeats it, one comes to feel, to the point of redundancy. This habit suggests that he saw in kinship a principle of structure and a principle of affiliation, principles which reveal their importance in the definition of chivalry, which is of such central thematic value in the Morte Darthur.

Arthur (211.25). Elsewhere Gawain is described as "nye cosyn unto kyng Arthure" (168.10). The niece of the Earl of Pase is also called his "cousyn nyghe" (643.8, see also 539.8). Cousin can therefore at times signify collateral kinship. One interesting usage of "cousyn nyghe" is to describe the relationship between Pelles and Joseph of Arimathea. Malory was perhaps not unaware of the French tradition which placed six generations between Pelles and the sister of Joseph, but, whatever his knowledge may have been, Malory tends to foreshorten the ancestral dimension of the Arthurian story.

The expression cousyn jarmayne signifies first cousin. It is used occasionally to describe a relationship which is not otherwise defined. Given the common usage of the formula in Medieval French and English we can assume that Malory does not use it as an equivalent for kinsman.

The rest of Malory's vocabulary of kinship offers no difficulty and few noteworthy usages. Malory frequently refers to nephews as sister's children as the following examples show: "my nevew, my sistirs son" (99.14: Arthur-Gawain), "kynge Arthurs syster-sonnes" (162.13: Ywain and Gawain), "his sister son" (168.5, 169.10: Arthur-Gawain), "sistyrs chylde unto my lorde sir Luncelot" (401.15: Blioberis and Blamour). Later Blioberis says to Blamour, "Remembir of what kynne we be com of, and what a man is sir Luncelot de Lake, nother farther ne nere but brethyrne chyldirne" (408.23-26). This peculiar construction probably does not signify "we and Lancelot are the children of brothers." We also find "my systir son" (1230.11, 1233.31: Arthur-Gawain), "systirs sonne unto the noble kynge Arthur" (1231.10: Gawain). This is a common enough formula in Old and Middle English. Its purpose in Malory is less to clarify a relationship than to emphasize it. It is applied repeatedly and almost exclusively to the Arthur-Gawain kin set, a well documented relationship in the Morte Darthur. Similarly the Archbishop of Canterbury rebukes Mordred for his treason
The study of the motifs of kinship, however, is reserved for the second part of this dissertation. In the following section we will look at the fifteenth-century background of the idea of noble descent in order to discover the nature of its associations, whether these are primarily social (and, therefore, "realistic") or more broadly cultural, whether, in other words, Malory's equation of knighthood with noble birth does or does not represent a contemporary social practice.

by pointing out his proximity of kinship to Arthur: "For ys nat kynge Arthur youre uncle, and no farther but youre modirs brothir" (1228.1-3).

Other formulas of specific kinship—there are very few—appear intended both to clarify a relationship and to emphasize the familial closeness between two characters. Margawse is described as "syster on the modirs syde Igrayne unto Arthure" (41.20: that is, Arthur's half-sister), Gareth identifies himself as "brothir unto sir Gawayne of fadir syde and modir syde" (299.27-28), Melyot de Logres calls Nenye "my kynneswoman nye, my awntis doughtir" (115.18).
PART ONE: NOBLE DESCENT

CHAPTER I

THE IDEA OF NOBLE DESCENT

In one of his infrequent reflexive excursions Malory passes comment on the instability of love "nowadayes" in comparison to the virginal patience of lovers in "kynge Arthurs dayes" (1119.31-1120.6). Such retrospective moralizing is exceptional enough in the Morte Darthur, yet it evokes a central question in Malory criticism, namely, the nature of the function of the past in Malory's romance. What is the aim of a fifteenth-century English writer's reworking of thirteenth-century French accounts of the legendary British history? Some critics, recalling R. W. Chambers' claim that "the world to which the Morte Darthur belongs had passed away before the book was finished," see the book as a basically retrospective work.1

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2. For E. K. Chambers, English Literature at the Close of the Middle Ages (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1945), p. 185; Caxton may have shared Malory's longing for the glory that was Britain: "It was, perhaps, his nostalgia for a decayed chivalry which led William Caxton to make his greatest gift to English letters, the so-called Morte Darthur of Sir Thomas Malory." The retrospective premise opens a variety of interpretational routes. One ideological critic, Ralph Fox, The Novel and the People (New York: International Publishers, 1945), p. 44, dismisses the Morte Darthur as nothing better than romantic escapism. In "Malory and the Chivalric Ethos: The Hero of Arthur and the Emperor Lucius," Mediaeval Studies, 36 (1974), pp. 331-53, Michael Stroud portrays Malory as a conservative rough-rider attempting "to arrest the drift away from feudalism,
It must be remembered, however, that as a chivalric entity, the *Morte Darthur* does not stand alone in the fifteenth century. In Malory, as Elizabeth Pochoda writes, "we confront a purposeful and conscious revival of Arthurian material which arises out of a cultural context ... specifically related to the contemporary aristocratic concern with reliving the ceremonies and traditions of the past." The *Morte Darthur* represents Malory's participation in a contemporary flowering of chivalric ideas and forms. It cannot be read as simply a backward-looking knightly Götterdämmerung, an obituary to chivalry.

Larry Benson, in the most recent book on the *Morte Darthur*, views it as a "realistic" celebration of contemporary knightly activities. According to Benson, the world to which the book belonged, far from having passed away, was gloriously alive throughout Europe as Malory wrote about it. Yet even if we recognize that Malory did write during a period of chivalric enthusiasm, we must still try to understand the nature and the scope of this enthusiasm and Malory's attitude toward it. Were the ideals of chivalry adopted only by members of the feudalism as he had lived it" (p. 351). The *Morte Darthur* accordingly celebrates knightly virtues, "but not those of the effete form of chivalry already popular in France and England" (p. 350). Stroud's thesis depends somewhat too questionably on the identification of the picaresque "Warwickshire Malory" as the author of the *Morte Darthur* and on a restricted examination of the belligerent knights of the second tale. For more of the retrospective approach see Edmund Reiss, *Sir Thomas Malory* (New York: Twayne, 1966), pp. 20-23.


aristocracy? The question is important to our understanding of the significance of noble descent in the *Morte Darthur*.

And did Malory regard the contemporary practice of chivalry as beneficient, as Benson contends, or vacuous and corrupt by comparison to that of Arthur's days?

Vinaver, among others, argues the decadence of fifteenth-century knightly pasttimes: "What chiefly attracted these late admirers of chivalry was not its doctrine but its outward splendour. Chivalry having lost its material basis could not retain its moral ascendancy. . . . The formal aspect proved more permanent than the ideal, and the great devices of medieval knighthood degenerated into mere love of luxury and theatrical pomp."\(^5\) According to this view, Malory deplored the senescence of chivalry and attempted to rejuvenate its ideals, or at least to hold them up to a changing world as a sign of the glories of the past. The weakness of this critical stand is in its dependence on a questionable assessment of the nature of late medieval chivalry. Fifteenth-century chivalry cannot, as we will later see, be limited to the ceremonies and tournaments of the courts and of the great orders of knighthood. These comprised the highly visible surface of a complex of ideas, difficult to define, in which much of the professional population of fifteenth-century England found ideological security during a period of disturbance and change.

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In response to critics who stress the decadence of fifteenth-century knighthood, Benson points out that court chivalry of the time represented the single true flowering of knightly ideals: "If there was a golden age, a time when men at least tried to be chivalric knights, it was from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries." Benson describes the Morte Darthur as a "realistic" work, an account—and a generally favorable one—of a contemporary aristocratic effort to live out chivalric ideals. According to Benson's view, Malory translated into English those thirteenth-century romances which the fifteenth-century noblemen of Britain and the continent were actively emulating. If this view is correct the Morte Darthur cannot be characterized as nostalgic or ethically retrospective. Indeed Benson's arguments and the supportive examples of knights who enjoyed the leisure "to hold the mirror of life up to art" do help correct the excessive picture of Malory as a backward looking social moralist.

Yet Benson's limitation of the fifteenth-century chivalric idea to the visible practices of the aristocracy in defining the spirit and purpose of the Morte Darthur is too restrictive:

One might speculate that as power shifted away from the old agrarian aristocracy, from those who held land to those with skill and money, the almost inevitable response of the nobility was an insistence upon those qualities that set them apart as a class and an emphasis on an ideal of noble conduct that defined that class. If power and money were

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6 Benson, p. 141.

7 Benson, p. 142.
moving into the control of men of low blood with no sense of chivalry, how much more precious honor and high birth, to which the lowborn could not aspire! . . . In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the knightly class seems to have felt more threatened--perhaps with better reason--than in former times. . . . The reaction of the nobility of the period was an increased insistence on the importance of noble blood, the beginnings of a definite and conscious class structure, and an enthusiastic cultivation of the ceremonial forms of chivalry.

Malory, Benson later writes, "is equally firm on the restriction of knighthood to the nobly born."\(^8\)

Behind Benson's realism as behind the more restrictive kinds of moralistic readings of the *Morte Darthur* we find the assertion that Malory's fictional aristocracy was meant to reflect, praisingly or censoriously, the attitudes and practices of fifteenth-century nobility--or rather that fraction of the nobility which could boast an ancient pedigree. It is quite likely that Malory did "reverence" the aristocracy, as P. E. Benson, p. 143.

\(^8\)Benson, p. 150. "Malory and most of his contemporaries remained convinced that only those of noble birth could become knights." In fact this restriction was neither legally nor factually true; Benson assumes it from a literal reading of traditional commonplaces on the subject in medieval manuals of chivalry. We might bear in mind, with Jacques Heers, that "les œuvres littéraires, quelles qu'elles soient . . . offrent une image très déformée de la société; elles présentent des types parfois construits de toutes pièces; elles témoignent surtout de l'état d'esprit ou des intentions de leurs auteurs, des conventions qui régiussent tel ou tel spectacle": *Le clan familial au Moyen Age* (Paris: P. U. F., 1974), p. 5. The problem of discerning the true medieval mind in the matter of lineage and kinship is made even more difficult by the fact, recognized by most social historians of the Middle Ages, that the field has not been sufficiently explored.
Tucker and others have claimed, and more than likely that he based some of his passages on actual chivalric spectacles. But to say that Malory produced the *Morte Darthur* primarily as a statement, positive or negative, on the social, political, or moral state of the fifteenth-century hereditary nobility is another matter. It is important to recognize to what extent nobility, social and political, is circumstantial in the *Morte Darthur*. For one thing, though he sometimes describes social hierarchy—"kyngis, deukes, erlis, and barownes, and many noble knyghtes"—Malory makes virtually no use of titular protocol in the narrative itself. The titled knights are on the whole minor characters known by no other identity. It is knighthood that counts, and even Arthur is said to reign "as a noble knyght" (545.11-12). Chivalry, in the *Morte Darthur*, is not "the outward expression of aristocracy" but rather the reverse: noble birth represents the nobility of chivalric virtues, not virtues restricted to an aristocracy. The idea of a noble descent as the natural medium for the transmission of potential moral excellence from generation to generation belonged to the revived "mystery" of chivalry of the fifteenth-

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10 The "remarkable fervour behind Malory's belief in chivalry . . . derives from the fact that Malory sees knighthood as the outward expression of aristocracy, which he reverences": P. E. Tucker, "Chivalry in the Morte," in *Essays on Malory*, ed. Bennett, p. 66. While recognizing that knighthood for Malory is "the outward and temporal expression of inner and timeless virtues" (p. 103), Tucker considers noble birth to be essentially an aspect of Malory's early conception of chivalry as an aristocratic standard of conduct. I hope to show that noble birth is to be regarded, with respect to Malory, not as a criterion of social distinction but as a conventional chivalric expression, central to the book, of "inner and timeless virtues."
century. The effects of the chivalric revival, of which the Morte Darthur was itself a part, were limited neither to actual contemporary knights nor to men of noble birth, and it is profitable to think of the connection Malory makes between noble descent and chivalry as ideal--ideal not in the sense of a social condition to be wished for, but rather in the sense of a symbolic association. By representing, within the romance boundaries of the Morte Darthur, chivalry as a product of noble birth, Malory was able to characterize this complex of virtues as something inherent in human nature, persistent in time, and of a certain excellence.

All of Malory's major male characters are knights (the Morte Darthur constitutes a purely knightly universe) and all his true knights are nobly born even though in Malory's real England the ideas of chivalry were not solely the province of the nobly born. Arthur Ferguson, to whose important work, The Indian Summer of English Chivalry, Benson acknowledges a debt, sees fifteenth-century chivalry as a widely useful if somewhat anachronistic set of ideas. "The ideals and ideas connected with knighthood," Ferguson writes, "once given a fictitious substance in the chronicles and in romances of chivalry, and a substance more accurately to be described as meretricious in the pageantry of the court, could maintain a life of their own largely independent of the facts of actual life." This persistence of tradition was the result of the

12 Ferguson, p. 27.
medieval habit of "embalming general principles in traditional forms and thereby isolating them quite effectively from the contingencies of daily existence." These embalmed principles were not merely "lip-service to chivalric idealism" but served a profound purpose: "Facts that aroused the anxiety of contemporary observers or in any way elicited from them a strong emotional response could be interpreted in the light of accepted values and can thus be considered a quite honest response to the upsetting events of the fifteenth century." The ceremonial and athletic devices of chivalry may have been restricted, at least in execution, to men of money and power, but the ideas of chivalry constituted a kind of functional mythology, a useful secular mystery, for the fifteenth-century Englishman, perhaps especially for the man of civil profession.

Malory did not write *Morte Darthur* as a mirror for the civil servant or the professional soldier. Yet late medieval chivalry, like the late medieval gentle class, cannot be so easily and sharply defined as to allow us to say that Malory thought of chivalry as limited to aristocratic exercise for the nobly born. Benson teaches the student of Malory that chivalric ideas had a stronger, more profitable, and less degenerate hold on the fifteenth-century mind than has usually been assumed, thereby putting into question the view of the *Morte Darthur* as a book of moral censure or of idealistic...

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13 Ferguson, p. 27.
14 Ferguson, p. 27.
15 Ferguson, p. 106.
nostalgia. On the other hand, Benson overstates the importance of aristocratic practice in the scheme of chivalry. As Ferguson shows, the modified ideas of medieval knighthood enjoyed widespread and practical applications.

There is indeed little authority to be derived from fifteenth-century social practices and attitudes for taking the hereditary principal as a prescriptive doctrine. The equation of knighthood with nobility and nobility with noble descent has no absolute foundation in contemporary social fact. Neither is it justified to assume that these three terms—"knighthood," "noble degree," "noble descent"—describe an equilateral figure in the Morte Darthur itself, for Malory's equation is essentially between noble birth and chivalry. What there is in the Morte Darthur of a functional, political noble class lies mostly on the periphery of the book's central concern with chivalric ideas. This supposed triangular pattern is, moreover, scarcely represented in fifteenth-century literature and in that of an earlier period. The definition of class by descent is notably absent from English forms of Estate literature where it might be expected to be found, though there a principal responsibility of the class which is distinguished from the comynalte is knyghthode. It is to the manual of chivalry that we must look

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16 Benson, p. 138: That in the late Middle Ages, noble gentlemen played at jousts, knight-errancy, and courtly love "is of great importance to our understanding both of Malory's realism and of his attitude toward chivalry."

17 For a general study of the stereotype of the three estates see Ruth Mohl, The Three Estates in Medieval and Renaissance Literature (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1962),
to find a pattern similar to Malory's. We will consider the
application of the hereditary principal to chivalry in these
manuals after examining fifteenth-century practice and theory
concerning the distinction of the estates.

and in particular the section on the origin of lordship (p.
287 ff.).

Gower for one made extensive use of the stereotype to
indicate the moral duties pertinent to each degree. It is
perhaps Gower's remonstrative approach which prevents him from
dwelling on the phylogenetic superiority of one class over another.
The division between the nobility and the commons may well be
the state of things but, as Gower writes,

\textit{Qant Eve estoit la prioressesse}
Du no lignage en terre yci,
N'y fuist alors q'ot de noblesce
Un plus que l'autre ou de richesce;
Ne sai comment gentil nasqui.
(When Eve was the first
Of our line on this Earth,
There was no one then who possessed nobility
More than another, or wealth;
I do not know how gentility began.)

\textit{Mirour de l'omme,} 11. 17336-40. This and following quotations
are taken from \textit{The Complete Works of John Gower,} ed. G. C.
Gower calls knighthood \textit{ordo vetus} but says nothing about its
origins. Indeed in that work he writes of the "\textit{communis origo,/
Ortus et occasus vnus, et vna caro}" (VC, VI. xiv. 1020) from
which all mankind, high and low, springs. He goes on to express
the conventional medieval idea that true nobility is a matter
of virtue rather than of estate: "\textit{Nobilis est mentis quisquis
virtute refulget}" (VC, VI.xiv.1021). A number of texts
expressing this idea are to be found in George McGill Vogt,
"Gleanings for the History of a Sentiment: Generositas Virtus,

The traditional distinction between the secular estates
presupposes that each man belongs to the degree into which he
is born; the estates are theoretically defined by descent. Yet
Gower turns away from making an issue of noble descent or
attributing any particular virtue to it and looks back instead,
though with none of the anarchic intentions of John Ball, to
the time "when Adam delved and Eve span" when no man was a
gentleman. More precisely he goes back to time before the need
for delving and spanning to when "Du noble main no duy parent/
Estoiont fait molt noblement" (Mirour de l'omme. 11. 97-98:}
Lineage and the Noble Class

Sylvia Thrupp's study of the London merchant class of the fifteenth century demonstrates that the assumed demarcation line which, in a popular social idea of the Middle Ages, lies so absolutely between the class of lords and the commons was in fact not impassable. Relations between the nobility and

In a noble fashion our two parents were most nobly made. Sin corrupted the original nobility.

One early fifteenth-century sermon describes the divisions of society as "parte principall of Goddes lawe": the law seems to have been as appealing to the Medieval mind (and as far from being obeyed in nature) as the ptolomaic planetary system. The world would be better off, the sermon argues, if men "wold hold hem content with here own occupations": Middle English Sermons, ed. Woodburn O. Ross, EETS o.s., no. 209 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1960), pp. 223-24. Here, as in Gower, we do not find the separation of the classes associated with the idea of a nobility transmitted through descent. The preacher simply points out that the law of established degrees such as it is must be accepted, like the Nativity, as one of God's mysteries, of which, he says, "let vs not be to inquisitiff inoure own wittes" (p. 223).

The idea that noble blood transmits a certain noble character enters English thought—and the English tradition of the Estates—through specifically chivalric literature. It is an ancient convention of this literature and so appears in Malory's Morte Darthur. It may be found, quite emphatically stated in The Boke of Saint Albans, printed in 1486, (facsimile—Amsterdam: Da Capo Press, 1969). The book is a manual of hawking, knighthood, and heraldry and combines the conventions of chivalric literature with the stereotype of the Three Estates. Its absolute distinction between "Gentilmen" and "churlis," the former associated with "that gentilman Jhesus" (a i verso), the latter described as the descendants of Cain, ought not to be viewed as typical of contemporary thought. In matters of gentility, knighthood, and even heraldry, a pedigree did not, in the late fifteenth century, carry the force assigned to it in The Boke of Saint Albans.

We might take into consideration, finally, that Malory's passing formulas of social degree—as "firste the astatic hyghe and lowe, and after the comynalté"—have little to do with the chivalric concern of the Morte Darthur. It is this concern, the definition of what makes a virtuous knight, that the idea of noble descent illustrates, not the definition of a hierarchical social system. Malory never writes degradingly of the commons as a class.
the wealthy commons were "complex and . . . far from being governed in all respects by clear-cut attitudes of superiority on the one side and inferiority on the other." This attitudinal complexity was associated with an actual and surprisingly frequent crossing of the social equator. Though various sumptuary laws attempted to establish a code of fashion and feeding for the classes, there was no legal impediment to a passage up or down the system of denominated classes. Gentility was in part a matter of reputation; a merchant of means, born a commoner, could come to be known as a gentleman by living like one on a purchased country estate. The way of life, the interest and attitudes, the leisure which the bourgeoisie gentilhomme shared with his old-established gentle neighbors would incline him to associate upward rather than with the local yeomanry whose members were, theoretically, of his own class. Of fifty-two sons of London aldermen of the latter


19The people were required to dress "accordant a lour degrees." One such statute, of the reign of Edward IV, gives as reasons for regulation of dress God's displeasure in excessive array and the enrichment of foreign markets due to the importation of finery. It is interesting to note that men were measured according to their means as well as their estate. In a sumptuary law of 1363 merchants and burgesses with property valued over £500 were regulated like non-knightly gentlemen with land and rents of over £100; burgesses of over £100, like gentlemen of over £200. In the law of 1463 the mayor of London was allowed to dress as richly as a knight bachelor, and high city administrators to the same degree as gentlemen of over £40 income. Within the gentry itself allowances accorded with matter of hereditary class. Statutes of the Realm (rpt. London: Dawsons, 1963): 37 Edw. III c. 14-18, vol. I, pp. 380-82; 3 Edw. IV c. 5, vol. II, pp. 399-402.
part of the fifteenth century "only twenty-six entered and remained in trade; sixteen came to be known as gentlemen and esquires, although at least five of these continued to be connected with merchant companies; four were knighted, two of them in the king's service and one after becoming a successful lawyer."^{20} On the other hand the law of primogeniture, though it preserved the integrity of property, obliged some younger and disinherited sons to become apprenticed to the city merchants and craftsmen.^{21} Many of these disenfranchised sons subsequently rose back into property and gentle standing thanks to their self-made wealth.

Intermarriage between the gentry and the merchant class was no less infrequent than the passage of males from one class to the other. "A quarter of the wives of fourteenth-century aldermen whose parentage is known were the daughters of country landowners, the proportion in the fifteenth century rising to a third; and at least some of these . . . were from families ranking by birth."^{22} The widowed wives and the daughters of London's merchants were also often able to secure matches with gentlemen, many of whom welcomed the dowries which these marriages brought. If the social mobility of members of less prominent merchant families was not so active as that of the aldermancy, it was still not unheard-of. On the whole the idea of the separation of the estates was more inassailable

^{20}Thrupp, p. 205.


^{22}Thrupp, p. 265.
than the fact. Many forms of military, civil, and professional service might matriculate an able or clever man into the class of gentlemen, and even into the higher aristocracy. Between 1350 and 1500, eighty percent of the new earldoms "were conferred as direct marks of royal favour rather than inherited through females."²³ Marc Bloch considers the fluidity of the English class system as an exceptional one, but Edouard Perroy's study of the situation of the gentry of Forez between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries demonstrates that the nobility of that county was "as much of an open class as was the English gentry."²⁴

The principle underlying reasons for the constant movement, in England and on the continent, from the commons to the nobility, were the grim facts of infertility and infant mortality: many gentle families were unable to produce a line of surviving heirs. Of 215 lignages appearing in the thirteenth century records of Forez:


30.7% had disappeared before 1300,
53.6% of the remainder had disappeared between 1300 and 1400,
55.0% of the remainder had disappeared by 1500.  
"From these figures it might be said that, roughly speaking, the nobility loses half its members within any given century. The average duration of a noble line is hardly more than three or four generations; let us say, to be on the safe side . . . between three and six generations, stretching from one to two centuries."  

Perroy refers to Sanders's observation that of the 210 English baronies in existence between the Conquest and 1327, only 36, or 17%, remained more than two centuries in the hands of the same male line.  

The half-life of baronial families was fairly equivalent in England to what it was in Forez, the region studied by Perroy. K. B. McFarlane points out, in one of his lectures, the rarity of a durable medieval lineage:

Only three comital families in 1400 had enjoyed their dignity for more than a century: Vere, Beauchamp, and Fitzalan. The rest of the earldoms in 1400, namely fourteen, were creations of the previous seventy-five years; well over half, ten out of the total of seventeen, of the last fifty years. As a group the earls in 1400 were mostly newcomers to their rank. And in this--you will have to take my word for it--1400 was no way exceptional. The higher ranks of the nobility rarely deserved the epithet 'old.' The turnover

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25 Perroy, p. 31.
26 Perroy, p. 31.
was always rapid, the eminence short-lived, the survivors invariably few.\textsuperscript{28}

Recognizing the difficulty of discovering the survival rates of the gentry on the whole, which included some 3000 families in 1300, many of them, of course, obscure, McFarlane turns to those families whose head received a personal writ of summons to Parliament. He finds that the rate of lineal default, principally due to a failure to produce male heirs, was as high in the lower degrees of the gentle class as it was in the baronage. Although McFarlane's figures do not take into account the survival of a "lineage" through collateral lines, the fact that a large percentage of new earldoms was granted for service to the king rather than gotten through heiresses suggests a remarkable attrition of family lines during the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{29}

The result of this necessary replenishment of the constantly declining noble class was, in France, a sharp contrast between theory and actuality. If medieval society's self-portrait is to be believed—and some scholars have believed it—the noble estate was a fixed class with its bloodlines extending back to the original milites, the prototypes of the chevaliers. But Perroy shows us that this picture was a handy illusion, and a grand illusion:

\textsuperscript{28}McFarlane, p. 143. Tables in appendix (pp. 173-176), posthumously set up from McFarlane's notes, show the disappearance and creation of noble families between 1300 and 1500. McFarlane bases continuancy on unbroken male descent.

\textsuperscript{29}Sylvia Thrupp has shown that the same was true for the merchant families of London.
By the second decade of the fourteenth century, the picture was complete of a social group whose real structure was in utter contradiction with its legal status. The accepted view, even among the gentry, was that nobility was exclusively a matter of birth. One did not become a gentleman; one was born a gentleman, ex nobilibus ortus. The pride of a gentleman was his ancestry, which imposed upon him a certain way of life, more nobilium. Yet, in fact, the noble class was freely open to newcomers, through the acquisition of rural lordships, the holding of fiefs, matrimonial alliances with the gentry, the trade of war. None of these conditions made a gentleman ipso facto. They were influential in bringing about the consent of the local gentry. The rate at which, if the nobility had remained a closed class, it would have died out and dwindled away, explains the apparent contradiction between legal theory and social realities.

This contradiction became attached, in England of the fifteenth century, not so much to social hierarchy as to the order of knighthood.

Knighthood and Nobility

The idea of a restrictive "nature de lignage et fine gentillece" which inspired those who possessed it to chivalric excellence was well established in romance literature of the thirteenth century, and from there Malory was later to take and use it. If we look closely—as we will eventually do—at the Morte Darthur we discover that lineage defines a knight, not a nobleman. Still the conflation of knight and aristocrat is sufficiently set in the mind of most readers of Malory to make it worthwhile to investigate the actual status of the knight in fifteenth-century England. I hope thereby to advance the picture of chivalry as a quality which for Malory and many

30Perroy, p. 36.
of his contemporaries was essentially to be found, as Balin points out, "nat in araymente." Sir Urre can be healed only by "the beste knyght of the worlde" and those who search his wounds are a hundred and ten of "the kynges, dukes and erlis and all noble knyghtes of the Rounde Table" (1146.30-31). The activities of these men have nothing to do with their hierarchical relationships to one another in a system of titled ranks; the dominant fact is that they are all members of the Order of Knighthood. But this hundred and ten would equal about a third of all the landed knights in fifteenth-century England; in fact there are more knights in the fictional England of the Morte Darthur than there were in vivo when Malory wrote. Knighthood, for all the celebration it met with in romance, was a notoriously unpopular institution in late medieval England. According to Sylvia Thrupp there were some 1200 landed knights in the years 1322-24, but only 300 a century later, and 375 in Malory's time.\(^{31}\) The lack of knights was such that professional gentlemen performed much of the administrative business which had formerly been theirs. A call to parliamentary elections in 1444/5 allowed that not only

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\(^{31}\) Thrupp, p. 276. "There was no general desire for the title" (p. 275). The small proportion of knights to men of means in the shires of England can be seen in the lists of annual incomes given by H. L. Gray, "Incomes from Land in England in 1436," English Historical Review, 49 (1934), pp. 607-39. The list for London shows that many merchants surpassed the knights in wealth. Though Gray's methodology is shown to be not entirely accurate by C. D. Ross and T. B. Pugh, "Materials for the Study of Baronial Incomes in Fifteenth-Century England," Economic History Review, 2nd. ser. 6 (1954), pp. 185-94, the fact remains that there existed no simple social proportion between wealth, degree, and knighthood.
"notable knights" might be candidates from the shires but also "such notable Esquires, Gentlemen of the same Counties, as shall able to be Knights; and no man to be such Knight which standeth in the Degree of a Yeoman and under."\(^{32}\)

Benson puts forth this statute to advance his argument that knighthood was restricted to gentlemen of birth. This interpretation is an overreading of the statute, which only excludes established commoners from shire elections. It contains no legal or customary indication that these notable candidates were gentlemen of birth, much less a proof that only they could accede to knighthood. The legal qualification for knighthood was in point of fact a financial rather than hereditary one. A policy of distraint required every landowner with over £40 annual income from rents to accept knighthood. Those who refused this imposed honor—and the majority of those eligible did—paid a fine, one which appears to have been generally less burdensome than the cost of the ceremony of initiation and the price of outfitting for knighthood.\(^{33}\) The enforcement of these fines became an established source of royal revenue.\(^{34}\) The expense of entering into knighthood was not the only reason the majority of qualified men were not

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\(^{32}\) Henry VI c. 14, Stat. Realm, II, 342. The quotation seems to have suffered a career of errors. Gray first used it, giving the date as 1440; Ferguson reproduced the quotation and the erroneous date from Gray; Benson received the statute from Ferguson and unaccountably gave 1422 as the year of its publication.


\(^{34}\) Thrupp, pp. 275-76; Ferguson, p. 113.
attracted to it. By Malory's day knighthood as an institution was no longer the civil and military force that it had been in an earlier age when nobility and knighthood were more nearly equivalent categories. Political administration was increasingly handled by professional gentlemen—some of whom grew to be accepted as gentlemen because of their service. Only half the members of a Parliament of the fifteenth century were knights although the majority who attended were liable to distraint; a substantial fraction of the Commons were men of law.35 "The knights of the shire," Ferguson wrote, "had, indeed, by Chaucer's day achieved a position in which the term 'shire' had outrun in significance the term 'knight.'"36 The administrative organism was growing, and growing more complex, while the number of dubbed knights diminished to a point where their conventional duties could be, and were more easily, assumed by lower degrees of gentlemen, the *generosi*. In similar fashion the knights' military responsibilities were being taken over by professional captains.37 And indeed, as *miles*, the knight with experience at arms often deviated from his traditional estate as defender of the commonwealth and

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36 Ferguson, p. 113.

37 Ferguson, pp. 114–15. Barber, p. 22: "The distinction between the knight and the paid soldier after the late thirteenth century was merely one of name."
merchandized his services, a practice facilitated by the devices of "bastard feudalism," whose allegiances were founded on a contractual and mercenary relationship between lord and knight instead of on a feudal, chivalric bond.

By the late fifteenth century the dubbed knight had become a practical anachronism. He could no longer be identified with the nobleman, and as a group knights constituted a minority of the gentle class. The gradual stratification of what had once been considered the uniform estate of the nobles left the knight in a middle position, between the lord above him and the large and increasingly powerful category of squires and gentlemen below him. This evolution of degrees within the upper class was accompanied by a growing division between the "lords" and the men of lesser degree, knights, squires, and gentlemen. Simultaneously, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the terms defining members of the armigerous class took on specialized meaning. "Noble" and "lord" were eventually restricted to men of titled rank, the baronial nobility. "Gentleman" on the other hand had by Malory's

38 Barber, pp. 23-24. Bloch, p. 330: "In England knighthood, transformed into a fiscal institution, could not serve as the focal point for the formation of a class founded on the hereditary principle." Malory's association of lineage and knighthood cannot be considered a reflection of contemporary general practice.


40 McFarlane, Nobility, p. 122; Thrupp, p. 236.

time come to define a member of the lowest level of the class. Sylvia Thrupp speaks of the connotations of the term as not being "restricted to the idea of birth," and this is true insofar as "gentlemen" were seen to constitute a social stratum to which the wealthy, learned, or capable commoners had access. Yet the idea of the gentleman never entirely lost its association with the old idea of a stable, governing gens immutable from generation to generation and established by divine Providence to manage and defend the commons. "As the foundation upon which all the other orders are built, gentility is differentiated from nobility as an inner and inherited quality which distinguishes all who have it from plebians, and of which nobility with its titles is the outward sign. . . . Nobility and gentility might therefore in reality not mean the same thing, since kings in their wisdom sometimes saw fit to confer high rank not only on the base-born but on wicked and worthless men. . . . Blurred as the class lines became during the sixteenth century, and new as many of England's prominent families were, the idea that gentility meant fundamentally gentle birth is never lost."

It is of course impossible to fix dates upon these transformations, but it is clear that Malory wrote at a time when the bisection of English society into two classes—the ruling nobles and the laboring commons—was less than ever

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42 McFarlane, p. 122; Thrupp, pp. 235-36.
43 Thrupp, p. 236.
44 Kelso, p. 371.
a mirror of social fact. The knights could no longer be identified with the nobility, and the majority of the gentry formed, with the prominent merchants, what Sylvia Thrupp called "significant middle strata in society," a class defined by common interests. The demarcation between the nobles (in the earlier sense) and the commons survived as a theoretical concept distinguishing the gentleman from the non-gentleman and based on an idea of gentle birth. Yet it may be supposed that theory and practice were not entire irreconcilable. Theory could not determine the reality, and where reality conflicted with ideal it was adapted upward; "nobility native" ensued from "nobility dative": the son of a gentleman made was a gentleman born. Furthermore a fictional bloodline, or at least the reputation of gentle ancestry, might soon follow social promotion. Genealogical evidence was principally a matter of hearsay and oral documentation, and there is evidence of newly risen commoners acquiring, like Major-General Stanley, ancestors by purchase.

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45 Thrupp, p. 293.

46 Kelso, p. 373 ff.

47 See Barber, p. 22, Rosenthal, p. 178 ff., and for the examples of the de Norwiches, McFarlane, p. 165. Armorial bearings, though thought of as insignia nobilitatis--Malory speaks of "jantyllmen that beryth olde armys"--were in practice granted by the heralds to honorable commoners. In W. H. Schofield's section on Malory we read that the difference between the nobles and ignobiles "was made more manifest than before by the privilege, strictly denied to all but the former, to use coat-armor": Chivalry in English Literature (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1912), p. 116. Thrupp, p. 249, corrects this impression: "English writers have often stated that the medieval merchant was not allowed to bear arms,
The examination of the idea of noble lineage in the literature of the manuals of chivalry gives additional evidence that this idea, rather than being used to define an actual social class, existed as a conventional figure of enduring excellence.

Manuals of Chivalry

The principal auctorite behind most medieval chivalric handbooks was the fourth-century military treatise of Flavius Vegetius Renatus, De re militari. Vegetius was medievalized as resourcefully as Ovid or Virgil, and the Roman miles was seen as the predecessor of the knight even though the qualifications for soldiering which Vegetius proposed would hardly apply to the medieval knight. In his chapters on the selection of the soldier Vegetius places a great importance on experience—a butcher, accustomed to the sight of blood, is to be preferred to a confectioner; a peasant to a man of the city; and in promotions the more experienced soldier should take precedence. Vegetius's philosophy of recruitment, training, and advancement is summed up in a maxim: "Paucos uiros fortes natura procreat, bona institutione plures reddit industria" (Veg. Mil. 3.26:

but there is no medieval authority for this view. In London it was customary for aldermen to bear arms in the same manner as any military commander of high rank." For additional information on the recipients of arms see A. R. Wagner, Heralds and Heraldry in the Middle Ages (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1960), p. 65 ff.

Nature bears few strong men, by means of proper discipline diligence produces more of them). Most good soldiers, in other words, are made, not born. Vegetius recognizes however that the born coward, the ignavus, will not make a good soldier whatever his training. Nature provides a few inherently capable and inherently craven men, yet the majority of recruits became successful soldiers as a result of industria. Vegetius makes a passing reference to the advantage of genus, family, in the recruit: "Iuuentus . . . et genere, si copia suppetat, et moribus debet excellers. Honestas enim idoneum militem reddit, uerecundia, dum prohibet fugere, facit esse uictorem" (Veg. Mil. 1.7: The youth should excel in family, if possible, and in character. For the sense of honor of such a man will produce a good soldier; a sense of shame, as it prevents fleeing, causes him to be a victor).

In many medieval adaptations of Vegetius in which the miles is regarded as a precursor of the knight, the ignavus, incapable by nature of being a worthy soldier, comes to be equated with the man of low birth. Genus, a contingent qualification in Vegetius, is translated into noble lineage which, in turn, is designated as the only source of a complex of chivalric virtues replacing Vegetius' more restricted idea of uerecundia. To these transformations is added a rationale for the supremacy of the knight of lineage: his "honour" is "auncyently acustomed." This argument is at times given Aristotelian authority. The transition from Roman militia

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49 In Politics, Book IV, ch. 8, Aristotle, describing the constitutional government, observes that "there are three
to medieval chivalry represents in the main a change of concern from properties acquired through nurture to those intrinsic to nature. Though the consensus of medieval chivalric and military literature is anything but uniform in the matter of noble descent, the idea that "parage and chivalry accord together" is a central element in the fifteenth-century English manual of chivalry. Given the fact that the expression of this idea in the English manuals had no true English sources, that its expression was not universally established in the manuals, and that it failed to represent the contemporary actualities of knighthood, there is some justification for arguing that it ought not to be regarded as a prescriptive doctrine, part of the by-laws of institutional knighthood. The appeal to "parage" in the context of "chivalry" had, in Malory's day and in Morte Darthur, a symbolic coloration. The value of the chivalric idea, attractive to many classes of men in the fifteenth century, derived a certain quality of elevation and antiquity from its conventional association with noble birth.

The translation of ignavus to ignobilis is to be found as early as John of Salisbury, but John, a clerical writer, is speaking of a spiritual rather than social ignobility. He believes, with Vegetius, that training rather than degree of birth makes a good miles, but his concern with the moral roots

grounds on which men claim an equal share in the government, freedom, wealth, and virtue (for the fourth or good birth is the result of the two last, being only ancient wealth and virtue) . . ." (Trans. Benjamin Jowett, New York: Random House, 1942, p. 186.) In the fifteenth century Bishop Russell referred to this passage in one of his sermons before the House of Lords to justify the cause of a wealthy nobility.
of a healthy commonwealth—and the spiritual strength of the 
tirones—causes him to focus, more than Vegetius, on the inner 
man. He substitutes, for example, vis for the genus of the 
Roman writer:

Ait ergo /Vegetius T: In hoc totius reipublicae salus 
vertitur, ut tirones non tantum corporibus, sed etiam 
aminis praestantissimi delegantur. . . . Juventus enim, 
cui defensio provinciarum imminet, et moribus excellere 
debet, et viribus. Honestas enim idoneum militem 
reddit, et verecundia, dum prohibit fugere, saepe facit 
esse victorem. Quid enim prodest si exerceatur igno-
bilis, si pluribus stipendiiis moretur in castris?
(Thus Vegetius said: The safety of the commonwealth 
depends wholly on this, that the recruits excelling 
not so much in body as in soul are enlisted. . . . 
The youth to which the defense of the provinces falls, 
must excel in his morals and in his fortitude. For 
the honor of such a man will produce a good soldier; 
a sense of shame, as it prevents fleeing, will often 
make him a victor. What advantage is there in training 
a craven man if in during many campaigns he lingers 
in the camps?)

The translation of Vegetius done by Jean de Meun, who 
gives a derogatory history of the origin of nobility in the 
Roman de la Rose, does not go so far. The young warriors 
entrusted with the defense of the land

doivent surmonter les autres et en lignaige et en 
bonté de cuer, ce est a dire en vertus, se on en 
peut assez trouver de ceaus, car bons cuers et 
honestes fait le bon chevalier honteus de fuir et 
li donne hardement de combatre, dont il vient a 
victorie; et qui vuoir apnredre et faire hanter 
l'usage des armes as mauvais et as pereceus . . . 
il perderoit sa paine (must exceed the others both 
in lineage and in excellence of the heart, that's 
to say in virtue, if enough of these men can be

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51 Ll. 9493 ff. Humanity originally lived in peace, 
but sin gradually established itself and caused discontent and 
hostility. To protect their property they chose a big, strong 
peasant, ung grant vilain, who then acquired retainers and a 
large income to support them. So sovereignty was born.
found, for a great and honest heart makes the
good knight afraid to flee and gives him might
in battle, which brings him to victory; and he
who would teach and urge to the exercise of arms
the evil and lazy man would only suffer for his
pains.)

Although Jean de Meun concedes, however unspecifically,
preference for higher lineage, he avoids making the distinction
between the noble and the common man and stresses natural
virtue. Jean Priorat, of the late thirteenth-century, whose
Abrejance de l'ordre de chevalerie is a servile and sometimes
awkward versification of the prose of Jean de Meun, gives
virtually the same text. But, taking his cue from a comment
in Jean de Meun's prologue on the knowledge of princes, Jean
Priorat inserts a lesson on the duties of those who, by
Providence, are born into high estate. These men "font a prisier/
Plus . . . . Que janz qui sont fuer de saison/ Cui Deux n'a tant
doney hautaces. . . . Li uns, quant nait, richaces trove;/
Uns autres, quant nait, povretey" (merit to be valued more
than men who are not in the running, those to whom God did
not give such advantages. Some at birth find wealth; others
at birth find poverty). "Las naissanz/ Du haut leu et du haut
lignaige" are to be valued more than "sex qui en subjection/
Sont et saront et par nature" since "il se mantienent con saige/
Et mantienent lor nation" (Those born of high degree and high
lineage . . . . those who are under rule and ever will be by
nature . . . . they keep themselves wise and sustain their

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nation). It is therefore important that the rulers learn while young "las granz choses" which are more profitable to them "qu'as genz petites/ Ne as mainnez n'as genz subgites" (than to the low people, the younger sons, and those who are ruled). The author seems uncertain of his focus: is the separation of the estates due to circumstance, saison, or the nature of their members? His recourse to Providence appears, in this case, to be unconvincing. The effort to balance an idea of lineage with circumstances of social actuality is typical of many chivalric manuals, continental as well as British.

**Knyghthode and Bataile**, a mediocre mid fifteenth-century poem described by its perpetrator as "Vegetius translate Into Balade," indicates, like the Latin original, that certain trades—"the ferrour and the smyth, the carpenter, the huntere . . . the bocher & his man"—make a good "werreour." These qualifications contradict the English author's doctrine that knighthood and battle are the occupation only of the noble class. The two stanzas where this position is put forward are accompanied respectively by these marginal notes: "Nobiles sint milites," and "Ignobiles non sint milites." This is the medieval author's reading of Vegetius's comments on genus and the ignavus:

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If chiualers, a land that shal defende,
   Be noble born, and have lond & fee,
With thewys goode, as can noman amende,
   Thei wil remembir ay their honeste,
And shame wil refreyne hem not to fle;
Laude & honour, hem sporynge on victory,
To make fame eternal in memory.

What helpeth it, if ignobilitie
Have exercise in werre and wagys large;
A traitour or a coward if he be,
Thenne his abode is a discepyt & charge;
If cowardise hym bere away by barge
Or ship or hors, alway he wil entende
To marre tho that wolde make or mende. 55

It may be that the author of Knighthode and Bataile intends
a distinction between the "werreour" or foot-soldier, and the
"chiualer," the knight, although he generally uses both these
terms indiscriminately with "knyght" to translate miles. 56
This distinction—with a singular comment on the endurance of
the nobles—is made by a Scottish adapter of De re militari:

In fut fichting land men ar better to battell than
noblis. In fichting on hors noblis ar erar to cheis
na feld men because the strenth of the hors helpis
mair the fault that the noblis tholis, that thai may
not sustein sa gret laubour as the feld men ar usit
with. And in sic batellis is ryt mekle worth knawlege
of battell myngit with scham of fleyng ther fra. 57

Both foot and horse soldiers, it is implied, must possess
verecundia.

Where Vegetius employs Virgil's description of two
sorts of bees (hic melior ... ille horridus alter) 58 as an

55Ll. 271-84.
56Knighthode and Bataile, p. lxii.
57"The Scottish Prose Version of Vegetius' De re
in Scottish Literature, 8 (1971), 174-83.
58Verg. Georg., 4. 92, 94.
illustration of different physical appearances in men, the
author of Knyghthode and Bataile turns it into a celebration
of the gentle class: "Too kyndis are, a gentil and a vile.
The gentil is smal, rutilaunt, glad-chered, That other horribil."\(^59\)
It is of course a commonplace of romance description as well
that the knight is well-made, strong, and "well-vysaged;" in
Malory, for instance, it is physical excellence which first
suggests that Tor and Gareth are of superior birth. In
Knyghthode and Bataile there is the additional observation that
the vile bee "wil litil do, but slepe & ete, And al deouure,
as gentil bees gete."\(^60\) Finally, the inlustres viri from which
Vegetius says that the officers of the legions are to be
selected are transformed into the "illustres Lordes, Peerys."\(^61\)

\(^{59}\) Knyghthode and Bataile, 11. 235-37.

\(^{60}\) Knyghthode and Bataile, 11. 241-42.

\(^{61}\) Knyghthode and Bataile, 11. 857. By contrast we
find, in a contemporary translation of Alain Chartier's
Quadrilogue Invectif the suggestion that the commanders in the
field ought to be men of experience and ability: "For the
linages be nat the hede of the warris, but such to whom God,
their wittis or their wourthines, and the auctorite of the
prince hath comytted of his grace and commaundement to be
obeyed." In another MS.: "The cheefes of werre comyth nat
by heritage." Fifteenth-Century English Translations of Alain
Chartier's Le Traité de l'Esperance and Le Quadrilogue Invectif,
ed. Margaret S. Blayney, EETS o.s. no. 270 (London: Oxford
Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 234-35. This is not to say that a low­
born soldier has as much right to captaincy as a gentleman
knight; two of the participants in the quadrilogue (with a
Cleric and France) are the People and the Knight, and the
object of the invective is to point out their separate and
proper duties. The author, like others, makes the connection
between honor and lineage: "Disciplyne of knyghthode to feere
shame" is all-important and comes of "the reuerence and the
savable doctryne of the wourshipfull fadirs and olde men of a
lienage" (p. 238). But stresses discipline and recognizes the
failings of the gentle class, whereas the English author of
Knyghthode and Bataile allows high-birth the benefit of inherent
The author of *Knyghthode and Bataile* makes little effort to be consistent either with the pragmatic rules of Vegetius or with his own stereotyped conception of the role of the chivalric nobility. That such apparently differing views are made to lie together indicates the difficulty which the Middle Ages themselves had in identifying the nature of true nobility, the duties of the knight, and the significance of heredity; that is, in distinguishing between the accumulated mysteries of chivalry and the technical realities of warfare, between "knyghthode" and "bataile," "chyvalerie" and "fayttes of armes." Battle itself, or rather a man's performance in the field, as proof of nobility of character would, in legal theory and practice, justify his ennoblement, and "a soldier's descendants could base a claim to nobility on the ground of his service in war." As we say, the majority of new English earldoms of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were granted for civil and military service. Lineage, as the absolute qualification put forth in several manuals of chivalry, was an aspect of idealized fiction of chivalry in the later Middle Ages, a fiction which, in England, became stronger as the knight's civil and military pertinence declined. The equation of nobility, knighthood, and lineage belonged to the romance of chivalry such as it was propagated in the later chivalric honor. The excessive emphasis placed on noble birth is a characteristic theme of fifteenth-century English versions of books of chivalry, just as it is of the *Morte Darthur*.

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treatises and in the *Morte Darthur*. A man who profited from the articles of this romance was not necessarily in fact a nobleman of birth any more than that the readers of the Arts of Love, or love's allegories and romances, had ever universally practiced courtly love.

Between 1483 and 1485, on the eve of the appearance of the *Morte Darthur*, Caxton printed a translation of a French version of the *Orde de Cavalleria* of Ramon Lull, the Majorcan courtier, writer, apostle, and martyr. Lull composed his treatise around 1280 and it is the best known of the Iberian manuals of chivalry.83 Caxton's epilogue, with its lament concerning the debasement of chivalry in "these late dayes," has attracted the attention of Malory critics who read the *Morte Darthur* as an effort to revive a decadent ideology.84

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Lull's work is one of several Catalan treatises on chivalry, four of which are collected under the title *Tractats de Cavalleria*, ed. Pere Bohigas (Barcelona: Barcino, 1947). One of these, a treatise by King Peter of Aragon, is virtually a copy of the section on knighthood in the *Siete Partidas* of Alfonso the Learned. Like Alfonso, Peter comments that "gentilesa" can be seen in three ways: "per linyatge," "per saber," and "per bonea," conceding that wisdom and goodness can earn a man the appellation "noble" or "gentil homen" but "majorment o són aquells qui o han per linyatge antigament, e fan bona vida per tal com los ve de luny, axi com per heretat" (*Tractats*, p. 115: more are they noble who have it by ancient lineage, and live a good life because it comes to them from afar, as by inheritance). The older the lineage, the greater the "honor en gentilesa." There follows a "law" describing the dishonor and diminution to "gentilesa" and "paratge" when low blood is introduced, especially in the male line.

84 In "Malory and the Chivalric Ethos," Michael Stroud emphasizes differences between Malory's spirit and that of his editor. Caxton's complaint in the *Ordre de Chivalry* "seems
But Caxton's complaint is framed in the conventional *ubi sunt* form: "O ye knyghtes of England where is the custome and vsage of noble chyualry that was vsed in tho dayes," that is, in the dayes of Belinus and Brennius, of Arthur, of Richard the Lion-Hearted, Edward the First, the Third, and his noble sons, and in the days of "that vyctoryous and noble kynge Harry the fyfthe." His principle remedy is reading: Froissart, the histories of the Romans and of Arthur's knights, and "this lytyl book"; there is a touch of mercantile interest here on the printer's part.\(^{65}\) This list of kings illustrates the mixture of legend and history, of symbolism, allegory, and practical policy, of spiritual and pragmatic chivalry to be found in these manuals. But what dominates in the *Ordre of Chyualry* is the spirit of chivalry, what Ferguson refers to as "the ideas and ideals connected with knighthood [which] motivated not so much by love of knightly deeds as by his middle-class hostility towards a life of leisure. . . . While both author and editor had didactic purposes, their ideals are quite different. Caxton was part of the rising middle class, and chivalry for him was a metaphor for a disciplined system under which trade might flourish. . . . Malory sought to praise the feudal system under which he lived, and to re-establish an order he saw disintegrating" (pp. 348-51). Stroud's distinctions are too bold; there is little reason to presuppose such a conflict of classes, old and new. As Sylvia Thrupp showed, the usual tendency in the fifteenth century was "to associate the merchants and gentry together as significant middle strata in society, with certain similar functions" (*Merchant Class*, p. 293). This is not to say that there existed no conflict between Winner and Waster. On the other hand we cannot characterize Caxton as having no interest in the romance and mystery of chivalry, or Malory as ideologically frozen back in the twelfth century.

\(^{65}\) P. 121 ff. It is hard to know how seriously to take Caxton's declaration that his book is intended only for the squire who is about to be made knight. That, in 1485, would have been a small audience indeed.
could maintain a life of their own largely independent of the facts of actual life." Caxton's additions and alterations of Lull's text mainly concern the ceremony and romance of chivalry, and it is in this light that we must read his absolute connection between chivalry and "parage."66

The Ordre of Chivalry opens with a traditional account of the origin of knighthood based on the supposed etymology of the terms miles and chivaler.67 At a time when humanity had fallen into vice, the people separated themselves into groups

66 Diane Bornstein, Mirrors of Courtesy (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1975), p. 97 ff., describes Caxton's additions to Lull as being principally concerned with the ceremonial aspects of chivalry.

67 There is no great effort in the English literature of the estates or in the manuals of chivalry to produce an argumentative history of the origin of lordship, to establish a credible and authoritative foundation of the stratification of the noble and common classes. By way of contrast it is interesting to note how Alfonso the Learned and Peter of Aragon go about applying these etymological explanations to Vegetius in order to account for the origin of knighthood. In the old days warriors were chosen, the best man from every thousand, from among men of rough occupations but it turned out that such men often lacked vergonya, shame, and easily deserted a difficult field. The wise men of the time—notably Vegetius "qui parla del orde de cavalleria"—declared that only men who possessed vergonya naturally could ever win battles. Thereafter only men of high lineage were chosen to be soldiers: "E per aquesta rahó guardaren, sobre totes coses, que fossen homens de bon linyatge, per tal ques guardassen de fer coses per què poguesen caure en vergonya, e per açò foren elets de bons lochs" (Tractats, p. 115: And for this reason they took care above all that they were men of good lineage, because such men kept themselves from doing things by which they might fall into shame, and therefore they were chosen "de bons lieux"). And for this reason the knight must be at least of the fourth degree of gentle lineage on both sides.

Elsewhere it is said that knights should be honored first of all "per la noblea de lur linyatge" (Tractats, p. 147).
of a thousand (mille) and chose the noblest man of each group
(that is, the miles). They then found the noblest beast,
the horse, and gave it to him: chyual, chyualler. This semi-
mythical account of the origin of knighthood is not made to
explain the genesis of the ruling class nor to justify its
ascendancy or continuation as a superior political class. If
anything, the knight must be a "louer of the comyn wele/ For
by the comynalte of the people was the chyualrye founden and
established." 69

The implications of an equivalence between nobility
and knighthood founded on a blood descent from the elect
aristocracy of ancient times refer principally to the idea of
chivalry. Detached as it was from the social realities of
the fifteenth century, the manual of chivalry seeks to explain
and encourage an ideal, and to do so in terms of a secure,
conventional, and long-established set of social concepts.
The motif of noble descent was a central feature of the
chivalric idea:

Parage and chyualrye accorden to gyder/ For parage
is none thyng/ but honour auncyently acustomed/
And chyualrye is an ordre that hath endured syth

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68 Varro (De Lingua Latina, 5) explains the etymology
of miles in this fashion: under the old kings a legion
consisted of three thousand soldiers, one thousand from each
of three gentle tribes. A miles was therefore one of the
tria millia.

69 p. 113. Earlier Lull makes a basically moral con­
nection between the medieval knight and the origins of the
order: "Who that wylle entre in to the ordre of chyualrye/
he must thynke on the noble begynnynge of chyualrye/ And hym
behoueth that the noblesse of his courage in good custommes
accorde to the begynnynge of chyualry" (p. 16).
the tyme in which hit was begonne vnto this present tyme/ And by cause that parage and chyualry accorde them yf thou make a knyght that is not of parage/ thou makest chyualrye to be contrary to parage/ And by this same reson/ he whome thou makest knyght is contrary to parage & to chyualry.70

This would seem to suggest that only the descendants of the original members of chivalry are qualified to be knighted and clearly asserts that men of high degree alone are worthy to be knighted. But both Lull and Caxton, though in different ways, modify this doctrine. Lull, and his French translator, after going on to say that chivalry possesses such force, "tant de vertu," that it is impossible to remove from it "ceulx qui par parage lui sont conuenable" or to make a true knight "domme de vil lignage," concede that it is possible to accept into chivalry "aucun homme de nouuel lignage honnourable et gentil."71

70 Pp. 85-89.

71 Ordre of Chyualry, p. 59, notes 1, 2. Aucun=some, a certain. We find the concession denied by Gilbert of the Haye, a Scottish translator of Lull's treatise, in his Duke of Knychthede: "And sen noblesse of curage suld be in all knyght, it may stand that a man of a new sprungyn lygnye, that be honourable and worthy in all gentrise, mycht be con- venance and worthy to the ordre, sa that the vertues condicionis and proprieitis of nobless of curage acord ther till. Bot this opynioun is untrew and unworthy." Gilbert of the Haye's Prose Manuscript: A. D. 1456, ed. J. H. Stevenson, "The Scottish Text Society," no. 62 (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1914), pp. 37-38. Gilbert is, like the author of The Boke of Saint Albans, a hard-liner on the issue of social candidacy to knighthood. It must be noted, however, that Gilbert does allow the possibility that a new-sprung gentleman may after all be "worthy in all gentrise." He appears to indicate that the virtue associated with a recent family is a matter of "proprieitis corporales, and personalis," while that associated with "hye parage and noblesse" is "spiritualis." Of course not all those who possess "nobleis of parage" are to be accepted
Caxton's omission of this concession has generally been taken to suggest that his aristocratic views were absolute. He writes instead: "Thus in the same wyse thordre of Chyualry is more couenable and moche more syttenge to a gentyl herte replenysshed wyth al vertues than in a man vyle and of euyl lyf." A. T. P. Byles remarks that "the train of argument in this passage almost compels us to interpret 'gentyl' and 'vyle' as 'well-born' and 'lowly born' respectively." But this is to ignore a shift in the train of thought on Caxton's part away from the subject of parage to that of "courage" and "the noblesse of the soule" as opposed to the nature of "the body bestyal." Working in and out of Lull's text, Caxton moves away, even before Lull does, from reflections on the relationship of birth and knighthood to the analogy of body and soul with vice and virtue. The train of argument beginning with a statement that "parage and

into knighthood, they must be "vertuouse, honest, and of worthy curage" as well.

Gilbert's arguments are interesting because the distinction they posit between on the one hand nobility as a group of fallible, often unworthy, and sometimes adventitious men, and on the other hand the intangible inherent property of noble blood. Chivalry and parage essentially belong in the "noblesse of the spirirualitee of the saule resounable, that accordis with angelis." The worthy knight himself produces the ideal union of noble degree, chivalry, and noble birth: "For hye parage and ancien honour ar the first poyntis of the rute of knyghtede, that is cumnyn fra alde ancestry; and syne worthy personis with worschipfull condisious and proprieteis, personale of the knycht him self, makis mariage betuix worschipfull vertues in hye parage and knychthede" (p. 37). In Gilbert, the nobleman best lives up to "alde ancestry" in his chivalric capacity.

72P. 59.
72Ordre of Chyualry, p. xxxix.
chyualrye accorden to gyder" ends with the dictum that
"noblesse of courage apperteyneth to Chyualry."74

Caxton, Byles writes, "stresses the aristocratic con­
ception even more than Lull, and "insists that it is the
preserve of a privileged class."75 Yet when we look
for the definition of true chivalry we learn that it is
determined in each knight by his "noblesse of courage." This--
in a passage that brings to mind Balin's speech--is not to be
found "in honourable clothynge/ For vnder many a fayr babye
hath ben ofte vyle courage ful of barate and of wyckednesse. . . .
Thenne yf thou wylt fynde noblesse of courage/ demaunde it of
faythe/ hope Charyte/ Iustyce/ strengthe/ attemperaunce loyaulte/
& of other noble vertues."76 This combination of the theo­
logical and cardinal virtues belongs to all Christians, whatever
their estate, to practice. The Ordre of Chyualry
cannot be
said to have been intended as a handbook of morals and manners
for the general public, set in the formalities of chivalry;
nor can every distinction made in the book between high and
low birth be considered allegorical. On the other hand it
appears to be an oversimplification of Caxton's mind on
chivalry and of the fifteenth-century conceptions of chivalry
to consider it the preserve of the baronial nobility and belted

74 P. 60. The French text has a different emphasis:
"Car meulz se commet a lame que au corps noblesse de courage
guy affiert a chevalerie" (n. l: For the nobility of the
spirit which pertains to chivalry belongs more to the soul
than the body).

75 P. xxxix.

76 Pp. 55-56.
knights. Caxton's editorial policy, if we can call it that, was fairly wide-ranging, and his later translation of the Faits d'Armes of Christine de Pisan shows him adaptable to a less "aristocratic" presentation of chivalrous deeds.77

In her study of chivalric treatises, Mirrors of Courtesy, Diane Bornstein identifies their readers as belonging to a class identified by similar interests rather than by heredity: "Rituals of chivalry and courtesy served to identify the upper class as a separate group... Such procedures were

77The Book of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyualrye, ed. A. T. P. Byles, EETS o. s. no. 189 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1932, 1937). This is a book of war, not of the mystique of chivalry, and Christine remains close to the spirit of Vegetius when she uses him. In the election of the constable and marshalls of the "chyualrye" there "ought to be more regarde to the perfection of the sayd thynges that is, experience in the battle field and the government of soldiers whiche apperteyne to hym/ Than to the gretenes of his lignage & hye blood of his persone" (p. 21). As for the selection of fighting men: "but as to me I hold pt in this none othre rewle ought to be kept/ but for to chese tho men that moost haue seen/ and that moost delyte & haue pleasure in thexersice of armes/ in which labour is theyre glorye & theyre Ioye sette/ and that none othre felicite nor whorship they requyre/ but onely that/ that may com to thym by meane of theyre cheualrous dedes" (p. 38). There follows Vegetius' passage on the rough trades, with the omission of his comments on genus and verecundia. In a passage on coats of arms, taken on the whole from Bonet's Arbre des Battailes, is found a passage on the rise of men. "It falleth hapli oftentimes/ that fortune enhaunceth men" from low degree to high estate "by the suffi- saunce of the persones/ other in fayt of armes/ or in scyence/ wysedom/ or counseyll/ or by som other vertue that they haue." It is right then for them to acquire a coat of arms—"one that is called petir hamer/ he shall take one/ two or thre hamers for his armes"—for himself "& the heyres that afterward shall descend & come of him" (pp. 286-87). The Fayttes of Armes was printed in 1489 on the order of Henry VII and undoubtedly reflects the unfrivolous cast of mind of this king who once fined one of his nobles £10,000 for entertaining him too lavishly.
needed because the upper class was rapidly expanding. An identification of interests, activities, and way of life began to occur among members of the aristocracy, gentry, and upper middle class. . . . Chivalric pastimes . . . developed into elaborate games that required leisure time and money rather than military skill and a noble pedigree." Participation in chivalric activities was not limited to men of noble lineage. Beneath the visible activities of the moneyed and powerful class, there existed a more extensive and less ostensible stratum of chivalric ideas in which military and professional men of the fifteenth century found direction in a transitional age.

Lineage, then as now, was an important and useful property, yet the chivalric spectacles of the age were certainly not designed to accommodate impoverished gentlemen however exalted their ancestral lines. In practical matters common financial and professional interests, and a shared way of life did more to bring like-minded men together than similar degrees of lineage. Lineage, however, was seen to possess a certain intrinsic value cherished as much perhaps by the new gentlemen as the old. There was a long tradition in England of legal homogeneity among free men: "our law hardly knows anything of a noble or of a gentle class; all free men are in the main equal before the law." But the idea of a hereditary estate and, concurrently, of an inherent character of gentility passed

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78 Bornstein, pp. 17-18.

on from generation to generation was never absent from ancient thinking. The fact that the idea survived despite the actual fluidity of the estates and the constant demise and creation of lineages suggests that it was more than a self-perpetuating oligarchic deception. As an instrument and symbol of social continuancy, the hereditary principle (like kinship systems in general) endured with tenacity, as do many symbols of social cohesion whether or not they are accurate in fact.

To every age its representative hero. And these, from Gilgamesh to Lew Archer, play out their dreams in worlds whose settings are to some degree symbolic and certainly appropriate to the nature of the hero. Because the *Morte Darthur* presents a stereotyped universe of Arthurian knights and Arthurian chivalric procedure, it does not follow that the intended audience of the book is the fifteenth-century nobleman and its purpose the reformation of his aristocratic conscience. The modern *roman policier* is far from being an attempt to bring the real-life private investigator or the "blue knight" to a respect for the principles of criminal investigation and justice. The corruption of Personville in Dashiell Hammett's *Red Harvest*, and the gradual infection of the Continental Op with that corruption, occurs in the very limited scope of a California town, and indeed in a scope that scarcely takes into consideration the ordinary citizen of the town. Yet the thematic dimension of the book and its moral issues if any are not addressed to the social classes of criminal, police, and private eye, but to any reader.
This analogy, whatever its credibility, between Malory and other authors of popular forms is meant simply to be illustrative of a possible approach to the Morte Darthur which recognizes its knightly world as being a significant stereotype. Malory has, of course, little in common with Hammett, but the very different heroes of either author do represent something beyond their type. Malory's heroic ideal is knightly, but for Malory knighthood is, as P. E. Tucker writes, "simply a worthy and honourable status; it is his conception of the highest excellence in man, and he gives terms like 'chivalry' and 'worship' a moral significance. Chivalrous adventures are the obligation of noble birth, and they should properly illustrate this ideal of knighthood."80 The Arthurian knight represents for Malory a certain magnificence, an excellence of spirit and body, an inner nobility which is represented by his noble blood. In the sense that chivalry and worship—defined by the aspirations and actions of the good knights—denote the worthiest human endeavors they are morally significant terms. But this does not mean that Malory was first of all a social moralist, a critic of fifteenth-century chivalric reality, a man who asked himself what he could do to help bring back the glories of an Arthurian past.81 Malory was simply touching on the complex, extensive, resonant, and often subliminal ideals of late medieval chivalry.

81Michael Stroud points out, in order to demonstrate his thesis that the Morte Darthur was an effort to arrest the disintegration of the old feudal order, some of the harsher
"Ancestry," Sylvia Thrupp notes, "was the most mysterious of the great gentlemen's attributes. It connected him with the dead and with the universally recurring idea of magical properties in the blood; and the mythical chain of descent." Yet families "actually knew very little about their ancestry... This vagueness and arbitrariness caution one against assuming that there was much rational reflection about heredity."\(^{82}\) Rational reflection would come in the next century as the romance of the knight is replaced by the more down-to-earth books on the gentleman.\(^{83}\) What Malory does in the Morte Darthur is to employ the idea of noble descent, which he found in his French sources and possibly in the manuals of chivalry, to express in the narrated temporal activities of Arthurian knights—and against the tale of a specific society's chivalric rise and fall—the timeless value of chivalry, its excellence, and its inherent place in the human spirit.

attitudes of Malory's knights. Stroud is perhaps too quick to see "Arthur and Lucius" as representing the spirit of the whole book, and his judgement that "the society portrayed here is violent and unforgiving, intolerant of weakness and disdainful of compassion" cannot really apply to the whole of the Morte Darthur. But Stroud's reading is in part correct, and similar attempts to define the "chivalric ethos" testify to the difficulty of reading the Morte Darthur as a consistent moral statement.\(^{82}\) Thrupp, p. 304.

\(^{83}\)Caxton's translation of Lull—"parage is none thynge but honour auncyently acustomed"—anticipates Elyot's explanation of the advantages of lineage:

It wold be more ouer declared that where vertue icyned with great possessions or dignitie hath longe continued in the bloode or house of a gentleman, as it were an inheritaunce, there nobilitie is mooste shewed, and these noble men be most to be honored; for as moche as continuaunce in all things that is good hath euer preemience in praise and comparison. 

CHAPTER II

NOBLE DESCENT AND CHIVALRY IN THE MORTE DARThUR

The connection between noble descent and knighthood generally appears in prescriptive form in the chivalric manuals: knighthood should be conferred only upon men of noble birth. This prescription had little basis in the late medieval actualities of English knighthood and the noble class. It was primarily a survival of a continental tradition—which was probably never so absolute in fact as the chivalric literature indicates—and helped to express the eminence of chivalry in its complex fifteenth-century manifestations. Where the influence of the chivalric manuals can be detected in the Morte Darthur the relationship between lineage and knighthood takes on a certain prescriptive tone, as in Malory's celebration of Sir Tristram as the first gentleman and the originator of the "terms" which distinguish a gentleman from a churl. But the predominant influence with respect to nobility comes from the romances, that is, from a narrative genre, and the representation of noble lineage in the Morte Darthur is mainly associated with characterization: it has a descriptive rather than prescriptive function.

Malory rarely uses lineage to distinguish between the estates, and then only in a minor way. That distinction has no significant role in the Morte Darthur: nobility is not essentially contrasted to, opposed to, or even associated with low degree. The noble class, which is also the class of knights,
constitutes the standard category of Arthurian characters. Those personnages who do not belong to it, such as Merlin and the hermits of the grail story, lie beyond any class criterion. Those few low born characters who do appear are peripheral to the main line of narration. Yet not all of the noble knights of the Morte Darthur are called men of noble birth. Malory tends to restrict this description to those knights who live up to the chivalric potential which they inherit by their noble birth. Noble lineage functions as a descriptive attribute of the worthy knight.

In their studies of Malory's style, P. J. C. Field and Mark Lambert separately demonstrate that a character's attributes are significant in the Morte Darthur to the extent to which they prove his chivalry or his lack of it. For Malory "to describe is to evaluate,"¹ and to describe a male character is to evaluate a knight. This practice is in keeping with Medieval theories of rhetoric which recognized no accidental attributes in characterization. Any attribute said something substantial about the character.

In the theories of rhetoric which the Middle Ages developed from classical authorities, and especially Cicero's De Invenzione, cognatio—in a specific and bilateral sense—is named as one of the attributes of character. In Cicero the attributa, by which he meant just about any aspect of the character or circumstances of the person in question, are

summoned by the orator of advocate to create in the mind of
his audience an opinion of esteem or suspicion. Among the
attributes are those ad habitum, and those of natura, the
latter being "in sexu . . . et in natione, patria, cognatione,
aetate." In formulating inferences (coniecturae) as to the
character of an individual, an orator may examine "quibus sit
maioribus, quibus consanguineis." Cicero is thinking not of
degree of birth but of specific kinfolk, and this is how cognatio
is understood in medieval rhetorics as well. Cicero's method
was easily adapted to the medieval tendency to see character
as a composite of stereotypes. The ideas of Matthew of Vendome
regarding the descriptio personae, for example, are based on
De inventione.4

Matthew regards the persona as the sum of its attributes:
"cujuslibet personae proprietas constat in attributis personae"
(sec. 75). These are used to draw a rhetorical argumentum
("per naturales proprietates de persona aliquid probare vel
improbare, personam propriare vel impropriare," sec. 76) which
is the counterpart of Cicero's coniectura. There are no
irrelevant attributes, and even nomen can be used as a

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2De inventione, ed. and trans. H. M. Hubbel, "Loeb
Classical Library" (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press,
1960), 1. 24.35.

3Cic. Inv., 2.9.29.

4Matthew of Vendome, Ars Versificatoria, in Les arts
poetiques du XIIe et XIIIe siecle, ed. Edmond Faral (Paris:
Champion, 1962), pp. 106-93; for the description of persons,
p. 135 f. Ernest Gallo, "Matthew of Vendome: Introductory
Treatise on the Art of Poetry," Proceedings of the American
Philosophical Society, 118 (1974) p. 51 ff. gives an intro-
duction and translation of Matthew's Art.
descriptive epithet. Matthew lists *cognatio* as one of the
equal (that is, not physical or spiritual) attributes of
ature along with nation, fatherland, age, and sex. The
grammarians place no special emphasis on cognatio. Moreover
nobility, or more exactly the distinction between freeman and
slave, falls under the categorical heading of *fortuna*, a
placement which reminds us that Alain de Lille's Nobility
is the child of Fortune and cousin to Chance. Malory's asso-
ciation—though not original to him—of the natural attribute
of *cognatio* with the attribute of gentility has a double effect.
Gentility is made to appear as a natural characteristic rather
than one dependant on mutable fortune, while *cognatio*, no
longer signifying specific *maiores* or *consanguinei*, becomes a
universal attribute within the "aristocratic" boundaries of
the chivalric romance.

The attribution of lineage to character in the *Morte
Darthur* occurs in simple descriptive formulas—"the grettyste
jantylmennes sunnys and the beste borne men of that contrey"—
but very rarely. The more usual formulation is in dialogue,
a reflexive judgement (Such behavior comes only of being nobly
born) or a prospective one (He will be a good knight because
he is nobly born). In both cases the emphasis is on chivalric
virtue. After investigating these formulas in the *Morte Darthur*
we will consider some of the characters who are most closely
associated with the theme of noble birth.

**Descriptive Formulas of Noble Lineage**

Noble birth appears in some instances in the *Morte
Darthur* simply as an occasion for courtesy and *noblesse oblige.*
Pelleas asks of Gawain that "syn ye ar so nye cosyn unto kyng Arthure and ar a kynges son, therefore betray me nat, but help me, for I may nevir com by hir Ettard but by som good knyght" (168.10-13). Pelleas assumes, wrongly as it turns out, that because Gawain is well-born he is a good knight to be trusted to intercede for him before the lady Ettard. Ettard ironically uses the same argument, in a mockery of courtesy, to seduce the all too willing Gawain: "Ye that be so well-borne a man and such a man of prouesse, there is no lady in this worlde to good for you" (169.20-21). Elaine pacifies an angry Lancelot with an appeal to his lineage: "Fayre curteyse knyght sir Launcelot . . . ye ar comyn of kynges bloode, and therefore I requyre you have mercy uppon me!" (795.31-33). And elsewhere Lancelot courteously declines Lamorak's offer of service: "God deffende, sir, that ony of so noble a blood as ye be sholde do me servyse" (449.7-8). But in most cases the reference to noble blood is less circumstantial: Gawain, near death, reminds Arthur how Lancelot "thorow hys noble knyghthode and hys noble bloode, hylde all youre cankyrde enemyes in subjeccion and daungers" (1230.28-29). Blood is regarded as a forceful virtue, companion to knighthood.

A knight's worth is dependent on noble blood, and noble birth is used to predict a knight's chivalric success. Merlin says of Tor, whose story we will look at in more detail later, that "he ought to be a good man, for he ys com of good kynrede as ony on lyve, and of kynges bloode" (100.35-101.2). Similar formulas apply to Ider and Percival. In "Lucius" Gawain greets Ider with a praise of his character, absent from
the Morte Arthure, which is the source of this tale. "'A, fayre knyght,' saide sir Gawayne, 'thou moste nedis be a good man, for so is thy fadir. I knowe full well thy modir. In Ingelond was thou borne'" (210.5-7). The presence of the formula here most likely derived from Malory's prior knowledge of the French romances. At any rate the greeting caps a commendatory description of Ider as a "freysh knyght clenly arayed, sir Idres, sir Uwaynes son, a noble man of armys" (209.30-31) and insures that Ider's worth is what it appears to be. In the case of Percival it is to an observation that

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5 In "Malory's Early Knowledge of Arthurian Romance," Texas University Studies in English, 29 (1950), pp. 33-50, R.H. Wilson supplies several textual indications that Malory was familiar with the Suite du Merlin and other French romances when he wrote the "Tale of Arthur and Lucius." "Lucius" is generally considered to be the first of Malory's tales in order of composition: Vinaver, Works, li-livi. Terrence McCarthy has recently challenged the traditional arrangement (II, I, III-VIII): "Order of Composition in the Morte Darthur," Yearbook of English Studies, 1 (1971), 18-21. McCarthy assumes that a proportional relationship exists between stylistic maturity and independence on the one hand and a degree of experience in writing on the other: the more mature and less imitative tales reveal a practiced author and are therefore later in composition. Using this stylistic rule McCarthy proposes the following order of composition: VI, II, V, I, III, IV, VII, VIII. McCarthy's premise that practice alone developed Malory's literary muscle may be doubted, especially in the case of the sixth tale, the "Sankgreall." The imitativeness of that tale very likely reflects the mind of a writer who is cool to religious topics and perhaps too uncertain of his passage through the territory to venture far from the path blazed by his Cistercian predecessor.

6 The greeting confirms the description, the elements of which would not independently guarantee Ider's knightly worth. The reprobate Abelleus is called "freysshe" (III.31), Helyus and Helake and their cohort are "of their hondis noble men" (717.26); Balin warns against judgement by "araymente." Only in the context of "Lucius" does "born in England" suggest virtue. As for his being sir Ywain's son, that is no assurance of his practical worth unless it is said to be—and it is. Lineage may be the source of knighthood, but it is not its
"at that tyyme he was made knyght he was full unlykly to preve a good knyght," that Arthur replies, "As for that . . . he muste nedys preve a good knyght, for hys fadir and bretherne were noble knyghtes all" (815.7-11). The addition here of collateral kin is unique. The formula is also applied to Lancelot and Galahad.

When Guinevere sees Galahad for the first time she says:

"I dare well sey sothely that sir Launcelot begate hym, for never two men resembled more in lykenesse. Therefore hit ys no mervayle thoughhe he be of grete proues."

So a lady that stood by the quene seyde,

"Madam, for Goddis sake, ought he of ryght to be so good a knyght?"

"Ye, forsothe," seyde the quene, "for he ys of all partyes comyn of the beste knyghtes of the worlde and of the hyghest lynage: for sir Launcelot ys come but of the eyghth degre from oure Lorde Jesu Cryst, and thys sir Galahad ys the nyneth degre from oure Lorde Jesu Cryst. Therefore I dare sey they be the grettist jantillmen of the worlde."

(864.37-865.12)

barometer, and men of high birth may well be "distroyers and murtherars of good knyghtes" (691.28-29). On the other hand the assurance that a knight "ought to be a good man" when it is expressed is never contradicted in fact. There is a distinction made between being of the nobility and being a mirror of noble chivalry.

^There are no such details in the Vulgate Queste where Galahad is said to be "de toutes pars estrais des millors cheualiers del monde . & del plus haut lignage que len sace" (Sommer, VI, 12.33-35: in every way descended from the best knights in the world and from the highest lineage known). I suspect Malory means "from the time of Our Lord": he describes Galahad as being of Evalake's blood "of the ninth degree": (Queste, "li mieudres de mon lignage"). On the other hand I do not think he felt the ambiguity of his statement to be out of order. He may have had in mind something like the curious blend of scripture and gentlemanly ideas which appear in the Boke of Saint Albans. The author describes the descent of gentlemen from Seth and, after the flood, from Japheth and
Here again lineage serves to define the character. Guinevere might be expected to emphasize the worldly repercussions of her lover's lineage, but I do not think this is the sense of the passage. Lancelot and his son are indeed the two greatest gentlemen in the world, and their respective supremacy—insured in a way by Malory's insistent separation of earthly and celestial chivalry—is a bond between them, a bond which can be said to bring these two species of knighthood together under a single genus.

Other texts deriving from the idea of inherent knighthood are dispersed throughout the *Morte Darthur*. King Angwysshe dreads the challenge of Blamour who is "a noble knyght, and of nobly knyghtes comyn." Blamour and his brother Bleoberys, "that ar comyn of kynge Banys bloode, as sir Lancelot and thes othir, ar passynge good harde knyghtes and harde men for to wynn in batayle as ony that I know now lyvyng" (407.16-19). Of Lancelot, incognito in action, Dinadan observes: "Whatsoever he be . . . I warraunte he ys of king Bannys blode, whych bene knyghtes of the nobelyst proues in the worlde" (516.26-28). Membership in the kindred of Lancelot is enough to get Helain to the Round Table: "And so whan kynge Arthure undirstooode that Helyne le Blanke was sir Bors son and neveaw unto kynge Brandegorys, than kynge Arthure let make hym knyghte of the Rounde Table. And so he preved a good knyghte and an

Shem, and concludes: "Of the ofspring of the gentilman Jafeth come Habraham Moyse Aron and the profettys, and also the kyngs of ye right lyne of mary. of whom that gentilman Jhesus was borne very god and man: after his manhode kyng of the londe of Judea of Jues gentilman by is modre mary prynce of Cote armure" (p. a ii).
adventurus" (831.8-12). When Tristram's cousin, Alexander, is made knight "the conestable ordayned twenty of the grettyste jantylmennes sunnys and the beste borne men of that contrey whych sholde be made knyghtes the same day" (636.17-19). When Melyas de Lyle identifies himself as the son of the king of Denmark, Galahad urges that "sitthyn that ye be com of kynges and quenys, now lokith that knyghthode be well sette in you, for ye ought to be a myrroure unto all chevilry" (883.7-9). 8

The prediction that a knight "muste nedys" be worthy and good on account of his birth is never used ironically in the sense that any knight fails the prophesy. The formula is not applied to Gawain, Agravain, Gaheris, or Modred, nor to Meleagant or any other of the cast of dishonorable knights. The formula, in fact the idea itself, is basically used as a device of characterization: of the knight who will be good it is said that he must be. On the contrary, dishonor to knighthood is conceived as a betrayal of lineage. Morgan, who, granted, is not a knight, but nevertheless fails at virtue, attempts to ambush Lancelot; it is shameful that "such false treson sholde be wrought or used in a quene and a kygys systir, and a kynge and a quenys doughtir" (511.12-14). Gawain and his brothers are severely condemned: "'But hit is shame,'

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8 Melyas is subsequently wounded by two knights and must be rescued by Galahad. The reason, a hermit explains, is that he dared take upon himself "so rych a thynge as the hyghe Order of Knyghthode ys withoute clene confession" (865.10-11). But Galahad's words are not so prophetic as admonishing, and his "ought to" is exhortative, or at least echoes the exhortative mode of "lokith that." Malory seems to consider this to be a venial lapse, eventually making him an ally of Lancelot and "erle of Tursanke" (1205.14).
seyde sir Trystram, 'that sir Gawayne and ye be commyn of so
grete blood, that ye four bretherne be so named as ye be: for
ye be called the grettyste distroyers and murtherars of good
knyghtes that is now in the realme of Ingelonde'' (691.25-29).
Meleagant is urged to act honorably with a plea to his lineage.

"Traytoure knyght," seyd quene Gwenyver, "what
caste thou to do? Wolt thou shame thyselff? Bethynke
the how thou arte a kyngis sonne and a knyght of the
Table Rounde, and thou thus to be aboute to dishonoure
the noble kynge that made the knyght! Thou shamyst all
knyghthode and thyselffe and me."  

(1122.8-13)

We can find also, in the Morte Darthur, a few general
references to the power of heredity. Malory's observation,
already referred to in the last chapter, that "he that jantyll
is woll drawe hym to jantyll tacchis and to folow the noble
customys of jantylmen" (375.23-29), seems to refer to nurture
rather than nature. Lancelot, at one point, produces a maxim
(not in the French text): "Harde hit ys to take oute off the
fleysshe that ys bredde in the boone!" (550.14—15). But this
is Malory in a rare mood of levity, for Lancelot makes this
remark, smiling, about Mark and his nephew Andret. The most
significant "doctrinal" reference is spoken by Percival to
his mother:

And than [their mother] kneled downe uppon her knees
tofore sir Agglovale and sir Percyvale and besought
them to abyde at home wyth her.

"A, my swete modir," seyde sir Percyvale, "we
may nat, for we be commyn of kynges bloode of bothe
partis. And therefore, modir, hit ysoure kynde to
haunte armys and noble dedys."

(810.1-7)

I have stressed the uniformity of noble birth, detaching
it from patterns of social hierarchy and degrees of political
eminence. A knight described as born "of royal blood" is not for that reason to be considered as superior to one born "of noble blood." Yet although Malory uses noble descent to define the knightly state rather than levels of social estate, there do appear in the _Morte Darthur_ instances of apparent comparisons and superlatives with respect to birth.

Some of these are clearly rhetorical superlatives. Though Gareth alone is described as being "of full noble blood," (italics are mine) this does not place him a notch higher than knights of noble blood. The superlative attribute is a regular element of Malory's style here used as an assertion of Gareth's chivalry and need not imply a distinction from the "mere" degree. The Romans are called a "full royal people" and Persant a "full noble knight." In other cases the comparison indicates a real qualitative but not essential discrimination between knights. Provoked by the Black Knight, Gareth claims that he is "a jantyllman borne, and of more hyghe lynage than thou, and that woll I preve on thy body!" (304.10-12). What is at issue here, and through most of "Gareth," is Gareth's demonstration that he is worthy to be a knight not because he is a member of a particular noble family (in contrast to his brother Gawain whom Arthur enthusiastically knights "be reson ye ar my newew") but because he has a natural chivalric ability. In putting this ability to work, as in his victory over the Black Knight, Gareth gives proof of his noble birth. Gareth's battle-boast to the Black Knight is equivalent to saying "I shall show you that I am the better knight." Likewise, in the case of Lancelot and Galahad superlative birth—"of the
beste knyghtes of the worlde and of the hyghest lynage"—is put forth as the reason that these knights are "the grettist jantillmen of the worlde," but the lineage remains ancillary to knighthood. It is not because they possess a higher pedigree that Lancelot and Galahad are to be judged the best men, but because they are the greatest knights.

The single case in which a degree of nobility is an issue in the Morte Darthur occurs at the beginning of the "Tale of Tristram." Voicing his challenge to the members of King Mark's court, Marhalt declares that he will fight only with knights "of blood royall, that is to seye owther kynges son othir queny's son, borne of pryncis other of pryncesses" (379.16-18). But the function of this discrimination is to enhance the character of Sir Tristram and to allow him to disclose his identity:

Than seyde sir Trystrams,

"Sytthen that he seyth so, lat hym wete that I am commyn of fadir syde and modir syde of as noble bloode as he is; for, sir, now shall ye know that I am kynge Melodyas sonne, borne of your owne sister dame Elyzabeth that dyed in the foreste in the byrth of me."

(379.21-26)

A further indication that noble birth corresponds to chivalry and not to any institutional system can be seen in the kind of knight who traditionally and in the Morte Darthur holds a title or an office at Arthur's court. The Counts, Earls, and Dukes of the Morte Darthur are minor characters. The important knights hold no political or hereditary office. Lancelot eventually advances his followers and kindred into
titles and lordships, but this only comes after the dissolution of the chivalric order.

Similarly the officers of Arthur's household are men of little chivalric importance. After Arthur's coronation Kay is made seneshal, Baudewyn constable, Ulfyus chamberlain, and Barastias warden of the North (16.32-37). At the great feast of All Saints Day, Kay, Lucas the Butler, and Gryfflet le Fyse de Du are named as the knights that "had the rule of all the servyse that served the kyngis" (24.30-23.1). Some of these appointments are of Malory's own devising. Since the appointments are made so early in Arthur's reign, we would not expect the prominent knights—the young sons of Lot and Ban and Bors, not yet knighted—to fill the posts. But still Malory makes no effort to bring the members of Arthur's household to chivalric prominence. If the otherwise insignificant knights Baudewyn and Constantine (his heir) are made regents of the kingdom—where in the Morte Arthure the position goes to Mordred—it is, one feels, because the important knights have a role to play in the continental wars.9

9For a discussion in full of this subject see Sister Imogene Baker, The King's Household in the Arthurian Court from Geoffrey of Monmouth to Malory, a printed dissertation (Washington: Catholic Univ., 1937), especially p. 132 ff.

"Lucius" has a more feudal and political spirit than other tales of the Morte Darthur. Lancelot is called, with Cador, a mighty duke, but on the whole the enemy aristocracy is more systematically described than the British: "And sir Kay the kene had takyn a captayne, and Edwarde had takyn two erlys, and the sawdon of Surre yeldid hym unto sir Launcelot, and the senatur of Sautre yeldid hym unto sir Cador" (216.11-14). Throughout the Morte Darthur aristocratic title is used especially to identify often insignificant and otherwise anonymous characters.
It is interesting to note that Constantine is mentioned twice in the list of knights who attempt to heal Sir Urry. He is listed first as the son of Cador in a group to which a senior knight such as Cador would belong. He is mentioned a second time among some of the members of Arthur's household, as Arthur's heir but not as his kinsman: "Than cam in sir Gryfflet le Fyze de Du, sir Lucan the Butlere, sir Bedyvere, hys brothir, sir Braundeles, sir Constantyne, sir Cadors son of Cornwayle that was kynge aftir Arthurs dayes" (1149.12-15). This may be another indicator of Malory's lack of interest in the dynastic and political aspects of lineage.

The chivalric function of noble birth in Malory is further indicated and clarified in several episodes, especially when they are read in connection with their sources. These are the stories of Pelleas, of Gamyssh, and of Balin, the enfance of Tor, and the sourceless (and probably original) "Tale of Gareth."

Pelleas and Gamyssh

The tales of Pelleas and Gamyssh are in many ways similar, but very different in their outcomes. Each knight loves a lady who rejects his love; each knight asks another (respectively Gawain and Balin) to intercede for him. Each discovers his lady asleep with a rival. Pelleas reacts nobly; Gamyssh kills his lover, his rival, and himself. In the French versions of these stories both Pelleas and Gamyssh are men of low birth. In Malory, Gamyssh remains a man of low birth while Pelleas is transformed into a great lord.
It is Gawain himself who, betraying Pelleas' trust—a trust founded on the fact that Gawain was a high-born and therefore assumedly good knight—makes love to the lady, Ettard (= Arcade in the French version). Pelleas discovers them asleep together and sets his sword across their throats, a sign of his visit. The lovers awake and, in the French version, are shamed by this gesture of noble restraint. In the Morte Darthur Gawain casually rides off, the lady is made to love Pelleas by enchantment while he is exorcized of his love for her. She suffers grief in turn and dies of it. It might be pointed out that the reason Gawain is away from court is his sense of family duty. Arthur banishes Ywain on an unfounded suspicion of treason, and Gawain accompanies him declaring that "whoso banysyth my cosyn jarmayne shall banyshe me" (158.15-16).

In the French version of the story Pelleas is a man of low birth, and it is on this excuse that Arcade rejects him. Gawain's host explains: "Cest le meilleur cheualier que is sache en ceste terre... Il la amee de longtemps,

For a comparison of the story of Pelleas and its source, see F. Whitehead, "On Certain Episodes in the Fourth Book of Malory's Morte Darthur," Medium Aevum, 2 (1933), pp. 199-216. Whitehead proposes that "one single fact explains all the major differences between the two accounts—the fact that Malory neither understood, nor cared to understand, the conventions of courtly love." He says nothing of the significance of Malory's omission of Pelleas's low birth. Malory may have understood without approving, but it is evident at any rate that in the Morte Darthur chivalric behavior is not seen as a consequence of love. The virtues constituting chivalry merit to be practiced of their own right, and if so perfect a practitioner as Pelleas is made to be Lord of many Iles it is because Malory constantly seeks to elevate chivalry by exalting the status of its heroes.
mez oncques ny pot auenir, pour ce quil est de bas lignage et elle est extraicte de haut lignage. . . . Et celle, qui estoit orgueilleuse et est encor plus que nulle autre, li dist que ia ne lameroit, car il nestoit pas du lignage que elle le deust amer" (A 25-26: He is the best knight that I know of in this land. He has loved her for a long time, but nothing can come of it because he's of low birth and she comes from a noble line. She, who was proud and is more than any other, says she will never love him because he is not of such a lineage that she should love him). Gawain then reflects that she may not be "de si vaillant gent com vous me dictes. Car, certes, se elle fust extraicte de courtoise gent, au moings eust elle tant de cortoisie en soy que len ne feist ia par son commandement honte ni villenie a hors qui tant lamast com cist fait" (A 27: from such a noble family as you make out. Certainly if she were of "courtoise" extraction she would have at least enough courtesy in her that she would never cause to be done by her commandment such a humiliation and dishonor to a man who loves her as much as this one does).

Gawain shows a high opinion of the obligations of "vaillant gent" but cannot anticipate his own betrayal of them. When, on his mission of intervention, Gawain discloses his identity and kin, Arcade, always the snob and sophisticate, becomes interested. In the French version a fine drama of temptation and fall ensues; in the Morte, Gawain is a cad from

the start. When Pelleas discovers them together he refrains from killing Gawain for two reasons: to kill Arthur's nephew would be to invite accusations of treason, to let Gawain live would give him the chance to reform and to behave like a king's son; he leaves the sword as a sigh of his "debonnairete." The discovery of the sword shames Gawain into seeking out Pelleas, who throws back at him the kind of comment Gawain had earlier made concerning Arcade: "Certes hoome estraict de si hault lignage comme vous estes ne deust pas entremettre de si grant desloyalte comme vous auez fait vers moy" (A 38: Surely a man who comes from such high lineage as you do should not entertain so great a disloyalty as you did toward me). Gawain repentantly persuades Arcade to accept Pelleas as her lover. Malory, in transforming the French tale, seems averse to having a low born knight preach courtesy to a high born one and therefore matriculates him into a noble estate. Pelleas speaks to Gawain as an equal and asks for his help as a matter of noblesse oblige:

"And my name is sir Pelleas, born in the Illes, and of many iles I am lorde. And never loved I lady nother damsel tyll nowe. And, sir knyght, syn ye ar so nye cosyn unto kynge Arthure and ar a kynge son, therefore betray me nat, but help me, for I may nevir com by hir but by som good knyght."

(168.8-13)

The rest of Malory's short tale is characterized by an amatory ruthlessness that violates Gawain's nature as a king's son; Pelleas's display of mesure, on the other hand, preserves "the hyghe Ordir of Knyghthode." The Lord of the Iles demonstrates, to Gawain's discredit, the moral measure of high birth.
Garnyssh, like Pelleas, is a lover spurned. Balin finds him on the verge of suicide and in the manner of Gawain but with a more honest will tries to help. He discovers the lady, Duke Harmel's daughter, lying "with the fowlest knyghte that ever he sawe." He reveals the scene to Garnysh, in the hope of bringing him to his senses, but the luckless lover kills the lady, her repulsive bedfellow, and finally himself. In French, as in Malory, the lover is a knight born of low degree, a self-made man: "je suis uns chevaliers nés de cest pais et estrais de vavasours et de basse gent. Mais par ma prouece, Dieu merchi, ai je tant fait, puis que je suis chevaliers, que assés ai conquis grans terres et grans fiés" (Suite II 35: I am a knight born in this land and descended from vavasors and low folk. But by my might, thanks be to God, I did so much, since I am a knight, that I have conquered plenty of great lands and fiefs). Malory does not, as in the case of Pelleas, raise Garnysh's estate; the knight describes himself as "a poore mannes sonne, and be my proues and hardynes a deuk made me knyght and gave me londis" (87.4-5). In the Suite Harmel is conquered by this knight of low degree, this false knight. Malory does not allow him the prowess to go so far.

Malory elevates Pelleas but maintains Garnyssh's identity as a low-born knight. He preserves the equation of

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nobility—noble birth—chivalry. There is no chivalry in Garnyssh—whose grim crimes are provoked merely by love lost—and therefore no reason to make him high-born. A knight of noble birth, such as Gawain, can betray his chivalry. But Garnyssh, though "a fayre knyght . . . a lyckly man and a well made" and a man of some "proues and hardynes" lacks that natural chivalry of the spirit which could have made it possible for him to respond to betrayal as Pelleas does. He may have been "made knyght" but he is not part of that "hyghe Ordir of Knyghthode" to which Pelleas belongs. The ostensible sign of his lack of chivalry is his low birth.

Balin

The story of Balin describes in the extreme the disassociation of chivalry from material criteria. Balin is a poor man, a luckless man, a man whose knighthood brings him no worldly profit, but he is a true knight and a man of gentle birth.

Fortune does Balin no favors; just released from prison where he had been placed for killing a prominent knight, one of Arthur's cousins in the Morte Darthur, Balin succeeds in a task reserved for "a clene knyght withoute vylony and of jantill strene of fadir syde and of modir syde" (62.22-23). But this sets him on a route of misfortunes, of which the story of Garnysh is an example, which ends in unwitting fratricide. He is, like the ograefumabro, the luckless man of the sagas, a hero whose heroics are cursed; his worth cannot be judged according to the outcome of his actions; and his virtue
is in a sense isolated from reality. Like Gareth when we first see him he presents an ambiguous picture, he is "a good man named of his body" but "poore and poorly arayed" (63.1-2,5). The author of the Suite du Merlin is careful to say that his poverty is adventitious; once wealthy he was dis-inherited because of his homicide, yet he remains "riches de cuer et de harde" et de proueche" (Suite I 215: rich of heart, hardiness, and prowess). Both the French author and Malory perceive a difference between the man who is born poor--in Malory the equivalent of low extraction--and he who has poverty thrust upon him. Though Malory makes no mention of Balin's former wealth, he adds, as a condition to removing the magic sword from the scabbard, that the knight be "of jantill strene."

When Balin first appears, the lady who bears the sword sees that he is "a lyckly man; but for hys poure araymente she thought he sholde nat be of no worship withoute vylony or trechory" (63.1-9), that is, she thought he could not be an honorable person. In French, Balin's reply to this is simply and angrily to state, "je fui ja plus riches" (Suite I 216: I was once richer). Just as Balin's ensuing career will be marked by chivalric good will hidden in external misfortune, so his reply, in Malory, proposes that knighthood is primarily an attribute of character.

"A, fayre damesell," seyde Balyn, "worthynes and good tacchis and also good dedis is nat only in araymente, but manhode and worship ys hyd within a mannes person; and many a worshipfull knyght ys nat knownyn unto all peple. And therefore worship and hardynesse ys nat in araymente."
"Be God," seyde the damesell, "ye sey soth. Therefore ye shall assay to do what ye may."

Than Balyn toke the swerde by the gurdyll and shethe and drew hit oute easily.

"Sertes," seyde the damesell, "thys ys a passynge good knyght and the beste that ever y founde, and moste of worship withoute treson, trechory or felony. And many mervayles shall he do. Now, jantyll and curtayse knyght, geff me the swerde agayne."

(63.23-64.5)

Balin's speech does not indicate, as Vinaver interprets it to do in his note on the passage, a moral condemnation of "araymente." We find for instance that when Gareth arrives, incognito, at court, Lancelot and Gawain courteously give him "golde to spende and clothis." Clothes do not make the man any more than nobility "of the hands" alone, but Malory and his contemporaries considered splendor as a suitable sign of honor and majesty. By introducing the statement of Balin's gentle birth and the speech on hidden worship Malory does reinforce the connection between the idea of noble descent and chivalric nature, not excluding the appurtenances of aristocracy but affirming that it is not according to these criteria that the knight is defined. So that there can be no doubt that Balin, despite his involuntary misadventures, is "a worshipfull knyght," Malory inserts "jantill strene" among his qualifications.

Tor

The story of Tor's youth illustrates Malory's manner with the continental notions of the power of high birth. The

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story is, in the Suite, something of an apologia for aristocratic supremacy and the segregation of the estates. Malory on the other hand gives us a picture of the power of chivalry, a power the continuity and inner character of which is represented by its association with high lineage.

At the time of his marriage to Guinevere, Arthur receives two requests for knighthood, one from Gawain and the other from a bemused cowherd named Ares in behalf of his son Tor. The suit for knighthood appears reasonable on the part of Gawain, who is the son of a king, and Arthur shows himself all the more eager to grant it "be reson ye ar my nevew, my sistirs son" (99.13-14). Tor's proposed candidacy seems, by contrast, presumptuous; Arthur calls it "a grete thynge."

Although Tor is apparently the son of a "poore man," by which Malory means of low degree, he is unexpectedly handsome, unlike his dozen brothers, "a fayre yonge man of eyghtene yere of ayge" (99.16-17). But more than anything his extraordinary behavior sets him apart; he refuses to join in the common work of the farm:

"I have thirteene sonnes," [Ares explains] "and all they woll falle to what laboure I putte them and woll be ryght glad to do laboure; but thys chylde woll nat laboure for nothyng that my wyff and I may do, but allwey he woll be shotynge, or castynge dartzes, and glad for to se batayles and to beholde knyghtes. And allwayes day and nyght he desyrith of me to be made knyght."

(100.4-10)

Tor does not share the willingness of his brothers "to do laboure," the natural activity of the farmer's condition, but feels, like the young Percival of Chretien's romance, a spontaneous inclination to knighthood. Merlin eventually
reveals, to no one’s surprise, that the boy is the son of a
king, namely Pellinor who once took casual advantage of Ares’
wife. "Yee, hardly, sir," Merlin replies when Arthur asks
whether or not Tor will be a good man, "he ought to be a good
man for he ys com of good kynrede as ony on lyve, and of kynges
bloode" (100.35-101.2). The royal pedigree is visible in the
boy's face and figure: "all were shapyn muche lyke the poore
man, but Torre was nat lyke hym nother in shappe ne in
countenaunce" (100.17-19). What especially distinguishes him
from his half-brothers, however, is his innate, natural
tendency toward "sotynge" and "batayles" and the inborn desire
to be made knight. Crypto-chivalric Tor represents the most
dramatic illustration in the Morte Darthur of a cogent associa­
tion between noble birth and knighthood. Chivalry endures
from generation to generation because it is transmitted not
by nurture, as a code of behavior, but by nature.

The French version of the story, as it appears in the
Suite du Merlin, places a strong, didactic emphasis on the
matter of innate chivalry. The picture of Tor's unconformist
enfance is absent but the author of the Suite attempts repeatedly
to voice the psychology--if we can call it that--of the young
noble. "Freuom sera il et boins chevaliers," Merlin says to
Arthur in the passage which Malory recorded, "et il le devroit
estre par lignage, car certes il est fieus de si haut homme
coum de roi, qui est uns des boins chevaliers del monde" (Suite
II 72: He will be a worthy man and a good knight and he ought
to be such by his lineage, for he is the son of so high a man
as a king who is one of the good knights of the world). Merlin
rebukes Ares for misunderstanding the behavior of his son:
"Vilains, moult iés chattis, qui coides que che soit tes fieus. Certes il ne l'est pas, et se il le fust, il n'entendist pas a gentillece, nient plus que si autre frere font, ains fust drois vilains aussi coume sa nature li aportast" (Suite II 72: Peasant, be ashamed for believing him to be your son. He certainly is not, and if he were he would not have drawn to gentility no more than his other brothers do, but would be a proper villein just as his nature would lead him to be). Later when Tor has proved successful in an adventure Arthur recognizes that he could not be the son of a cowherd for "se il fust fius dou vakier ne l'euust il si bien fait a cest commenchement; car fius de vakier et de vilain ne porroit pas avoir si haute commenchaille" (Suite II 114: Had he been the son of the cowhered he would not have done so well in this beginning; for the son of a cowherd and peasant could not have had so high a beginning). Merlin explains: "nature de lignage et fine gentillece l'a duit et apris" (Suite II 114: nature from (of?) lineage and gentility directed and taught him). Lineage is an effective coach.

After Pellinor returns to court and Tor's mother is brought forth, the mystery of the young knight's unlikely aptitudes is publicly solved, and we are given another forceful reflection on the potency of blood: "Se vous fussies d'estansion de vilain," Merlin tells the young knight, "ja ne vous presist talent de chevalrie mener, mais il ne peut estre que gentillece ne se moustre, ja ne sera si enserra" (Suite II 134-35: Had you been of peasant stock it would never have
occurred to you to become a knight, but gentility must reveal itself, no matter how pent up). Two additional passages from the Suite—not concerning Tor and not to be found in the Morte Darthur—help illustrate its somewhat deterministic treatment of the matter of heredity. The author of the Suite explains that Kay is a notorious poltroon because of the inferior milk he drank as an infant. Displaced at his mother's breast by his foster brother Arthur, the infant Kay was nursed out to a "garce." "Et se il est fel et faus et vilains, vous le deves bien sousfrir; que toutes les mauvaises choses qu'il a n'a il prises se par le norriche non qui l'alaita" (Suite II 140:
And if he is evil, false, and mean you must endure it, for all the bad in him he did not take except from the nurse who gave him milk). A form of the hereditary principal is also at work in the story, rendered from Robert de Boron's verse original, of Merlin's conception and birth. As the son of a demon Merlin is born "tout pelu" and possesses supernatural powers, but because his mother was innocent of any sin those powers are turned to good instead of evil. Malory ignored this story because it was irrelevant to his romance of Arthur, and he left out the piece of pediatric theory concerning Kay. He also omitted a speech by Tor's mother, a pious moderation of aristocratic determinism, the subject of which is that the

15 In one of the Tusculan Disputations, Cicero describes the precocious corruptibility of children: "ut paene cum lacte nutricis errorem suxisse videamus"—Tusc., 3.1.2, ed. and trans., J. E. King (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press). Elyot bases himself on unnamed old authority to recommend that a child be farmed out to "a nourise which shulde be of no seruile condition or vice notable" (The Gouernour, Bk. 1, ch. 4).
primary duty of the knight is to save his soul: better a peasant in grace than a knight bound for damnation.

These omitted sections show the kind of approach Malory found in the *Suite du Merlin* and how he adapted it to his own ends. The French author seems to regard estate as an inherent *virtus*, of which some contamination at least from below is possible, a kind of hereditary cogent intuition of chivalry. It has a providential dimension which is absent from the *Morte Darthur*: God increases Merlin's powers because of the virtue of his mother; Arthur's accession to the throne is seen, though he is Uther's son, as a matter of divine election; Tor's mother tells him to be grateful to God for having made him a gentleman. Malory also avoided the French author's condescending distinction between the high and low estate. Ares is not made to appear the ignorant peasant fool, and Tor's precocious abilities are presented not so much as proceeding from "nature" as the characteristic essence of a class as from his hereditary association with a worthy knight. Arthur praises Tor by telling Pellinor: "he sayeth but lytil, but he doth much more, for I know none in all this courte, and he were as well borne on his modir syde as he is on youre syde, that is lyke hym of prouesse and of myght" (131.28-31).

Whereas Balin's knightly "manhode" is assured on account of his noble descent despite continuous reversals in the field of adventur, Tor's royal blood impels him to reveal his chivalric capabilities, to desire knighthood, and to succeed in adventure. Tor's virtues are originally hidden, like Balin's, in poverty. The difference between the two men
is that one shows chivalric virtue triumphant in action while the other shows it to be enduring and valid despite the impediments of fortune. Despite their very different stories, Tor and Balin embody that inherent quality of good which is represented as coming from noble blood.

Gareth

Like Tor, Gareth—who is Gawain's brother and Arthur's nephew—arrives at court under puzzling and anonymous circumstances, a figure of the Fair Unknown.16 Though he comes in

16 In "The 'Fair Unknown' in Malory," PMLA, 58 (1943), pp. 2-21, R. H. Wilson attempts to locate the "Tale of Gareth" in the "Fair Unknown" group. One of the elements common to the stories of this group is the hero's concealment, whether through ignorance or the will to disguise, the identity of his kindred. The tale is unique in the Morte Darthur for having no known source. Vinaver believes that the tale was adapted from a lost French "romance of Gaheret" which had at one time been part of the Tristan cycle: "A Romance of Gaheret," Medium Aevum, 1 (1932), pp. 157-67; Works, pp. 1427-32. "While dispensing with the subtleties of the courtly code, the French Gaheret propounded the theory that 'a man of low birth cannot defeat a nobleman except by accident or by guile,' and so championed the claims of knighthood as an aristocratic institution. For once Malory found himself in harmony with this French model. . . . And so his work may well be said to belong to... that rapidly shrinking tradition which treated chivalry as something inherent in rank and breeding and firmly refused to yield to the threats of the most formidable 'kitchen-knaves.'" Vinaver, Works, p. 1434.

The hypothesis that Malory simply adapted a French or Anglo-Norman romance has had opposition. Wilfred L. Guerin, "The Tale of Gareth: the Chivalric Flowering," in Malory's Originality, pp. 99-117, argued it to be "Malory's original creation, with bits taken from earlier romances." Most recently Larry Benson has suggested a pathway between both these positions: Malory's source for "Gareth" was Ipomadon, a twelfth-century romance by Hugh of Rutland; but he used it only as a starting point (Malory's Morte Darthur, pp. 92-101). In Ipomadon as in other romances of the type the lady comes to acknowledge that the hero is of higher birth than he appears to be. Whatever the source for Malory's matiere, the sens was a common enough romance property: chivalry was the preserve of the high-born.
seemingly enervated and leans for support on two men, he is "large and longe and brode in the shuldyrs, well-vysaged, and the largyste and fayreste handis that ever may sye" (293.29-31). These hands earn him his nickname, "Beawmaynes," by which he is known until his identity is disclosed at the end of the adventures. For the time being he asks only for "mete and drynke suffyciauntly for this twelve-monthe," a suit that prompts Kay to suggest that he is "a vylayne borne," a run-away from an impoverished and underprovisioned abbey, but those who are more attuned to the nature of chivalry suspect nobility in disguise. "Myne herte gyvyth me to the gretly," Arthur tells him, "that thou arte com of men of worshyp, and gretly my conceyte fayleth me but thou shalt preve a man of ryght grete worshyp," and charges that he be treated "as though he were a lordys sonne" (294.18-21, 33-34). The conjunction of the idea of personal value and of social degree in the word "worshyp" anticipates the fact that in the course of the tale, the manifestation of Gareth's chivalric nature goes hand in hand with a progressive revelation of his lineage. Both Gawain and Lancelot concur with the king in his intuition, but each for a different reason: "As towchyng sir Gawayne, he had reson to proffer hym lodgyng, mete, and drynke, for that proffer com of his bloode, for he was nere kyn to hym than he wyste off; but that sir Launcelot ded was of his grete jantynnesse and curtesy" (295.31-35). It has been noted that "unlike the Gareth-Gawain affiliation, which often points up differences between two brothers, the friendship between Gareth and Lancelot more consistently shows similarities. Mutual love, not kinship,
is the essence of this relationship." Chivalric companion-
ship supercedes the bonds of kinship.

By his comportment in the field of adventure Gareth
demonstrates that he is come "of full noble blood and of
kynges lynage," but first, in what seems to be an exercise
in humility and camouflage, he spends a year in the kitchen.
It is Lancelot who, at Gareth's request and after the year in
service, makes him a knight, though not until after he has
asked for the young man's name and kin and rejoiced at the
answer: "evir me thought ye sholde be of grete bloode" (299.
29-30). Gareth undertakes to champion the cause of Lyoness
not as a king's son but in appearance "a luske, and a turner
of brochis, and a ladyll-waysher," whose clothes are "bawdy
of the grece and talow," a "stynkyng kychyn knave," more fit
"to styke a swyne than to sytte afore a damesell of hyghe
parage" (300.7-14, 301.22-23). The damsel, and author of
these observations, is Lynet, the sister of Lyoness, who rides
in Gareth's company. Her rebukes are of the same order as
Ebell's warning against giving rule to churls: a commoner
should not attempt to rise above his estate; she attributes
his defeat of two knights to accident. His opponents, however,
perceive the knight beneath the ladle-washer, "for whatsomever
he maketh hymself he shall preve at the ende that he is com of
full noble blood and of kynges lynage" (307.21-23). And Lynet
herself, eventually won over by the patient courtesy with which
he endures her unflagging contumely, concedes that "hit may

never be other but that ye be com of jantyll bloode, for so fowle and shamfully dud never woman revyle a knyght as I have done you, and ever curtysly ye have suffyrde me, and that com never but of jantyll blood" (312.30-34). She subsequently repeats this notion to her sister: "well may he be a kynygs son, for he hath many good tacchis: for he is curtyese and mylde, and the most sufferynge man that ever I mette withall" (329.26-330.7). On another occasion Gareth declines to unite with the daughter of Sir Persant, who sent her hospitably to his bed; his courtesy proves to his host that "whatsomever he be he is com of full noble blood" (315.19-20). When Gareth reveals himself to Persant it is in a speech dense with references to kindred: "My name is sir Gareth of Orkenay, and kynge Lott was my fadir, and my modir is kyng Arthurs sustir, hir name is dame Morgawse. And sir Gawayne is my brothir, and sir Aggravayne and sir Gaherys, and I am the yongeste of hem all" (317.6-10).

Gareth's proud roll-call seems at odds with the character Malory has created of the knight who reveals his lineage and hidden worth through prowess, mercy, and courtesy. Though it is meant to certify the nobility of Gareth's lineage it also represents in part the brotherhood from which he detaches himself:

There was no knyght that sir Gareth loved so well as he dud sir Launcelot; and ever for the moste party he wolde ever be in sir Launcelottis company.

For evir aftir sir Gareth had aspyed sir Gawaynes conducions, he wythdrewe hymself from his brother sir Gawaynes felyship, for he was evir vengeable, and where he hated he wolde be avenged with murther: and that hated sir Gareth.

(360.29-35)
But this is a matter of kinship rather than noble descent, and we will study the relationship of the Orkney brothers in a subsequent chapter.

Balin, Tor, and Gareth demonstrate in various ways that they are true knights: Balin through a magical deed and noble intentions, and Gareth and Tor through successful adventures. But the one thing these knights have in common and which indicates that their knighthood does not depend on the outcome of their actions is noble lineage. What stands at issue in the *Morte Darthur* is not the debate between natural and genetic nobility—it is not the validity of a definition of "gentil-lesse," such as Chaucer's "he is gentil that dooth gentil dedis" versus an identification of gentility with birth. Defining the application of gentility or nobility in a society lies outside Malory's primary concern with the nature of chivalry and its implications. Whatever his social beliefs, Malory is using noble descent in the tradition of chivalric literature to exemplify the eminence, immanence, and perennial quality of chivalry.
Studies on kinship in Medieval literature have generally sought to trace origins, investigating the history of particular kin sets and of familial motifs and often stopping short of exploring their function within the romances themselves. If this kind of source study is to be helpful to our understanding of Arthurian romances as literary objects it must be supplemented by a critical study of the interaction of the various elements and motifs at a particular moment in their literary history. Once the perigrination of a single motif has been traced from its earliest evidence in myth or folklore to the Morte Darthur, its appearance in that book can and ought to be

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1 The bias of kinship studies has been on the whole avuncular, epic, and anthropological. The title of W. O. Farnsworth's 1913 study, Uncle and Nephew in the Old French Chansons de Geste: A Study in the Survival of Matriarchy (New York: Columbia, 1901; rpt. New York: A. M. S. Press, 1966), is indicative of the approach. A similar research for anthropological antecedents exists in Murray Potter's classic work, Borobad and Rustem: The Epic Theme of a Combat Between Father and Son (London: David Nutt, 1902). In the same period W. A. Nitze, "The Sister's Son and the Conte del Graal," Modern Philology, 9 (1912), pp. 1-32, attempted to show from anthropological assumptions that Percival's unspecified uncles are maternal uncles. More recently Alan Dundes brings romance, and in particular the Morte Darthur, to the service of the soft sciences in "The Father, the Son, and the Holy Grail," Literature and Psychology, 12 (1962), pp. 101-12.

explained. To borrow an example from C. S. Lewis, we may learn from source studies that Gawain's diurnal cycle of waxing and waning strength is "the last vestige of a myth about the sun-god," but this information does not erase the fact that this "peculiarity remains, in Malory's book, a complete irrelevance." Many motifs, of course, survived because they were

13 (1938), pp. 271-77, argues that Geoffrey invented Arthur's family. Geoffrey's source for Uther, Parry writes, was not a Welsh genealogy but possibly a cue from an appellation of Arthur as "mab uther," "terrible young man" (p. 276). Other source studies are useful: J. D. Bruce's "Arthur's Son Lohot," Romantic Review, 3 (1912), pp. 179-84; his more extensive and interesting article, "Mordred's Incestuous Birth," in Medieval Studies in Memory of G. S. Loomis (Paris: Champion, 1927), pp. 197-208; and Alexandre Micha, "La naissance incestueuse de Mordred," Zeitschrift fur Romanische Philologie, 66 (1950), pp. 371-72, offering additional information on the subject; and of course passim numerous source studies of kin relationships to be found in more general works on Arthurian literature. Useful as they are, however, such studies generally avoid discussing kinship as a literary theme.

More recently Reto Bezzola examined the remarkable prevalence of the uncle-nephew relationship over the father-son in the French "chansons fédales": "Ces neveux sont un vrai motif, un topos, ils remplissent une fonction épique"—"Les neveux," in Mélanges offerts a Jean Frapprier, eds. M. R. Lebeque, et al. (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1970), p. 90. Bezzola spends his attention almost exclusively on the chanson de geste, with a brief comment on the romance. Substantial studies on the function of kinship in the romance, and particularly in Malory, are rare indeed. Stephen Miko, in the study already mentioned, is one of the few scholars so far to have seen kinship as a literary motif.

part of an authoritative tradition—though one might manage
to discern in this example an analogy, recognized by Malory
(see 1220.12-13), to Gawain's fluctuating moral strength. But
even where the motif endures because it is part of the whole
story, different authors may make it serve different thematic
ends. Indeed the search for sources often demonstrates a
writer's originality by revealing his independence from the
traditional meaning of the motifs he employs.³

The Adaptation of Motifs of Kinship to Early Romances of Love

An examination of three early romance poems—The Tristan
of Thomas of Britain, Chrétien's Cligés, and the lai of Yonec
attributed to Marie de France—reveals three different modes
of adapting kinship motifs to the needs of the new stories of
erotic love. These modes are not to be regarded as constituting
a chronological series or an evolution of literary method, but

³In the course of this study I shall be using the terms
motif, theme, and topos in the sense established by Scholes and
Kellogg in The Nature of Narrative (London: Oxford Univ. Press,
1966), p. 26:

A topos, whether it occurs in an oral narrative or
a written one, is a traditional image. . . . Insofar
as a topos refers to the external world its meaning
is a motif; insofar as it refers to the world of
disembodied ideas and concepts its meaning is a theme.
Traditional topoi consist, then, of two elements: a
traditional motif, such as the hero's descent into the
underworld, which may be extremely durable historically;
and a traditional theme, such as the search for wisdom
or the harrowing of hell, which may be more subject to
gradual change or replacement in the course of time.
The topoi of oral narratives are identifiable on the
basis of their consistent association of a given motif
with a given theme. In written narrative, on the other
hand, the relationship of motif and theme, even in a
conventional topos, is subject to the poet's manipulation.
rather as three typical devices—seen here independently—which survive, with modification, in the French romance cycles and in Malory's *Morte Darthur*. Together these modes represent an irreversible development in the narrative and thematic functions of kinship brought about by the displacement of heroic literature by the romances. In the *Tristan* (1160-70) kinship motifs of presumably heroic origin are significantly eclipsed by elements proper to the story of an absolute love. *Cligés* (c. 1176), which apparently owes some of its thematic inspiration and form to Thomas' *Tristan*, shows a more coherent combination of the dynastic tale and the love story, but the dynastic substructure serves as a principle of organization in a structurally bipartite romance. The heroic kinship motifs which survive in the *lai* of *Yonec* are retained as symbolic elements adapted by erotic themes.

In *Tristan* a story of the parents precedes that of the son. A great portion of the text of Thomas' *Tristan*, including the story of the parents, is lost. It is possible, however, to reconstruct a substantial part of the lost text by way of two medieval translations—the Norwegian *Saga of Tristram and Isén* (1226) and the English *Sir Tristrem* (late 13th cent.)—and the *Tristan* of Gottfried von Strassburg (1210-15) which is largely based on Thomas. Such a reconstruction may be found in Joseph Bédier's edition of *Tristan* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1902-5). For an account of the methods and limitations of reconstruction see Bédier, *Tristan*, II, pp. 64 f. Thomas and his derivatives represent only one branch of the medieval Tristan story. Bédier (II, p. 309) supplies a family tree of the various versions, but his hypothesis that all the branches descend from a single unknown romance is disputed. A recent critical study of the so-called "common version" of the Tristan romance is Beroul's *Romance of Tristran* by Alberto Varvaro (Manchester: University Press, 1972). Beroul's *Tristan* is available in an S. A. T. F. edition by Ernest Muret (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1903). The version Malory followed in writing his fifth tale, the thirteenth-century *Prose Tristan*, constitutes still another branch of this complex tradition.
his prowess, Rivalen-Kanelangres travels to England in order
to augment his chivalric knowledge and his renown. There he
meets Blancheflor, the sister of King Mark, falls in love with
her, and returns to his own land with her when his territories
are invaded. He falls in battle three days before Blanchflor
gives birth to Tristan and dies of grief in childbirth. The
story is in many ways similar to the corresponding one in
Cligés, as we will see later, but unlike that in Chrétien's
romance it does not extend into the story of the son's love.
The second dramatic occasion of kinship in Tristan concerns
the avuncular relationship of le Morholt to Isolde. When
Isolde discovers that Tristan (whom she does not yet love) is
the slayer of her uncle le Morholt, she, and then her mother,
intend to be revenged. Tristan talks them out of it. The
third, best known, but in fact least prominent familial situa­
tion in the romance derives from the fact that Tristan's lover's
husband is his uncle. None of these motifs plays a directly
significant or structurally important part in the love story
of Tristan and Isolde.

The evidence concerning the origin and transmission of
the legend (or legends) of Tristan in its Pictish and Welsh
forms is solely onomastic and tells us virtually nothing of
its narrative evolution prior to its appearance in romance.5
"Que disait cette légende?" Bédier asks, "Nous n'en savons
rien encore, sinon ce qui tient en une phrase, précieuse
d'ailleurs: les Gallois avaient adopté un héros picte, Drostan,

5Bédier, Tristan, II, p. 105 ff.
et l'avaient mis en rapports avec le roi Marc de Cornouailles pour une rivalité d'amour dont l'objet était la femme du roi. Rien de plus.  

Bédier then progresses through an investigation, based on previous scholarship of Gaston Paris, of the Celtic elements in the Tristan romance to a conclusion that though there are several Celtic relics in the romance, the boire amoureux is not one of them. The love-drink, like the all-consuming love that it signifies, belongs, according to Bédier, to the French stage of the story of Tristan and Isolde and may have been inspired by classical models. Bédier hypothesizes that the Celtic legendary of Tristan and Isolde consisted of a collection of adulterous tales, "un romancero d'amour cynique, triste parfois, ou l'on voit simplement une amante rusée, un amant redoutable par sa vigueur et par sa maîtrise en tous les arts primitifs, duper un mari jaloux et puissant." Tristan is characterized as "le héros d'une sorte de Décameron barbare."  

It would be possible to argue, of course, that the Celtic version of the tale was a basically heroic poem rather than a cycle of primitive fabliaux. Such an interpretation would account for the fact that Tristan is the nephew, adopted son, vassal, and only heir of the husband whose wife he must love. We can speculate—though with no real evidence—that

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6 Bédier, Tristan, II, p. 130.
8 Bédier, Tristan, II, p. 160.
9 Bédier, Tristan, II, p. 160.
the uncle-nephew relationship became established in the early stages of the Welsh period of the legend and was an essential aspect of a tale of familial loyalty undermined by erotic passion. But the avuncular relationship as it survives in Welsh literature postdates the French romance and for all we know may have been a consequence of the story of Tristan's parents: Rivalen fathers Tristan through the sister of Mark, and Tristan is given, as a result, a reason to be placed in a situation where he will love Mark's wife. Whatever the respective influence of the familial and erotic motifs upon one another during the early evolution of the Tristan legend, consanguinity is clearly subordinated in the version of Thomas of Britain to a unique thematic concern: absolute love.

After the death of his parents, Tristan is fostered in secret by Rivalen's marshal, Rouald. After a while a group of Norwegian merchants impressed by his knowledge, skill, and courtesy abduct him. He manages to escape and eventually makes his way to the court of King Mark, which he impresses by his remarkable abilities at hunting and harping. He is eventually discovered there by Rouald who reveals him to be Mark's nephew. Tristan's first request of his uncle is to return to his father's country in order to win back his rightful inheritance: "Sire, je demande maintenant que vous me donnez les armes de chevalier: car je veux gagner ma terre et venger mon père, étant maintenant en âge et en force de tenter de

10 Mark is given as Tristan's uncle in the Red Book of Hergest which is known in an early fifteenth-century manuscript.
réconquérir mon droit héritage" (Tristan, p. 60). Tristan
returns to Ermenie, besieges his father's enemy, Duke Morgan,
and demands his rights: "Sire duc ... tu occupes ma terre
contre le droit, et tu as tué mon père. Je suis fils de
Rivalen, venu céans pour réclamer mon pays héréditaire, que
tu retiens" (Tristan, p. 65). Morgan refuses to concede, is
killed, and Tristan and his followers eventually defeat the
invaders. Tristan "a vengé son père."

All this is quite typically heroic. The son, born (or
conceived) at a time of parental adversity, grows up to
repossess alienated dynastic rights. Variations of this story
appear in the Irish cycles of Conaire, Finn, and Cormac. The
motif may, in some form or other, be detected in the three
romance poems under consideration in this chapter: Tristan,
Cligés, and Yonec. In Yonec, as we shall see, the son's revenge
(Yonec avenge both his father and mother) and his accession
to his father's throne serves to signify, before anything else,
the justice and propriety of courtly love. Lacking the dimension
of revenge, the motif in Cligés underscores the trials of the
hero and his lover and the final justification of their love:
their marriage and coronation are concurrent. In Tristan, on
the other hand, the dynastic story comes to an end so that the
love story might begin. After overcoming his enemies and regain­
ing his "droit héritage," Tristan makes a speech to his followers

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1. This and subsequent similar references are to the
first volume of Bédier's edition. Page numbers refer to the
reconstructed text, line numbers to the verse original.
in which the preliminary story of the avenging son is effectively terminated:

"Beaux amis, je suis votre droit seigneur. Mais mon oncle, le roi Marke, n'a ni fils, ni fille, ni aucun hiver, sinon moi. Je veux donc retourner près de lui et le servir en tout honneur, aussi bien que je pourrai. Je donne à Roald, mon père nourricier, cette ville et tout ce qui en dépend. Il la tiendra jusqu'à sa mort. Après lui, ses fils la tiendront, en mémoire de toutes les peines qu'il a supportées pour l'amour de moi, et de la protection qu'il a donnée à mon enfance. Soyez-lui tous soumis et fidèles, car je lui transfère mon droit et mon rang. Maintenant je veux partir avec votre congé."  

(Tristan, p. 68-69)

Achieving heroic stature as the heir triumphant over the usurper, Tristan goes on to become the model love, and his uncle's rival. Yet this new relational focus on uncle and nephew, generally assumed to be a major element of the Tristan story, is not in fact all that prominent. Though Mark is occasionally referred to as Tristan's uncle (or Tristan as his nephew) he is more usually called, simply le roi. Bédier sees Tristan as suffering as a result of his recognition that his love for Isolde violates a just and necessary system of social order in which a nephew and vassal should not betray his lord uncle. "Il ne renie pas l'institution sociale, il la respecte au contraire, il en souffre, et seule, cette

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12 Tristan does eventually return to Ermenie (Tristan, p. 255), but his return is merely the author's means of bringing the hero to Brittany where he meets and marries that other Isolde, she of the white hands. There is a suggestion that Tristan receives the whole of his domains back—he is given some land at any rate—but there is no further reference to Ermenie. Interestingly enough once Tristan regains land in Ermenie—and at least one castle in Brittany—King Mark virtually fades from the story even though Tristan returns for a while to England.
souffrance confère à ses actes la beauté."\(^{13}\) It is true that Tristan is no romantic rebel against the social constrictions that prevent him from delighting freely in love, but neither does he suffer much on account of his being Mark's nephew. Indeed the fact that he is Mark's nephew gives him access to Isolde:

\(^{13}\)Bédier, Tristan, II, p. 166. Varvaro, p. 95 ff., discusses the importance of legal justification (the theme of escondit) in Beroul's Tristan and the extent to which social guilt, depending on judicial proof, replaces moral guilt. In Thomas's Tristan the apparent guilt of Tristan and Isolde depends more than anything on Mark's sentiments toward his nephew and his wife and on his interpretation of evidence, an interpretation colored by sentiment. At one point--after Tristan's return from Wales--Mark begins to suspect (yet again) that his wife and nephew are lovers. The following text, reconstructed from Gottfried, shows the character of his evidence and sentiment:

Non plus que naguère, il ne les surprit vraiment; il ne parvint pas a découvrir des preuves certaines; mais dans leurs regards, dans leur contenance, il trouva de quoi rallumer sa jalousie ... Il en conçut courroux et chagrin ... Il manda son neveu et la reine devant toute sa cour assemblée. Il leur déclare qu'il ne veut pas plus longtemps supporter le scandale, ni la peine qu'il souffre par eux. En sa tendresse, il ne veut pas les châtier par la mort: qu'ils s'en aillent loin de sa cour et de sa terre, la ou ils voudront.

(Tristan, p. 231-32: the emphases are mine.)

Bedier feels (p. 232, n. 1) that Thomas had originally given a more serious justification for this banishment. But the very idea of banishing two lovers together in punishment of their amorous conspiracies is not, after all, to be taken as a serious administration of jurisprudence. The effects of social reality are significant, in Tristan, to the extent that they succumb to love.

Later, discovering Tristan and Isolde in their exile, asleep but, as chance would have it, far apart and with a sword between them, Mark is persuaded of their innocence. The distance between them supplies circumstantial evidence of their mutual chastity--there the evidence is false--but Mark's judgement is somewhat influenced by the sight of Isolde asleep: "Isolde lui parut de beauté si merveilleuse que jamais il n'avait vu
Ils n'entendent personne parler de leurs amours ni élever sur eux le moindre soupçon, car Tristan servait la reine en tout honneur, comme le neveux du roi; et parce qu'il était de la proche parenté de Marke, son service ne semblait étrange à personne. Mais s'il advenait aux amants de ne pouvoir satisfaire leurs desirs, ils tombaient en tristesse.

(Tristan, p. 166)

If Tristan does ever suffer "duble paigne, doble dolor" it results from his marriage to one Isolde while inexorably in love with another (Tristan, 1, 1051 ff.)

The overall effect of the eclipse of kinship motifs in Thomas' Tristan is to relegate the motivations arising from bonds of kinship to a limbo of inconsequence: the power of love alone—or rather effectively seems in the psychological universe of the participants in the boire amoureux—not only supreme but unchallenged. The willingness of Isolde and her mother to forgive Tristan for killing le Morhold, though due ostensibly to the fact that Tristan has been and can be of service to them, nevertheless depends somewhat on the courtesies associated with love. Tristan pleads to Isolde that he fought the dragon in order to defend her honor: "je suis ton pleige (Tristan, p. 134). An even clearer example of this process occurs when Kaherdin reproaches Tristan for having married his sister Isolde Blanchemailains and yet refusing to consummate the marriage: "Nous allons être honnis, à la cour et hors de la cour, par l'affront que vous m'avez fait: vous faites fi de is virginité de ma soeur, et cet affront touche tous ceux qui plus belle" (Tristan, p. 241). Before leaving Mark places one of his gloves on Isolde's cheek to protect it from a ray of sunlight.
sont ses parents et ses amis. ... Nous voyons bien que vous ne voulez pas avoir de droit héritier sorti de notre race" (Tristan, p. 327). This "tort fait a toute ma parenté" is resolved in a remarkable manner. Tristan takes Kaherdin to a great cave where he has had the statues of Isolde the Fair and her attendant Bringvain placed. Kaherdin is obliged to agree that even Bringvain is more beautiful than his sister, falls in love with her, and desires to meet her. The conflict between him and Tristan is instantly transformed: to prove himself a friend Tristan must now show him the real woman represented in the statue. Tristan consents and they sail for England. The very need to avenge a dishonor to the family vanishes in the face of all-powerful love.

Thomas' concentration on the effects of love amounts to a telling suppression, or displacement, of the motivational order based on kinship. Cligés presents a different approach to the adoption of familial motifs in a tale of love; the motifs do not give way to love story, they form a structural foundation to the narrative of the lovers' trials and eventual success. Here as in Tristan the story of the son follows the story of the parents.¹⁴ The first part of Cligés, comprising a third of the work, tells of the inner tribulations suffered

by Alexander, a Greek guest at Arthur's court, and Soredamors before the revelation of their unspoken love for one another. The second part describes the bizarre series of trials which Cligés, the son of Alexander and Soredamors, and Fénice must undergo before they can marry. The familiar kinship tale of usurpation and recovered inheritance links the two sections.

When his father, the Greek emperor, dies, Alexander's younger brother Alis assumes through duplicity for which he is not responsible the throne to which Alexander is entitled. Upon Alexander's return to Constantinople, the brothers settle on a compromise: Alis will remain an emperor in title while Alexander rules; Alis will never marry and therefore never get an heir; when Alis dies, Cliges will succeed to the imperial throne. After his brother's death, however, Alis breaks his oath and decides to marry Fénice, daughter of the German emperor, and sends Cligés to escort her to Constantinople. Cligés and Fénice fall in love and—after several trials and ruses including a nearly catastrophic false-death—come together. Alis eventually dies as a result of his loss of Fénice, and two predicaments are concurrently resolved: Cligés becomes emperor and he marries Fénice. The original marriage of Fénice and Alis represents a double dispossession for Cligés: he is separated from his love and at the same time from his potential dynastic rights. No epic hero he, Cligés is not particularly provoked by his uncle's scheme to rob him of his kin-right to the throne; his indifference in this regard does not cloud his honor. It is his alienation from his beloved that he must overcome.
In an unpublished dissertation, Eleanor Otlewski demonstrates that the connection between the story of the parents and the story of the son is mainly an ideological one: "There can be no doubt that the two-fold division of Cligés provides a structural foundation in which parallels and contrasts can be used effectively to compare two generations. Whether this is seen in terms of a progression from selfish, personal concerns to social awareness or of a juxtaposition of two sets of values, both phases are intrinsic to the poet's sans and the ultimate meaning of the romance can only be derived from an understanding of their relative positions."15 Yet while filiation unites the two stories, it also advances the meaning of the romance by highlighting the theme of love. Descent occasions a system of rights, duties, and loyalties which the honorable vocation of knight-errancy supercedes.

Alexander leaves Greece to seek Arthur's court despite the persuasions of his father the emperor to remain:

Biax filz, por Deu ne dites!
Cist païs est vostres toz quites,
Et Costantinoble la riche... 
Demain vos ferai coroner,
Et chevaliers seroiz demain.
Tote Grece iert an vostre main,
Et de noz barons recevrez,
Si con recoivre les devez,
Les seiremanz et les homages.
Qui ce refuse il n'est pas sages.

(Pair son, for God's sake don't say you'll go.
This land is entirely yours, as is rich Constantinople... Tomorrow I shall have you crowned and made a knight. All Greece lies at your hand, and from our barons you will receive, as is right you should, oaths

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15 Otlewski, p. 193.
and homage. Anyone who refuses such an offer is not wise.)

(121-32)\(^{16}\)

Alexander prefers to refuse this paternal bribe and the kind of wisdom that justifies it in order to join the retinue of the king "De cui si granz est li renons/ De corteisie et de proesce" (150-51: of whom so great is the renown in courtesy and might). Alexander's quest of courtesy and prowess is successful; it ends in marriage with Soredamors and the fathering of Cligés. But a consequence of his absence is Alis' usurpation of the throne.

There is a remarkable contrast between Alexander's energetic assistance of Arthur in Arthur's war against the rebel Count Angrés—Alexander proves his worth in battle—and his rather mild-tempered accommodation of Alis. The treaty between the brothers mainly provides the narrator with a device for obstructing the love between Cligés and Fénice. Cligés shows absolutely no concern with the potential usurpation of his own kin-right to the throne by his uncle's plan to marry: he is "par amors conduit." The political problem, resulting from the rights of filiation, plays a secondary function to the author's (and the hero's) single-minded concern:

La volante de son corage  
Toz jorz en un panser le tient:  
De Fénice li resoivent  
Qui loing de lui se retravaille.  
(The force of his feeling keeps a single thought continually in his mind: His mind reaches out for Fénice who afflicts him from far off.)

(5016-19)

\(^{16}\)This and subsequent quotations are taken from Alexandre Micha's edition, Les romans de Chrétien de Troyes (Paris: Champion, 1957), vol. II.
It is only once Cligés and Fénice are discovered after several years of pleasant concealment that Cligés presses a claim to the throne, requesting Arthur's assistance. But no battle ensues because Alis dies of grief. Coronation and marriage then occur hand in hand:

> Et s'amie a fame li donent,  
> Endeus ansanble les coronent.  
> (And they give him his friend for a wife  
> and crown both of them together.)

(6631-32)

The implications of sonship which, in the first part of the romance, prove to be a potential obstruction to chivalric worship and chivalric love come to signify at the end of the tale the accomplishment of love.

Cligés is reminiscent of Havelok the Dane where also the themes of usurpation and love are interwoven. But in Havelok, which displays a more heroic sense than Cligés, the union of Havelok and Goldeboru is subordinated to their recovery of Denmark and England from usurping regents. The point of Havelok is that both Denmark and England are allied by their pledges of "manrede" to Havelok and Goldeboru. In Chrétien's romance, as in Marie's lai, filiation possesses a structural and symbolic function with respect to the narrative expression of love. What we find in Cligés that we do not find in Yonec is the paradoxical usage of kinship to represent on the one hand a system of obligations which demands of chivalric pursuits transcend and on the other hand a system of affiliation and continuity which allows the poet to express the durability and
triumph of chivalric values. We will find something of this use of kinship in the *Morte Darthur*.

The *lai* of *Yonec* concludes with an action which ought to be more at home in an epic or a saga than in a sentimental romance: at his mother's instigation young Yonec kills his father's slayer. A synopsis of the story, however, begins to show to what extent this stark, ancient motif speaks not for revenge but for the fresh concept of *amur*.

An old and wealthy citizen of "Caruënt" marries a lovely, courteous *pucele* not to honor her youth and beauty but to assure himself of an heir. Distrusting her attractions he locks her in a tower where she can have no visitors. After seven years of isolation, watched over by the husband's sister, she is astonished one April day by the arrival of a young knight, Muldumarec, who flies to her cell in the shape of a bird. She accepts his love—he is *mult curteis* and can prove as well that his magic is not diabolical—and the affair makes her so happy that her husband grows suspicious. Through the espionage of his sister he learns of the bird-man's visits and has sharp spikes placed in the window casement through which he must enter. Muldumarec arrives, is mortally wounded, and, before returning to his own land, predicts that the lady will bear a son—to be called Yonec—who will comfort her and grow to become the avenger of this crime.

Once Muldumarec has gone, the lady leaps from the window and follows the trail of his blood down the road, through an opening in a hillside, across a meadow, into a silver-towered city, and eventually to a bedroom where she finds her fairy-
lover dying among splendid candelabra. Before sending her
away he gives her a ring that will make her husband forget
these recent events and a sword to be kept until it is time
for their son to use. The lady returns home and Yonec is born.

Years later, after his knighting, Yonec, his mother,
and his assumed father go on a pilgrimage to an abbey in the
neighboring country of "Karlion." In the abbey chapter house
they come across a rich sarcophagus and learn that it contains
the remains of a former king who died for the love of a foreign
lady. Since his death the throne has been vacant, awaiting his
son. Hearing this, Yonec's mother tells him that it is his
father, killed by cist villarz, who lies in the tomb. She
gives Yonec the sword, tells the story of Muldumarec, and
dies of sorrow. Yonec kills his step-father. When the people
learn of these events they bury the lady alongside her lover
and make Yonec their seigneur.

The lai of Yonec contains two kinship motifs: the
extraordinary conception and the revenge of the father's
murder. Scholars who researched the possible sources of the
lai were unable to discover any previous combination of these
two motifs and have typically emphasized the composite character
of the work.17

Studies in Philology, 11 (1913), 26-60. This article is a
condensation of "The Celtic origin of the lai of Yonec," Revue
Celtique, 31 (1910), 413-71. Cross treats Yonec as a pastiche
of remade Celtic motifs and produced a number of Middle Irish
analogues in support of his thesis. He proposed several
parallels to the motif of the "semi-supernatural son." Yet,
as we shall see later, in none of the Irish tales in which this
motif appears does the birth of the son have any consequence,
R. N. Illingworth, for example, declares that a successful inquiry into the sources of the lai must begin with the recognition of "certain fundamental inconsistencies" in its plot. These inconsistencies—such as the lady's harmless leap from the barbed window where her lover was wounded, and the fact that the faerie silver city in the hillside becomes just a place down the road at the end of the tale—indicate, in Illingworth's opinion, that Yonec or its immediate, and hypothetical, model combined two previously independent stories. The first is the story "of a mortal lady who is visited by a supernatural lover in the form of a bird" and the second is "of a son who is born after the death of his father and who subsequently kills his father's murderer." Illingworth traced the first motif back to two Irish stories: the Togail Bruidne as it does in Yonec, on the story of the parents. Cross' comments on the second motif somewhat begs the question of its antecedents: "Stories of revenge are by no means uncommon in early Celtic literature, and it is entirely possible that the revenge motif which forms an important part of the final episode of Yonec, got attached to the story before it passed out of Celtic hands" (p. 28). In an article responding to what he saw as a Celticist's single-minded recourse to Irish influences, M. B. Ogle, in "Some Theories of Irish influence and the Lay of Yonec," Romantic Review, 10 (1919), pp. 123-48, argues that Marie de France could have borrowed the elements for her story from her classical and biblical readings. Ogle puts forth, for instance, the story of the Anunciation as a possible inspiration for Muldumarec's prophesy of a son and the bestowal of his name. He suggests non-Celtic analogues to the episode of Yonec's revenge: "thus Perseus slays Acrisius who first shut Denae up in her brazen tower and then, after the birth of the child, exposed her, and Romulus kills Amulius who had cast his mother into the Tiber because he did not believe that Mars was the father of the twins" (p. 147). But Ogle's scholarship too is basically anatomical.


19 Illingworth, p. 505.
Da Derga (The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel) and the Snám Da Én (The Ford of the Two Birds). In the first of these, as in Yonec, the bird-man predicts the birth of a son and names him. Like Yonec this child, Conaire, grows up to become king. In the Snám Da Én no son is conceived; once her supernatural lover has been killed, the lady dies of sorrow, and her death causes her husband to die of grief.

The Snám Da Én is ostensibly an etymological tale: "I will tell you truthfully the names of the birds from whom Snám Da Én is called: a tale of wrongs that confronts this concourse, the origin of the ever glorious crossing." The ford is the site of a tale of wrongs, the killing of the bird-lover and his foster-brother, who accompanies him in the form of a bird. "In an evil hour they come to the tryst, and Estiu came to meet them. Conall Cernach's son came on them from behind, heavy was the harm!" It is impossible to say where exactly Marie took the idea of the bird-lover, but of the analogues which Illingworth described, this one comes closest to having a purpose like that which Marie saw in her own lai:

Cil ki ceste aventure oirent
lunc tens apres un lai en firent,
de la peine e de la dolur
que cil sufirent pur amur.
(Those who heard of these events made a lai

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21 Snám Da Én, Illingworth, p. 508.

22 Ibid.
of them long afterwards concerning the pain and sorrow that these suffered for love.

Marie's lai is, then, about love and its martyrs. The question we must eventually answer concerns the function of a son in this scheme. In the Togail Bruidne Da Derga and the two stories which Illingworth offers as likely sources of the motif of the son's revenge—Fotha Catha Chuirta and Cath Maige Mucrama—the central characters are not the parents but the sons, Conaire, Finn, and Cormac, respectively. These stories concern the conception, birth, and coming into his own of the hero; Marie on the other hand developed the sentimental potential of the tale of the union of the parents and subordinated its issue to that story.

In the Togail Bruidne Da Derga, the union between the bird-man, Eterscélè, and the lady forms a subordinate motif to that of Conaire's extraordinary conception, for the tale is not about the lovers but about their son: "Conaire is represented as a model king, who was induced by the hidden influence of the Æs side to violate his gesa (religious prohibitions, or taboos), thus bringing upon himself an inevitable doom." 24

The story of Eterscélè and the lady is an episode in the

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23 This and subsequent quotations from Marie's lais are taken from Warnke's edition, Die Lais der Marie de France (Halle: Niemeyer, 1925).

24 Eleanor Knott and Gerard Murphy, Early Irish Literature (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966), p. 139. For a discussion of the Æs side, "a spirit folk living close to human beings, but normally concealed from them," see p. 104 ff.
enfances of Conaire, and it is briefly told. Clothed in a bird-skin Eterscéle visits a girl abandoned, because she is an improperly female heir, by her father the king of Ulster. She has been hidden in a wicker hut. "Now while she was there next morning she saw a bird on the skylight coming to her, and he leaves his bird-skin on the floor of the house and went to her and captured her, saying, 'They are coming to thee from the king to wreck thy house and to bear thee to him by force. And thou wilt be pregnant by me and bear a son, and that son must not kill birds. And Conaire shall be his name." Eterscéle himself is a king, and the girl is the grand-daughter through her mother, of the King of Ireland. Conceived by royalty, Conaire himself becomes king of Ireland.

The *Fotha Catha Cnucha* (The Cause of the Battle of Cnucha) is a twelfth-century account of the origin of Finn son of Cumall. It tells how Tagd instigates the death of Cumall who eloped with his daughter, Murni Muncaim. Finn, son of this elopement, later challenges Tagd who, unwilling to fight him, cedes his stronghold, Almu, to the hero. Yonec, like Finn, revenges his father's death and becomes king, but the Irish story-teller's interest is in the accession of the son while Marie's is in the love of the parents. In the *Cath Maige Mucrama* (The Battle of Mag Mucrime) Cormac demonstrates

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25 *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, Illingworth, p. 506.
26 W. M. Hennessy, "The Battle of Cnucha; a medieval Irish text, with a translation," *Revue Celtique* 2 (1873-75), 86-93.
through a youthful show of salomonic wisdom that he is "the son of the true prince" and proves therefore his kin-right to his father's throne. The usurper, Mac Con, is killed by the poisonous tooth of Aillil, who bites him in the cheek. Aillil's sons had been casualties, years earlier, at the battle of Mag Mucrimé where Art, Cormac's father, lost his life on the day after the conception of his son:

47. Art sleeps with the girl that night. It was then that Cormac was conceived. He (Art) told her that she would bear a son, and that son would be king of Ireland. Then he declared to her every hidden treasure which he had concealed for the benefit of that son. And Art said that he would be killed on the morrow, and he bids her farewell. And he told her to give their son for fosterage to his friend (one) of the Connaughtmen. And on the morrow he went to battle.29

The episode is anticipatory. In a passage that reminds us of Pelleas' interest in uniting his daughter with Lancelot to produce Galahad, the girl's father says to Art, "Sleep with

28On the subject of the Germanic idea of kin-right to a throne, Fritz Kern writes, "The early medieval kind did not come to the throne through a simple personal right of inheritance. He did, it is true, as a rule possess a certain hereditary reversionary right, or at least a privileged 'throne-worthiness' in virtue of his royal descent. But it was the people who summoned him to the throne with the full force of law, in as much as they chose from among the members of the ruling dynasty either the next in title or the fittest." Kingship and Law in the Middle Ages (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968), p. 12. This concept of kin-right can apply in the Cath Maige Mucrama. The court recognizes Cormac's title to that of his foster-father. But nature itself lends a hand in assuring the eventual deposition of the usurper: "For a year after that was he in kingship in Tara, and no grass came through ground, nor leaf through trees, nor grain into corn. When the men of Ireland rejected him from his kingship because he was a false prince" (Stokes, p. 463).

29Stokes, p. 455.
my daughter tonight, O Art. It hath been foretold to me that a great grandeur will be born of me." In Marie, as we shall see, Yonéc's father sees his future son as the avenger of his death.

Conaire, Finn, and Cormac are conceived under dramatic circumstances, though only Conaire's conception, being semi-supernatural, is extraordinary and intended to enhance his heroic charisma. The origins of Finn and Cormac are notable, and they are associated with a crime against the father which becomes the hero's duty to set right as son: Finn through his courage, Cormac by words of wisdom. Yet despite the extension in absentia of one of the parents and his story, the tale of the union of the parents is not developed to any great extent. Cumall is obviously possessive of Murni Muncaim—"Cumall said he would not give her; but everything he would give, and not the woman," when Cond required that she be returned to her father—but we hear little more about their relationship. Eterscéle "captures" the abandoned girl, breeds Conaire, and departs, and Art begets Cormac on a blacksmith's daughter the night before he dies. The story of the conception is not a story of love. The literal event of conception has no sentimental, allegorical, or symbolic dimension. Its significance is manifest; the conception of the hero and the continuance of noble blood. Likewise the motif and theme of revenge constitute a formulaic unit founded on the notion of

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30 Stokes, p. 455.

31 Hennessy, pp. 90-1.
the retributive duty of a kinsman. These are traditional and familiar topoi into which the poet injects no novel significance. The motif literally indicates the theme.

In Yonec, however, the theme of love denatures, as it were, the original topoi of kinship. The literal relation between motif and theme gives way to a more symbolic one; the avenging son appears in a tale whose main thematic concern, fin amors, has little place for filiation and dynastic concerns. Though students of sources may be able to conjecture or identify the adoption of pre-romance motifs by the romance writer, they cannot thereby explain the innovative function of the motif in the romance. Yet the operation of a motif of kinship in a lai of Marie de France is virtually unprecedented.

The prologue of Yonec implies that the subject of the lai will be its titular hero once the poet disposes of parental preliminaries:

En pense ai e en talant
que d'Yonec vus die avant
dunt il fu nez, e de sun pere
cum il vint primes a sa mere.
Cil ki engendra Yonec
aveit a num Muldumarec.
(I have it in mind and desire to tell you of Yonec, first of all whence he was born, and how his father first came to his mother. He who engendered Yonec was named Muldumarec.

(5-10)

But this is not the case. Despite the presentation of Muldumrec and the dame as Yonec's parents, apparently significant as his genitors, it is they who constitute the controlling element of the kin set. The structural proportions of the plot offer some indication of this arrangement: the birth of Yonec occurs in verse 463 out of a total of 562, and only about a third of the
final lines specifically deals with his actions. The rest of
the end-story describes the pilgrimage to Karlion and presents
a recapitulation of the parents' aventure. The subordination
of Yonec is not merely quantitative; the role of this character
is to advance the story of the lovers.

A moment before the bird-man's first appearance, the
lady voices a complaint, recalling the romantic stories she
has heard of knights and their lovers:

Chevalier trovoent puceles
a lur talent, gentes e beles,
e dames truvoent amanz
beals e curteis, pruz e vaillanz,

Deus, kii de tut a poeste,
il en face ma volente!
(Knights found girls of their desire,
gentle and lovely, and ladies found
lovers handsome and courteous, brave
and valiant. ... May God who has
power over all fulfill my wish.)

As an answer to this prayer Muldumarec arrives:

Jevo vus ai lungement amee
e en mun quer mult desiree;
unkes femme fors vus n'amai
ne ja mes altre n'ameral.
(Long have I loved you and much
desired you in my heart; I never
loved any woman beside you and will
never love any other.)

The lovers are not meeting for the purpose of breeding. Indeed
Yonec's coming is somewhat adventitious, disclosed by the bird-
man as he lies wounded and incapacitated:

Il la cunforte dulcement
e dit que duels n'i valt nient.
De lui est enceinte d'enfant,
un fiz avra pruz e vaillant:
icil la recunfortera.
Yonec numer le fera.
Il vengera e lui e li,
il oscira sun enemi.
Il n'i pu et dunc demurer mes,
kar sa plaie seignot ades.
(Gently he comforts her and tells her
that grief is worth little. By him
she is pregnant; she will bear a brave
and valiant son who will comfort her.
She will name him Yonec. He will
avenge them both, he will slay her enemy.
He cannot remain any longer, for the
wound bled openly.)

(329-58)

The second prophesy, which Muldumarec speaks on his deathbed
after he reassures his lover—"Li chevaliers l'aseura"—
that the magic ring will make her husband forget all that
happened, is more specific. He gives her a sword to keep until
it is needed:

Quant il sera creuz e granz
 e chevaliers pruz e vaillanz,
a une feste u ele irra
sun seignur e lui amerra.
En une abeie vendrunt;
par une tumbe qu'il verrunt
orrunt renowler sa mort
 e cum il fu ocis a tort.
Iluec li baillera l'espee.
(When he is grown and large and a brave
and valiant knight, to a feast to which
she will go she will bring her lord and
him. They will come to an abbey; by a
tomb that they will see they will hear
an account of his death and how he was
wrongly killed. She will then hand
over the sword.)

(429-36)

When Muldumarec says that he has been "ocis a tort" he means
as a lover and not as a king: the husband's crime is that of
the gelus—the enemy of courtly love—and not of the usurper.

The ethical atmosphere of the lai of Yonec is determined
by the bealte, curteisie, and mezura associated with the
cult of courtly love. The first offense against the proprieties of love is the marriage of the possessive old citizen and the fair young lady: "Grant pechie fist ki li dona" (28: A great sin sinned he who gave her away); the second is the killing of Muldumarec. Just as each lover is ami to the other, so the husband is their enemi, the enemy in fact of proper love, which, in this scheme, can only exist outside marriage. The husband marries not for love but because he values an heir, a son who will assure the continuation of his family. His sense of priorities would not have offended the audience of heroic poetry but it would offend the erotic sensibilities of Marie's readers and auditors. In a sense therefore Yonec's killing of his step-father repudiates the familial pattern of husband-wife-heir. But understanding the function of the fiz in Yonec depends on understanding the nature of the character of Yonec in the lai.

The Irish stories concern the hero; Marie's lay does not concern Yonec or even his parents in the same way. The tales of the Celtic heroes relate, in a quasi-historical fashion, how Conaire (or Finn or Cormac) was born and came into his own. Marie's lai intends to show how those lovers, represented by Muldumarec and the dame, who suffer for love are vindicated. One senses how this is not a story about

32 Marie makes one of her rare interventions as commenting narrator at the moment of the husband's arrangement to entrap Muldumarec: "Deus! qu'il ne sout la traison/ Que aparaillot le felun!" (295-96: God! That he but knew the treason which that felon was preparing!). The husband's intended crime is not murder itself, but a traison to the erotic system of things.
Muldumarec, the *dame* (unnamed), or Yonec in the same sense that the *Fotha Catha Cnucha* is a story about Finn. Yonec might, with qualification, be called an *exemplum* of love. Their story is a model of the tale of love, jealousy, and suffering.

The set of characters is typical enough of romance personae: the *bele pucele*, and the *curteis chevaliers*. Yonec himself, as a knight, receives the conventional, superlative description of a romance *chevaliers*:

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El regne ne pot u r n  trover
si bel, si pruz ne si vaillant,
si large ne si despendant.
(In the realm could be found none so
fair, so brave and valiant, so generous
and so liberal.)
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(466-68)

Yet he lacks a certain substantiality which the other characters, however conventional, possess. Although we have some insight into the sentiments and motives of the others, we perceive Yonec virtually as an object, a surface with no dimension of feeling, a speechless personage, and finally one who performs no independent action. His single act, the slaying of his step-father, is a response to a double prophesy, a kind of narrative reflex:

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Quant sis fiz veit que morte fu /*sa mere*/
sun parastre a le chief tolu.
De l'espee ki fu son pere
a dunc vengie lui e sa mere.
(When her son saw that his mother was dead
he cut off his step-father's head. By the
sword that was his father's he therefore
avenged him and his mother.)
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(547-50)

The impression is of a character who is little more than the tool of the biding sword of justice. The medieval character
often seems to have one foot planted in the abstract of his kind, and as a knight Yonec is more than customarily dematerialized. His primary role is as *fiz*. By the intervention of symbolism Marie makes this essential filiation do a service for love.  

Marie makes use of the son of love in *Yonec* and *Milun*.  

Milun brings the parent-lovers back together, Yonec vindicates

33 John Stevens, *Medieval Romance* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973). See chapter 7, "The Images of Romance," p. 142 ff. Stevens refers to two of Marie's *lais* to illustrate his thesis that one of the principal elements separating romance from other forms of fiction is its prominent use of "image." He hesitates to define "image" and uses examples from Laustic and Guigemar to explain his meaning. The events described in *Laustic* are these: a lady who habitually passes her time at an open window watching her lover below puts off her suspicious husband by telling him that she is listening to the nightingale. In spite he has the bird killed. She wraps the bird in an ornate shroud and sends it to her lover who places it in a casket and keeps it forever with him. The nightingale is an "image." Marie "is totally reticent about the 'meaning' of the nightingale. She could have said, 'The nightingale signifies a beautiful innocent love; the brutality of its death signifies the cruel misapprehension that the world always affords to beauty and innocence; the right incarceration signifies the high value which ought to be set on such a precious thing.'" But there is none of this" (p. 143).

34 In *Milun* filiation brings about the triumph of love. As in *Yonec* a boy is conceived during a love affair. In this case, however, the lady is unmarried at the time and parturition occurs in secret. The son is brought up by the lady's sister. While her lover, Milun, is away the lady marries. Milun returns and for twenty years the couple communicates from afar through letters cached in a swan. Meanwhile in "Norhumbre" the son reaches maturity and, learning that his father was a great knight, puts himself to a task of emulation. Milun eventually learns of this foreign knight's deeds and, envious of his reputation, rides out to confront him. Father and son, unknown to one another, meet at a tournament. The young knight unhorses the old and regrets the encounter when he discovers his opponent's age. Milun then notices on the knight's hand a ring which his lady had left with their child. After a questioning he recognizes his son and tells him of his obstructed
their love by slaying their enemy. But his function is complex.
In Muldumarec's first prophesy Yonec is described as a cunfort to his mother (icil la recunfortera). But toward what end and in what sense does he give her strength or ease? Once the husband is slain the lady is reunited with her lover in the grave--and Yonec, almost in an aside, is made king:

love for his mother. The son resolves to set things right:

Li fiz respunt: "Par fei, bels pere, assemblerai vus e ma mere. Sun seignur qu'ele a oicirai e espuser la vus feral.
(The son replies, "By my faith, dear father, I shall bring you and my mother together. I shall kill her lord and make you marry her.")

As they return they learn that the husband has died--Marie appears to have succumbed to a scruple. Still it is their son, common fruit of their love, who is the single agent of their reunion:

Unc ne demanderent parent: senz cunseil de tute altre gent lur fiz amdous les assembla, la mere a sun pere dona. En grant bien e en grant dulcur vesquirent puis e nuit e jur.
(They did not consult their kinfolk. Without the deliberation of anyone their son brought the two of them together, he gave his mother to his father. They lived in great wealth and great sweetness night and day thereafter.)

There are obvious differences between the outcome of Yonec and the happier resolution of Milun, differences as well in the presentation of the two sons. The son of Milun makes, despite his anonymity, a more substantial figure than does Yonec; he stands out as a more substantially physical testament to his parents' enduring love. As an "image" he is somewhat upstaged by the faithful messenger swan. But his sonship functions in the same symbolic way that Yonec's does, vindicating love: "lur fiz amdous les assembla."

The notion of cunfort appears elsewhere in Marie. In the lai of Milun, for instance, the hero grieves upon learning that his lady has been given in marriage by her father; but he returns home and finds comfort in geographical proximity:
Puis que si fu dunc avenu
e par la cite fu seu,
a grant honur la dame unt prise
e el sarcu posee e mise
delez le cors de sun ami;
Deus lur face bone merci!
Lur seignur firent d'Yonec,
ainz que il partissent d'ilec.
(After this had happened and was known
in the city, they took the lady with great
honor and placed her in the tomb beside
the body of her friend; may God have
mercy on them! They made Yonec their lord
before they went from there.)

Yonec's revenge of his father's murder, his declared role as
cunfort, and his accession to his father's throne triply produce
a single effect, that of inducing in the reader a kind of
sentimental intuition of the propriety of courtly love. The
fiz, in Yonec, like other elements of this and later romances,
is basically imagistic. His filiation belongs to this story
of love because it provides Marie with an analogy of the endur-
ance and justice of love. The real object of Yonec's cunfort
is, in a sense, the reader.

Milun revint en sun pais.
Mult fu dolenz, mult fu pensis,
grant deol fist, grant doel demena;
mes de ceo se recunforta
que pres esteit de sa cuntree
cele qu'il tant aveit amee.
(Milun returns to his country. He was
very sad and pensive he made great sorrow;
but he was comforted by this, that close
to his country was she whom he had so loved.

The meaning of cunfort was sometimes associated with
deduit (joy). In most cases—in the medieval lyric at any
rate—its significance approximates the idea of aid or easement
and is used in connection with the words alegement, aie, garison,
guerredon, and merir. Georges Lavis, L'expression de
l'affectivite dans la poesie lyrique francaise du moyen age
The comparison of the function of kinship motifs in Yonec and its attributed sources shows to what extent Marie was able to adopt a traditional matiere to express a novel sen derived from emerging twelfth-century ideas of love. In this process of analogical adaptation the original and more literal themes, those associated with kinship, are displaced or eclipsed altogether by the new ideas. Rhetoric showed the medieval romancer the way, as Vinaver puts it, "to a purposeful refashioning of traditional material, and the adaptor could become to all intents and purposes an original author, except that, unlike some authors, he would care above all for the way in which he told his stories and measure his achievement in terms of such new significance as he was able to confer upon an existing body of facts."36

The motif of the son who regains his dynastic rights is present in some form in the three romances which we have examined, and each gives us an example of a mode of application, a way in which the author conferred new significance, or a significant new treatment, upon existing facts. In Tristan the motif is fulfilled before the principal love story is undertaken. Tristan's defeat of Morgan is described as a revenge of the father's death. Though it is possible that in Thomas' lost text both father and mother, who dies as a consequence of Rivalen's death, were said to be avenged by Tristan, the episode has, from the very start of the romance, a dynastic rather than an erotic character. Tristan's

36Rise of Romance, p. 33.
repossession of Ermenie lacks the special overtones of Yonec's return to his dead father's kingdom, and the story is consummated in its heroic denouement. Chrétien transforms the story of usurpation and extends it, relating it to Alexander's own deferral of his kin right for a pursuit of chivalric glories and the love that ensues. The story of the father and the story of the son are structurally combined by way of the actions of Alis.

It is in Marie's lai that we find the clearest and most effective allegorization of the filial motif. Still, the operation of kinship in Tristan and Olives is not merely a negative one. The very fading into insignificance of the kinship motifs found in Thomas is significant; the repeated suppression of potent familial obligations serves to magnify the power and the scope of love. The dynastic substructure of Chrétien's romance to some extent symbolizes the moral progress of the lovers; their victory over the usurper coincides with a triumph over the impediments to marriage.

Admittedly Malory owes no direct debt to these early authors. His "Tale of Sir Tristram" shares little in form, spirit, and even content with the Tristan of Thomas, and there exists only a superficial, and we might say corrupted, resemblance between Malory's version of the "Chevalier de la Charette" and Chrétien's original. Yet as we will see in the following chapters Malory's use of motifs of kinship more closely resembles the methods of his romance predecessors than those of the
heroic writers. Just as the idea of noble descent serves to express the enduring values of chivalry, so consanguinity, in the Morte Darthur, serves to dramatize these values. Malory's approach is generally similar to that of Thomas, Chrétien, and Marie, while chivalry rather than love governs the significance of the kinship motifs.

A second similarity suggests itself. The coincidence of kinship and erotic love in the early romances does not constitute an opposition of values. In Malory likewise the relationship of kinship to chivalry ought not to be regarded as describing an incompatibility of codes, of two existential systems equally potent yet tragically irreconcilable. As we will see, Malory tends to underplay those aspects of kinship which may conflict with chivalric values and to dwell on the "naturall love" of kinsmen, a love which enhances rather than disrupts the chivalric order. Before turning to Malory, however, we might examine the tradition behind his immediate sources. The evolution of the comprehensive Arthurian story from Geoffrey of Monmouth's History of the Kings of Britain to the post-Vulgate cycle represented a tremendous accumulation of characters. This literary population explosion coincided with a proportionate genealogical ramification: in Geoffrey a little over a dozen characters may be said to be related to Arthur, in the Vulgate cycle the number is closer to a hundred. Kinship furthermore acquires a renewed dramatic importance in these stories, yet the comprehensive romances continue to adapt kinship motifs to symbolic ends.
The Development of Kinship in the Comprehensive Arthurian Story

The authors of the prose cycles united the earlier pseudo-historians' attempts to relate the whole Arthurian story within a historical context with the romancers' interest in significations. The resulting products, though unified in spirit and overall narrative scheme, read like material and thematic mazes. The tremendous, and virtually sudden, literary boom, the aggregation of innumerable episodes and characters—Sommer's Vulgate Index lists some fifteen hundred named characters—posed certain logistical narrative challenges which kinship helped solve. Genealogy supplied the eclectic prose romancers with an expandable substructure upon which they could enlarge the existing Arthurian tradition. Kin relationships furnished at times expedients of motivation. What concerns us here, however, are not the convenient strategies for organizing a vast and somewhat pluralistic literary product, but rather the manner in which kin relationships became important to the comprehensive Arthurian story, important both as occasions for moral and religious thematic statement and as motivational resources in the creation of plot and character.

The expanding fabric of kinship produced motivational relationships between characters, and the establishment of several virtually unconnected kindreds furnished a framework of tensions which characters could act upon. While kinship in the prose romances was being used to signify, even to the point of allegory, various aspects of erotic, chivalric, and religious topics, the literal base itself was expanding. The families grew in size and number and provided a resource for
motivation and action not to be found in the more limited scope of the early verse romances. The outline of this evolution, too complex to present here, can be discerned in the development of Arthur's kindred. Among the kinsmen of the king, Mordred presents the most outstanding process of growth—from a name to Arthur's incestuous son.\textsuperscript{37}

It was Geoffrey of Monmouth, so far as we know, who made Mordred into Arthur's nephew and fabricated the occasion

\textsuperscript{37}J.D. Bruce, "Mordred's Incestuous Birth," traces the literary history of Mordred in order to establish that the incestuous birth was invented by the author of the Vulgate Mort Artu. He observes that this author "endeavored to intensify the tragedy of Arthur's downfall by representing the chief agent in this catastrophe as being the offspring of the monarch's incestuous relations with his own sister" (p. 204). In "La naissance incestueuse de Mordred," Micha suggests that the motif could have been inspired by the legend, appearing in the tenth-century Vita Sancti Egidii and the Icelandic Karlamagnusaga, that Charlamagne engendered Roland through an incestuous relationship with his sister Gille. Mordred's incestuous birth does not represent the only case in which illicit procreation is given as the origin of an unseemly character. The false Guinevere who causes Arthur and his kingdom so many difficulties (Sommer IV 5-82, 369-99; for a summary of the episode see Lot, p. 313 ff.) by her resemblance to the genuine queen in the second part of the Lancelot branch of the Vulgate cycle is described, by the Lancelot-writer and in somewhat greater detail by the author of the later Estoire de Merlin, as the natural daughter of Guinevere's father Leodegan (Sommer II 148-49). In an episode reminiscent of David's treatment of Uriah, Leodegan sends his senescal on a campaign against the Irish in order to enjoy his wife. On the same night that he fathers his legitimate daughter "il estaint les chieres & puis alla gesir auoc la feme al senescal" (Sommer II 149.8: He put out the candles and went to lie with the senescal's wife). The two Guineveres are born on the same day: "On ne connoist mie lune de lautre se ne fust lenseigne de la coroune que ele /the true Guinevere/ auoit es rains deriere" (Sommer II 149.19-20: No one could tell the difference between one and the other except by the figure of a crown on Guinevere's "rains deriere"). The writer considers this act to be a great dishonor to the senescal. The consequences of this sin do not fall on its author's head as tragically as Arthur's sins on his own head in the case of Mordred.
for his rebellion, namely his regency during Arthur's continental wars. Geoffrey's account of the battle of Camlan in which Arthur and Mordred are killed derives from a historical caption for the year 537 in the *Annales Cambriae*: "Gueith Camlann in qua Arthur et Medraut corruerunt." All we know from this reference is that the two men died on the same occasion. We do not learn whether they were allies or opponents, uncle and nephew or not, or the cause of the battle. It is possibly as a result of their passage through Geoffrey's imagination that Arthur and Mordred became hostile kinfolk. There is no statement in Geoffrey's *History* that the enemies killed one another, yet the passage allows for later development along those lines: Arthur's retainers "hacked a way through with their swords and Arthur continued to advance, inflicting terrible slaughter as he went. It was at this point that the accursed traitor was killed (Concidit namque proditur ille nefandus) and many thousands of his men with him."39

Geoffrey makes Mordred Arthur's nephew by his sister Anna and her husband King Lot. He is working backwards from the reference in the *Annales Cambriae* where he has found a name for Arthur's final opponent. Making Mordred Arthur's nephew

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prepares the way for his nomination to regency and subsequent rebellion. Mordred has no other function in the *History*. After the glancing mention of his birth—along with Gawain's, his brother—Mordred sinks out of the narrative until Arthur is about to leave for the continent. Mordred is the brother of Gawain, Arthur's faithful knight, and the contrast between them is manifest, though Geoffrey does not exploit this relationship of opposites. Gawain's relationship to Arthur antedated Geoffrey; in his *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (c. 1125), William of Malmesbury writes of "the tomb of Walwen, who was not unworthy of Arthur—a nephew through his sister. . . . He deservedly shared in his uncle's praising, because he prevented the fall of his collapsing country for many years." Discounting theories that Gawain entered Arthurian literature out of Celtic mythology, J. S. P. Tatlock conceives a somewhat cynical motive for the nepotic connection: "This passage shows that a generation and more before Geoffrey wrote, Wales was aware of Arthur, and had associated with him the new or old traditional eponymous Walwen (ruler of Walweitha), but by no means that there were narratives about either of them. 'Sister's son' could be invented by any antiquity-monger to secure credit.

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40 "It is a pleasing antithesis to have one nephew presented as the staunchest champion of the king, and another as his bitterest foe." A. B. Taylor, *An Introduction to Medieval Romance* (London: Heath Cranton, 1930), p. 85. It is impossible to say to what extent Geoffrey was interested in the Cain-Abel contrast.

for a local hero by connecting him with the popular messiah."  

Whatever the source of the Arthur-Mordred-Gawain kin-set, Geoffrey employs it toward a thematic statement of loyalty and treason. Mordred's blood relationship to his king and the trusted knight heightens his infamy and helps dramatize the meager report of the chronicle.

What makes Geoffrey's intentions difficult to assess is his inconsistent handling of references to Arthur's sister Anna. She is originally said to be married to Lot (viii. 21) but is later mentioned, unnamed, as the wife of Budicius, the King of Brittany, and the mother of Hoel, called Arthur's nephew (ix. 2). The Arthurian family tree becomes even more entangled when at their birth Gawain and Mordred, eventually spoken of as Arthur's nephews, are said to be the children of a marriage between Lot and the sister of Aurelius Ambrosius, Arthur's uncle (ix. 9). "Si peu coutumier qu'il soit de ce genre d'étourderie," Edmond Faral writes, "Geoffroy semble s'être un peu embrouillé dans l'histoire de ces relations de famille." Yet some critical lesson can be salvaged from this infelicity. Despite his mismanagement of data Geoffrey appears repeatedly drawn to setting up kin relationships in the background of his History. This same concern for genealogy produces a royal line which, save for a few lacunae, extends from the eponymous founder of Britain, Brutus of Troy, to the brothers

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43 Faral, II, p. 263, n. 2.
Yvor and Yni, the last leaders of a spent nation. Still, Geoffrey's strategy with respect to kinship is somewhat opportunistic. As Arthur lies dying, the historian creates a successor to the throne: "Constantino, cognato suo et filio Cadoris, ducis Cornubiae, diadema Britanniae concessit." 44

Though Cador figures prominently in the History, there is no previous indication that he belongs to Arthur's kindred. The introduction of Constantine is to all appearances a sudden inspiration and a successful coup: Arthur receives a cognate heir and his strong-minded and courageous ally is glorified as father of the new king.

Twenty years after its appearance, Geoffrey's History of the Kings of Britain was translated, versified, and expanded by the Anglo-French poet Wace. Wace, in his Brut, assigns three nephews to Arthur: Hoel, "Sun nevu, fiz de sa sorur" (9141); 45 Gawain, "sis niés" (13100, also 13147), also said to be Arthur's sister son (9635-40); and Mordred, "un de ses nevuz" (11452) and "Sis niez, fiz sa sorur" (13011). These men should be brothers since the only daughter said to be born to Uther and Ygerne, Arthur's parents, is Anna (8819). But Wace has inherited Geoffrey's confusion. None of these characters is called brother to another, and indeed on one occasion Gawain and Hoel are presented as cousins:

44Faral, III, p. 278.

D'ire e de rage furent plein
Hoel e sun cusin Walwein.
(Hoel and his cousin Gawain were full
of rage.)

(12813-14)

If Hoel and Gawain can find glory in being described as "fiz
sa sorur," the predicate only aggravates Mordred's malfeasance:

Feme sun uncle par putage
Amat Modret si fist huntage.
(Mordred shamed himself by loving his
uncle's wife dishonorably.)

(1185-86)

Fist Modred altre vilainie,
Kar cuntre cristiene lei
Prist a sun lit femme lu rei,
Feme sun uncle e sun seignur
Prist a guise de traitur.
(Mordred performed another abomination,
for contrary to Christian law he took to
bed the wife of his king; the wife of
his uncle and lord he took as a traitor.)

(13025-30)

Like Geoffrey before him Wace evidently did not prepare his
way with an exact genealogical diagram that would have prevented
the contradictions that exist in their works. He did however
mitigate his predecessor's entanglements by omitting the fact
that Budicius was, in the History, Hoel's father and that the
mother of Gawain and Mordred was there called the sister of
Aurelius.

Wace makes greater use than Geoffrey does of the moral
implications of kinship. In addition to the passages concerning
Mordred's crime we find an explanation as to why Hoel, and the
rest of Arthur's kindred dwelling in Brittany, should come to
his assistance in his war against Childric:

Artur de ço se conseilla
Que pur Hoel enveliera,
Sun nevu, fiz de sa sorur,
Rei de Bretaine la menur;
La sunt si parent, si cusin,
E la meillur gent de sun lin.

... Mult iert grant hunte a sun linage
S'il pert issi sun heritage.
(Arthur took counsel that he would send
for Hoel, his nephew, his sister's son,
king of Brittany; his kinfolk and cousins
are there and the best men of his lineage...
Great shame would befall his lineage should
he thus lose his heritage.

(9139-44, 9149-50)

Familial honor requires them to form an alliance with Arthur. In Geoffrey we have the following statements: "Eventually a common policy was agreed on and messengers were dispatched to King Hoel in Brittany to explain to him the disaster which had befallen Great Britain. This Hoel was the son of Arthur's sister; and his father was Budicius, the King of the Armorican Britons." In Geoffrey's History, Arthur's grandfather, Constantine (II), is the brother of Aldroien, former king of Brittany, and so there exists shared blood between British and Breton royalty. Geoffrey uses this kinship as the political basis for requesting aid and having it instantly granted. Wace points out the obligation of honor inherent in the relationship.

A singular couplet of the Brut sharply illustrates the device of inventing kinship for the purpose of moral commentary. In the course of the description of Mordred, and the prediction of his double crime of treason and adultery, occur these verses:

Mordres estoit [Canhumar] sa serour
Mais il lui first grant deshonor.

46 Thorpe, trans., p. 214.
(Guinevere was Mordred's sister but he did her great dishonor.)

Found only in MS. Bibliotheque nationale, fr. 1416, dated 1292, the passage is obviously a scribal interpolation, a fact that does not diminish its validity as evidence of a rhetorical strategem based on the ethical repercussions of kinship. "In painting in dark colors the character of Mordred," Bruce writes, "Wace yielded momentarily to the temptation of representing the traitor as adding incest to adultery in the list of his crimes."

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47 Arnold, ed., commentary to l. lll78.
48 Arnold, I, vii-ix.
49 Bruce, "Incestuous Birth," p. 202. Bruce supposed the passage to be authentic. Fletcher, The Arthurian Material in the Chronicles (Boston: Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature, Vol. X, 1906; rpt. New York: Burt Franklin, 1966), p. 141, considered the passage "perhaps traditional (but not due to Wace)." As Bruce points out, this is the only extant reference to Guinevere as Mordred's sister. The interpolation may not have been as spontaneous as Bruce suggested. Wace learnt from Geoffrey that Cador was one of Arthur's kinsman— as father of Arthur's cognatus heir Constantine III—and that Guinevere grew up in Cador's household. To Geoffrey's indefinite comment on her parentage, "ex nobili genere Romanorum editam" (Faral, III, p. 237), Wace adds:

Cador la nurri richement
En Cornoaille lamburgem,
Cume sa cusine prochainne;
E sa mere resteit romaine.
(Cador richly provided for her long in Cornwall as his near cousin; for his mother too was Roman.)

Wace's intention was not to produce an exact family tree, of course, but to gather some more of the principals into the ennobling sphere of Roman descent from the Constantinian line. The interloper who fabricated the relationship of blood between Guinevere and Mordred may have taken his cue from the fact that the queen, like the regent, was of Arthur's kindred.
The histories of Geoffrey and Wace were followed, insofar as it concerns this study, by the Arthurian romance cycles. The first of these was a verse trilogy, or at least an intended trilogy, which its author, Robert de Boron, referred to as *li livres dou Graal.* Malory made use of portions of three subsequent prose cycles: the Vulgate cycle (or *Prose* 

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50 Robert de Boron has received credit for inventive mediocrity. Bruce's appraisal is typical: "Robert de Boron's poems have no striking merit--they are far inferior to those of Chretien de Troyes--but in the genre of the prose-romances their influence is of capital importance. He is, above all, responsible for three innovations in Arthurian romance: he gave it both a religious and a pseudo-historical coloring and he cast his compositions in cyclic form": *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance* (Gottingen: Vandenhoe & Ruprecht, 1923), vol. 1, p. 146.

The first section of Robert's work, the *Joseph,* tells of the eucharistic origin of the grail as the cup Jesus used at the Last Supper and of its history in the age of primitive Christianity, and suggests its transportation to Britain. The book is fabricated apocrypha. The *Merlin,* which only partly survives in the original verse version, deals with the creation and early days of the Arthurian reign. The third section is a presumably lost Percival-quest. Some scholars doubt that this last part was ever in fact completed while others consider the Didot-Perceval to be a prose rendering. See J. D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance,* p. 6, and Pierre Le Gentil, "The Work of Robert de Boron and the Didot Perceval," in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages,* ed. R. S. Loomis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. 251-262.

The Robert de Boron cycle was closely followed by the so-called Pseudo-Map or Vulgate cycle (also referred to as the *Prose Lancelot*), a five-branch work by several authors around a romance originally limited to the exploits of Lancelot.

The classic study of the Vulgate cycle remains Ferdinand Lot's *Etude sur le Lancelot en prose* (Paris: Champion, 1918, 1954). Lot advanced the theory, which failed to gain subsequent acceptance, that the bulk of the Vulgate cycle was the work of a single writer. Investigating only the third branch of the cycle, the *Lancelot-proper,* in "The composition of the Old French Prose Lancelot," *Romanic Review,* 9 (1918), 241-268, 355-95; 10 (1919), 48-68, 97-122; J. D. Bruce argued that its text, as we have it, is the end result of additions into a primitive Lancelot-tale by successive redactors.

The first branch of the Vulgate cycle--though not in order of composition--is the *Estoire del Saint Graal,* a greatly
Tristan, a cycle evolved from a different tradition altogether.
Like the histories of Geoffrey and Wace, these romances are
somewhat comprehensive in their treatment of the Arthurian
story; the result is an astonishingly vast complex of characters,
narratives, and topical traditions. Still, the authors and
remanieurs of these cycles retained, on a larger scale, the
romance practice of symbolic statement. The great shift in
expanded version of Robert's Joseph. The following branch, the
Estoire de Merlin, contains a prose text of Robert's Merlin
and an original suite describing at length Arthur's wars
against the "Saisnes." Though these two works present Arthurian
pre-history and early history, from the Old Testament to the
consolidation of Arthur's rule, they were composed after the
subsequent branches. As a consequence much of the background
fabric is an explanatory extension of events in the later
Arthurian story. The third branch is the longest and the
first to be written, the Lancelot del lac, and tells of the
adventures of that knight. The Queste del saint graal describes
the achievement of the quest of the grail by Lancelot's son
Galahad. The final branch, La mort le roi Artu or the Mort
Artu, closes the cycle with an account of the disintegration
of the Arthurian court as a result of the love of Lancelot
and Guinevere. Malory made some use of three of the Vulgate
branches. Most of "The Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake"
is derived from three separate fragments of the Vulgate
Lancelot; the "Tale of the Sangreal" is a close, if reduced,
reproduction of the Queste; the final two books of the Morte
have the Mort Artu as one of their sources.

Robert's trilogy concerns the story of the grail while
the Vulgate cycle focuses on the secular story of Lancelot.
Nevertheless the religious material of Robert's poem not only
survives in the Vulgate cycle but is amplified and woven more
tightly into the story of the secular Arthurian knights. The
Joseph pretends to be a historical continuation of scriptural
events while the later Estoire del Saint Graal is offered as
the transcription of a little book handed to the author by
Jesus himself during a mystical vision on Good Friday of the
year 717. A third Arthurian cycle, called variously the Pseudo-
Robert de Borron cycle, the Post-Vulgate cycle, and The Romance
of the Grail has only lately been recognized, largely thanks
to the scholarship of Fanni Bogdanow whose Romance of the Grail
(Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1966) is the most sub-
stantial study of the cycle. The structure of this cycle is
similar to that of the Vulgate romance though the third branch,
pertaining to Lancelot, is a much abbreviated version of the
the historical context of the Arthurian reign which Robert de Boron initiated assured for the cycles a moral and religious direction already foreshadowed in Wace.

The work of Robert de Boron does not mark any notable advance in the history of Arthur's kindred. Robert's contribution is of a different order. The historians who preceded him conceived the reign of Arthur as part of a national story reaching into the epic past "quant Greu ourent Troie conquise"

Vulgate Lancelot. What particularly concerns us here is the Merlin, Malory's source for "The Tale of King Arthur." Like its Vulgate counterpart this branch consists of a prose rendering of Robert's Merlin and a suite. The Post-Vulgate Merlin-suite owes little to the Vulgate suite and contains material familiar to the English reader by way of the first section of Malory's Morte Darthur. Perceval where Modred is omitted:

--- Dame, Gavains fu li aisnez,
Et li autres fu Engrevains,
Li orgueilleus as dures mains;
Gaheries et Guerrhehes
Ont non li autre dui apres.
(Lady, Gawain was the oldest, and
the other was Agravain, the hard
handed proud one; Gareth and Gahare
were the names of the two next ones.)

Le Roman de Perceval, ed. William Roach (Geneve: Droz, 1959), ll. 8138-42. It is interesting to note that the earlier, Vulgate, text of the Prose-Merlin lists the brothers in order of their birth—"gauuains & agrauains & gerehes & gaharies et mordres"—whereas the later Suite sets Mordred, as Arthur's incestuous son, more prominently apart: "Et de la fille que il donna le roi Loth issi Mordres et me sires Gauvains et Agravains et Guerrhehes et Gaharies." In the prose passages Gaharies (Malory=Gareth) takes his place as Gawain's youngest brother. The near homonymy of the names Gaharies and Guerrhehes will cause a great deal of inadvertant qui pro quo in later romances. Agravain, to the end, lives up to the characterization that Chretien gives him.

Since the last part of Robert's trilogy, if actually ever composed, does not exist, it is impossible to say how he intended to use these extra brothers of Gawain. They do not appear in the Didot-Perceval. They may indeed have been the prose redactor's insertion into Robert's original verse text.
Robert launches his cycle from a somewhat different point of departure: "Molt fu nostre Sire simples et dous quant por raembre ses peceors d'infer li plot que il fesist de sa fille sa mere: ensi le couvenoit a estre por raembre le peuple d'Adan et d'Evain" (Very simple and gentle was our Lord when to save his sinners from hell it pleased him to make of his daughter his mother: thus it pleased him to be in order to save the nation of Adam and Eve). His trilogy was to culminate in the achievement of the quest of the grail by Percival. The history of King Arthur therefore belongs to a religious epic. The coronation of Arthur depends on providential election. Speaking to the barons who ask him to help them choose a successor to the dead king Uther, Merlin advises them to wait until Christmas:

que diex par sa pitie & par sa grant deboinarete a cele feste qui est apelee noel qui a dont deigna naistre que ausi urailement comme il deigna naistre a celui lor & est rois des rois & sires de tout le monde . que vous puissies auoir tel homme a roy & a seignor dont li pueles puit estre gouernes a son plaisir & a sa volonte & en tel maniere que il meisme puissent uoer & connoistre que par sa elecsion soit rois & sans le election dautrui.

(That God in his mercy and great goodness at this feast called Christmas, he who deigned to be born, that as surely as he deigned to be born on that day and is king of kings and lord of all the world, therefore might you have such a man as king and lord—by which the people might be governed at his Christ's pleasure and will and in such a manner that they themselves might see and know that the king would be chosen by his Christ's election and by the election of no other.

(Sommer II, 80, 13-18)

Though son of the former king, Arthur receives his right to rule from the King of Kings. The religious framework with which Robert surrounds the story of Arthur replaces the former secular history to such an extent that the subsequent romances do not trace Arthur's lineage farther back than his grandfather Constans.

In Robert's poem, Joseph, Christ promises to Joseph of Arimathea, first guardian of the grail, that the grandson of Alains li Gros, his nephew by his sister Enigeus and her husband Bron, will become the vessel's final keeper. Robert is anticipating his concluding tale of Percival's adventures. This device of linking an Arthurian knight to a religious past through lineage gives rise to numerous similar genealogical series in the Vulgate cycle. This cycle contains a genealogy of Galahad, the hero who replaces Percival, whose cognate branch begins with Enigeus and passes to the hero through his mother Elayne, and whose agnate branch is initiated by Flegentine, the sister of Joseph's ally, Evalake Mondrains, and descends through Lancelot, father of Galahad. Malory reproduces Galahad's paternal ancestry, with some mutation, in the Morte Darthur. The author of the Vulgate Estoire del Graal further gratifies an appetite for inventing genealogy by creating a certain Pierre, kinsman of Joseph of Arimathea, and ancestor of the Arthurian knights Uriens and Uwain. Furthermore he states

52Like writers before him, and like many to come, Robert lapses into genealogical self-contradiction; at one point he states that it will be Alain's son, not his grandson, who will become the last keeper of the grail: "li fil Alain," "Modena Text," p. 340, l. 1048.
that the son of Joseph's old age, Galaad le Fort, is also an ancestor of Uriens and Uwain. The Tristan cycles as well create an Aramathean ancestry for their hero.

Robert, and subsequently the authors of the Vulgate Queste and Estoire del Graal, employs lineage to express the continuum of British religious history and to underbrace the Christian aspects of Arthur's reign. Though some of the ancestral grail figures show miraculous longevity, lineage belongs to the past and lies outside the romance of Arthur and his knights. Nevertheless some of the kin relationships among these contemporary knights have a certain religious and moral dimension while retaining their power of motivation as literal human relationships. The author of the Vulgate Merlin, who wrote after the Mort Artu was composed, was aware of Mordred's conception. More importantly, he attributes to Arthur's sister's love for her brother the reason for the alliance of Gawain and his brothers (her sons) with Arthur against their own father, Lot.53

Qvant ce vint al terme que li enfes Mordred fu nes & la nouele fu partout le pais que cil seroit rois qui fu fiex uterpandragon si lama miex la dame en son cuer que nus ne poroit dire mais ele nen osa faire samblant por le roy loth son seignor & moult li pesa de la guerre qui fu leuee entre lui & cels du pais. (When it came to pass that the child Mordred was born and the news spread over the land that he who was to be king was the son of Utherpendragon the lady loved him even more in her heart than any could say, but she did not dare reveal it because of King Lot her husband. And she was much saddened by the war being waged between him and those of the nation. (Sommer II, 129, 34-38)

53 The names of Lot's sons are simply listed in the prose versions of Robert's Merlin (see Sommer II 73.22 and Suite I 120). They likely originate in the Gawain section of Chrétien's Perceval.
This love for her brother moves her to encourage her sons to join Arthur's forces. The author of the story of the rebellion, knowing that the eventual downfall of the reign of Arthur had its inception in the love between Arthur and his sister, contrives to draw some advantage from this love by making it the reason for the loyalty of Gawain and his brothers. Likewise he has Arthur's two other half-sisters persuade their sons, Galescien and Ywain, to join their uncle in his war against the rebels, among whom their own fathers are to be numbered.

The author of the Vulgate Merlin, who is principally concerned with portraying Arthur as a king victorious over his enemies, first the rebel kings and then the Saisnes, subtracts somewhat from the moral implications of Mordred's conception. The author of the post-Vulgate Suite du Merlin, on which Malory based most of his "Tale of Arthur," reestablishes and even

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54 There has been some debate as to whether the section on the rebellion of the kings is an interpolation in the Cambridge MS. Suite du Merlin—a text similar to that which Malory used—or an omission in the Huth MS where it is not found. R. H. Wilson, "The Rebellion of the Kings in Malory and in the Cambridge Suite du Merlin," University of Texas Studies in English, 31 (1952), 13-26; and "The Cambridge Suite du Merlin Re-examined," UTSE, 36 (1957), 41-51, considers the rebellion never to have been part of the Post-Vulgate Suite and therefore an interpolation into the Cambridge MS. F. Bogdanow, "The Rebellion of the Kings in the Cambridge MS. of the Suite du Merlin," UTSE, 34 (1955), 6-17, argues on the other hand that certain unexplained passages in the Huth Merlin indicate that the story of the rebellion was originally contained in the Suite but was dropped by a later redactor as inappropriate. This discussion does not much affect the present study. Whatever its status of authenticity in the later cycle, the story of the rebellion of the kings forms an important part of the Vulgate Suite du Merlin which was written after the structurally later branches in which Gawain and his brothers stand out as Arthur's allies.
expands these repercussions. "Adont conut li freres carneument sa serour," he writes, "et porta la dame chelui qui puissedi le traist a mort et mist a destruction et a martyrre la terre" (Suite I 147-48: Thus the brother knew his sister carnally and the lady bore the one who would someday cause his death and bring the land to destruction and martyrdom). The son carries in him and signifies the death of Arthur and the ruin of his nation, bringing finally to fruit the consequences of Arthur's first sin. Merlin later says to Arthur: "tu ies dyables et anemis Jhesucrist et li plus desloiaus chevaliers de ceste . . . tu as geu carnelment a ta serour germainne que tes peres engenra et ta mere porta, si i as engenre un fil par qui verra moult de grant mal en etrre" (Suite I 154: You are a devil and an enemy of Christ and the most disloyal knight of this land. You have lain carnally with your sister germain which your father engendered and your mother bore, thus a son was conceived by whom much great evil will appear on earth). It is difficult not to hear certain scriptural echoes in this speech, of a son born not to bring, like Christ, salvation to the world, but destruction. The scriptural analogy continues. A Herod at least in intention Arthur, upon learning that a newborn child will one day undo his reign, has several hundred children under three weeks of age put into a ship which is then set adrift. The infants are secretly saved. Mordred, however, is not among them, having been previously waylaid by another shipwreck, from which he is rescued without being identified.
These stories, however, and the kin relationships contained in them had for the most part a traditional literary existence independent of the symbolic overtones which a particular author might have worked into them.\textsuperscript{55} It is very likely on account of the dense and not altogether unimpeachable literary character which Percival had acquired by the thirteenth century that the author of the \textit{Queste del Sangraal} created Galahad \textit{ex nemine} to be the impeccable model of the "celestial" knight. As for the long-standing Arthur-Mordred kinset, we could speculate, for example, that it represents in the last stages of its literary history the post-lapsarian bond of man and sin-induced mortality, but the conception of Mordred will nevertheless retain its literal consequences.

The barons of Logres are angered by Arthur's mistreatment of their sons and it requires Merlin's intervention to persuade them that the king acted in this fashion "pour le commun pourfit dou roiame de Logres" (Suite I 211). Lot, however, still believing that Arthur has been the cause of Mordred's death, leads the rebellion against him. "Dont il ont enviers vous acueilli si tres grant haine," Merlin tells Arthur, "et tout aussi vostre serours comme li rois, et que il ont fait assambler tous les preudommes et les boins chevaliers dou roiame d'Orkanie" (Suite I 246: They have therefore conceived a great hate toward you, your sister as well as the

\textsuperscript{55}Galahad, hero of the \textit{Queste del Graal}, is a notable exception, notable in that the author of the \textit{Queste} felt constrained to invent a fresh character to be the allegorical hero of his allegorical book.
king (i.e. Lot, and they have assembled all the good men and knights of the kingdom of Orkeney). There is nothing explicitly or implicitly symbolic in this. Though the author of the Suite, unlike the author of the Vulgate Merlin, sees only evil as resulting from Arthur's incest—and therefore makes it the ultimate cause of the rebellion—he presents Lot as a man moved by the presumed murder of his son. Arthur, Lot says,

\[
a \text{fait tout de nouviel la gringnor desloiaute que rois fesist onques, si en a adamagie tous les haus hommes de cest regne. Et moi meismes en a il apovroié d'un hoir meismes que Dieus m'avoit envoie; si ne regarda onques a chou qu'il estoit mes fieus, qui estoie li plus haus hom de son regne, et je estoie si ses amis que je avoie sa serour a feme, et a chou que mes enfes estoit ses niés. Or regarde que sa felonnie fu par se desloiaute.}
\]

(has done the greatest disloyalty that any king has ever done, and thus has injured all the great men of this kingdom. And he denied me an heir which God had given me; he did not care that the child was my son, I who was the highest man in his kingdom and such a friend as to have his sister for a wife, or that the child was his nephew. Therefore consider that his crime was the result of his disloyalty.)

(Suite I 255)

It would be possible to continue at length along this avenue of research, showing how, in Malory's major sources, kin relationships serve complex functions. They retain the power to move character and advance action, and thereby also have a structural function in forging credible links between various episodes of the romance. Yet at the same time they retain a latent adaptability to symbolic usage. From these cycles, in which the literal and significant uses of kinship are both enhanced, Malory received those relationships and motifs which appear in the Morte Darthur.
Finally, despite the tremendous structural expansion of kinship in the prose romances, these works maintain the focus characteristic of the earliest romances on the character as an individual agent. It is the relationship of kinsman to kinsman rather than of kinsman to kindred or kindred to kindred which preoccupies the French authors and characterizes Malory's approach to themes of kinship. While the existence of distinct kin groups provides a basic pattern of discord and concord, and this pattern is most apparent in the *Mort Artu*, the kindreds do not generally function as cogent abstractions. It is the particular affiliation between participants which is commonly used as the resource for motivation and thematic significance. As a consequence of this attention to kinsman rather than clan, kinship becomes an occasion for strong affective relations between characters. Malory employs these cognate emotions in the *Morte Darthur* to convey various aspects of his principal theme of chivalry.

An examination of the structure of the four major kindreds in the *Morte Darthur* will help us understand Malory's effort to establish consistent and identifiable relationships of consanguinity between his characters. We will then study in the following chapter the affective content of these relationships, the emotions of hostility and amity associated with common blood and with distinctions between family groups, in order to discover the bearing of motivations ensuing from consanguinity upon chivalric action. Kinship, it will be shown, signifies not so much fidelity to the family as it does a sentiment of "naturall love" for a member or members of the
family. Finally we will re-examine the so-called Lot-Pellinor Feud before passing, in the final chapter, to a consideration of the most unified of all the kindreds, Sir Lancelot's blood. In the story of the kindred of Lancelot we will see an assertion of the endurance of chivalry in a community of knights beyond the catastrophic disruption of the Round Table.
CHAPTER IV

KINSHIP IN THE MORTE DARThUR

Kinship and Kindreds

We know from R. H. Wilson's studies to what extent Malory avoided the practice, typical of his French source, of leaving minor characters unnamed. In Wilson's view Malory's naming of anonymous characters gives an impression of dramatic density to the Morte Darthur:

The most significant effect is a total one. By continued repetition there is forced into the mind of the reader a cast of characters that he can think of as moving in the background, and appearing in the action of the story under appropriate conditions: kinsmen and followers of Lancelot, associates of Gawain, old friends of Tristram later joining Lancelot, villainous figures like Breuse sansc Pite and the enchantresses, small groups of kinsmen and friends always found together.

Malory's techniques with regard to kinship, expressed as we have seen in a generally unambiguous terminology of specific relationships, have a similar effect of bringing the Arthurian population of the Morte Darthur into sharper focus.

Malory generally identifies bonds of kinship at the earliest opportunity, and this practice has the effect of

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clearly identifying the position of a character within the genealogical scheme and especially exposing potentially significant unions between characters. Gawain and Ywain, for example, even before their birth, are given a genealogical identification: "And kynge Lot of Lowthean and of Orkenay thenne wedded Margawse that was Gaweynes moder . . . And after Morgan was wedded to kynge Uryens of the lond of Gore that was syre Ewayne's le Blaunche Maynys fader" (10.9-12). In the Suite du Merlin Sir Tor's parentage for a long time remains a mystery; Malory promptly identifies King Pellinore as his father. In "Gareth" Malory might have allowed his bel inconnu to remain incognito, but he shuns the devices of anonymity, mystification, and suspense. Gareth is quickly revealed, to the reader at least, as "nere kyn" to Gawain, and soon after, to Lancelot, as "Garethe, and brothir unto sir Gawayne" (299.27). The examples are typical.

But Malory's methods go beyond prompt identification of kinship. Established relationships are repeatedly mentioned even when the reference serves no purpose of identification. There are numerous instances of this technique throughout the Morte Darthur. Soon after the occasion just mentioned, Lot and Uriens are again described as the fathers of Gawain and Ywain: "Than there swore kynge Lott, a passyng good knyght and fadir unto sir Gawayne. . . . Also there swore kynge Uryens that was sir Uwaynes fadir, of the londe of Goore" (26.3-5). Again (at Lot's burial): "Also there com thydir kynge Uryens, sir Uwaynes fadir, and Morgan le Fay, his wyff, that was kynge Arthurs syster" (77.28-30). Thereafter Ywain is identified as
Uriens' son: "sir Uwayne, the kyngis son Uryen" (746.4-5), or so identifies himself (539.23-24, 945.1-2). Identification in dialogue serves, of course, a different purpose than does redundant identification by the narrator: in the first case the speaker actually identifies himself in an encounter by way of his kinsman. Malory occasionally employs the patronymic form, as, "le Fyze de Roy Ureyne." The functions of kinship reference by the narrator and by the characters converge, however, in showing the importance of bonds of kinship. The effect is not unlike that produced by the naming of minor characters. There emerges a background matrix of interrelationships, a sense of fundamental connectiveness between the heroes and heroines of the Arthurian society. Paradoxically overlying this general impression of community is the recognition that the patterns of relationships are limited and ultimately fractional. While noble blood brings together all knights who possess it into the universal chivalric class, kinship subdivides the Arthurian population into distinct groups sharing common blood, groups which may operate as factions.

The same regularity and care to be found in Malory's terminology of kinship and in his identification of specific relationships generally appears in his treatment of the genealogical patterns he found in his sources. The Morte Darthur contains but a few modifications of the relationships set down in the French romances and in the Morte Arthure. Some of these, as we shall see, are independently significant, but together they demonstrate that Malory's technique with respect to kinship is to emphasize, in much the same way that his repeated
attributions of kinship do, the substrate of familial connection. Where Malory transforms his models it is usually to create a bond of kinship between previously unrelated characters or to tighten a bond which already existed. These changes exist to a different extent in each of the four major kindreds to which most of the principal Arthurian characters belong.

These distinct kindreds are associated with the four principal traditions of Arthurian romance and center on their respective heroes: Arthur, Lancelot, Percival, and Tristram. For convenience I will abbreviate these kindreds as A, L, P, and T. The question of the origin of these kindreds has been of interest to the Celticists, but it lies beyond the scope of this study. What is notable, however, is that the authors of the thirteenth-century French prose cycles, while amalgamating the different traditions into their comprehensive romances, rarely created bonds of kinship between the kindreds. The authors of the grail branches of the Vulgate cycle (the Estoire and the Queste) did produce a common ancestry in the kin and companions of Joseph of Arimathea for Arthur's nephews (through Lot and Uriens), Percival and his brothers, and Lancelot. The Tristram story was not part of the cycle. There is no evidence that Malory read the Estoire, and the only ancestral bloodline to appear in the Morte Darthur is Lancelot's, which is given in the French Queste.³

³A table of the major family trees of the Morte Darthur may be found in Appendix I.
The earliest documentation of the A-kindred is found in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*. Geoffrey's scheme is somewhat inconsistent but it remains the seed for all later genealogies. This kindred consists chiefly, in Malory as in his sources, of Arthur, his half-sisters Morgan and Margawse, and their sons, Arthur's nephews. All of Malory's alterations to this kindred originate in "Lucius," whose source is the alliterative *Morte Arthure*.

---The Duchess of Bretayne, Arthur's "wifes cosin" in the *MA* (1. 865), is given as Arthur's "cousyns wyff" in Malory (199.1). This cousin "nyghe of Arthur's bloode" is Howell the Hende (199.2, 205.14). In Geoffrey, Hoel is Arthur's kin, his sister's son (or the son of the sister of Aurelius--this is one of Geoffrey's contradictions) and not a kin of Guinevere. Malory may have had access to a manuscript of the *MA* which identified the Duchess as "cousin's wife." At any rate it is Malory who adds the formula "nyghe of bloode."

One of Howell's daughters eventually becomes Tristram's step-mother (373.15) and another daughter, Isolde Blanche Mains, becomes Tristram's wife (433.19). Malory makes nothing of this connection between the A-kindred and the T-kindred. Indeed, the Howell who appears in "Lucius" may not be identical with the one who appears in "Sir Tristram."

---Malory makes Lovel "Idrus brothir" (210.19); the occasion is the following passage from the *MA* (1. 1510-16):

Then answers Sir Idrus with austeren wordes: "Thou a senator shall have condicioun as the king likes,

To be killed as his commandement his knightes before."

They led the senator forth in the rout and latched off his weedes,
Left him with Lionel and Lowell his brother. Malory reads the pronoun to signify Ider, not Lionel. Given the chance, he associates Lowell with the A-kindred (Ider is the son of Arthur's nephew Ywain).

— Lowell of the MA becomes two separate characters in the Morte Darthur: the brother of Ider and a son of Gawain. He may be named as Gawain's son (222.27: the text is problematic); he is in any case called the brother of Florence (224.8-10) who is named as Gawain's son in "Lucius," and he appears as a son of Gawain in the final tales.

— Florence's filiation to Gawain is based on Malory's literal reading of MA (l. 2735-36). In the alliterative poem, Florence, a French knight, "a fauntekin, unfraised in armes," addresses his more experienced comrade, Gawain, respectfully as "Fader." Malory also invents an origin. Like Lovel, Florence "was gotyn of sir Braundyles systir upon a mountayne" (224.9-10,

--- Vinaver, in his name index (Works, p. 1688), identifies Lovel as "brother of Idrus" simply, even though in most of the text Lovel appears as Gawain's son. If Lovel is to be treated as a single character it would be more useful to identify him as Gawain's son, his principal role. He is also identified in Ackerman's Index of the Arthurian Names in Middle English (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1952).

5"Than sir Launcelot, sir Gawayne and sir Lovelys son." As Vinaver points out in his textual note (Works, p. 1393), it is Lovel himself and not a son of his who joins Lancelot and Gawain. Vinaver interprets "Lovelys son" to mean "Lovel Ywains son," the y being an abbreviation, and not "Lovel hys (Gawain's) son." Vinaver argues that ys does not appear as a form of hys in the Morte Darthur and that Lovel has just been described "as Idrus brother and Idrus as sir Uwaynes son." By the same token, however, the form Ywain for Uwain is not used in the Morte Darthur, and Lovel is about to be identified as Florence's brother and Florence as Gawain's son. I suspect that the passage is after all a corruption of "Lovel hys son."
Like Lovel, too, Florence appears in the last tales of the *Morte Darthur*.

---Constantine, Arthur's *cognatus* and heir in Geoffrey and *cosyn* in the *MA* (4316), is made regent in "Lucius" because he is "nexte of my kyn save sir Cadore, thy fadir" (195.20-21). There is, however, no mention of Constantine's kinship to Arthur when he becomes king after Arthur's death. Malory may have come to sense, at the end of the *Morte*, the problem of placing this otherwise insignificant knight and his father in the Arthurian family tree.

All of Malory's changes in the A-kindred are inclusive; he states the genealogical status of every character which he adopts from the French sources. When Malory does alter it is not by omission but by addition. In Malory's reproduction of the T-kindred, however, we find neither major addition nor subtraction. The two remaining kindreds offer some special difficulties.

The creation of Galahad nearly *ex nihilo* to replace the traditional grail-hero, Percival, is one of the chief innovations of the Vulgate cycle. The Cistercian author of the *Queste del Saint Graal*, needing a pure, adamic representative of "chevaillierie celestiale," introduced Galahad who was an

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6 Some manuscripts of the *Prose Tristan* trace Tristan's ancestry back to Joseph of Arimathea. See, for example, *Le roman de Tristan en prose*, ed. Renee L. Curtis (Munich: Max Hueber, 1963), p. 37. This cannot be considered as a true omission by which I mean a failure to report the relationship of kinship between characters active in the *Morte Darthur*.

untainted by sinfulness as he was by a literary history. But even a heavenly knight requires biological parents, and Galahad is resourcefully made the son of Lancelot (the model of worldly knights) and Amite (also Elizabel or Helaine: Malory's Elaine) who is Percival's first cousin. On his mother's side, therefore, Galahad is a grandson of Pelles le Riche Roi Pescheor, and great-grandson of Pellehan le Roi Mehaignie, and so a descendant of the guardian family of the grail begun by Bron and his wife Enigeus. Percival is (in the Vulgate cycle at least) the son of Pellinor, Pelles' brother, and therefore grandson of Pellehan. Galahad is, like Percival, affiliated to the grail family and the grail tradition; on his father's side he is heir to the earthly perfection of chivalry which he transcends.

In French manuscripts confusion between Pelles, Pellinor, and Pellehan is common, and Malory himself was unable to avoid this onomastic mare's nest. Malory does not describe Pelles and Pellinor as the sons of Pellam (F.=Pellehan) and therefore breaks the invented connection between Percival and Galahad. It is possible that Malory did not keep track of the distinction between Pelles and Pellam, each of whom he identifies as a Maimed King. One of the Maimed Kings is said to be the son (F.=Pellehan) of Labor, presumably then Pellam of Lystenoyse (also called Pelles in the "Sankgreal"), who was wounded by Balin. The other is Pelles, or Pelleaus, Galahad's "grauntesyre" who was "maymed for his hardynes" when he entered a holy ship. At the start of the "Sankgreal," Galahad foretells that he will heal "Pelles" (read Pellam) who was wounded by Balin, but
it is his grandfather Pelles, the other Maymed Kynge, whom he encounters. 8

The disconnectedness of the P-kindred is not the result of any conscious omissions on Malory's part but rather of the confused and confusing state of the characters and their relationships in the sources. It seems likely that, given his usual care in documenting kinship, Malory would have set down the relationship of Pellam, Pelles and Pellinor, had he clearly understood it.

So far we have seen no alteration of kinship involving the relationship between two major characters. Such a mutation occurs, however, in Malory's L-kindred, specifically in the relationship between Lancelot and two of his kin, the brothers Bors de Ganis and Lyonel. In the sources Bors and Lyonel consistently appear as Lancelot's first cousins, the sons of his father's brother, Bors. Malory on the other hand calls

8 Malory's confusion may have extended even further than this. In "The Tale of Arthur" he identifies Sir Pelleas, who has no connection at all with the P-kindred, as "one of the four that encheved the Sankgreall" (180.9-10). He appears to be identifying Pelleas with King Pelles. In "Sir Tristram" Lamerok says to Gaheris that his father (Pellinor) did not kill King Lot, "hit was Balyn le Saveage!" (612.29). Vinaver attributes this inaccuracy (Balin wounded Pellam) to confusion between Pellinor and Pellam (Works, p. 1493-94). That may be, though the confusion would seem to lie between Pellam and Lot. On the other hand Thomas Wright's excited reading of the passage—"The Tale of King Arthur," in Malory's Originality, ed. R. M. Lumiansky (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1964)—assumes, perhaps, an insight into psychological twists which is uncharacteristic of Malory: "Here indeed is the utterance of demons raging within—wild accusation, misdirected revenge, filial treachery, the breakdown of coherence itself, with no appeal to any code above the elemental law of feud" (p. 65).
each of them alternately cousin, brother, and nephew to Lancelot: 

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Tale</th>
<th>Bors</th>
<th>Lyonel</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>cousin</td>
<td></td>
<td>relationship not indicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>nephew</td>
<td></td>
<td>cousins germains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>(brother)</td>
<td>(brother)</td>
<td>no known source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (Lancelot &amp; Elaine)</td>
<td>nephew</td>
<td>cousins germains</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>cousin</td>
<td>cousin</td>
<td>cousins</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>brother</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>cousin (cousin germain)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>nephew</td>
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These irregularities raise two questions. Was Malory simply playing variations on a generic terminology of kinship? If not, what was his purpose, if any, in altering the relationship he found in the French sources?

Malory often employs cousin generically in the sense of kinsman, and more specifically as a substitute for nephew. Brother could conceivably be used in the same way, though there is no demonstrable occasion of it in the Morte Darthur outside the undecided case under examination. Nephew had a restricted definition and would not be used generically.

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9. The texts, from Malory and his sources, appear in Appendix II.

10. Malory does, however, occasionally use brother figuratively in dialogue. Arthur addresses Ban as "fayre brothir" (34.12), and so does Tristram address Persydes (515.5)
It is obvious then that at some point in writing his romance Malory decided to make Bors and Lionel the nephews of Lancelot. That he did not begin with this idea is indicated by the fact that in "Lucius," possibly the first tale he composed, Lancelot and Bors de Ganis are described respectively as the sons of the brother kings Ban and Bors. Malory was aware of the genealogical link between these knights, and although he later encounters the French formula cousins germaine—which he knows to mean first cousins—he deliberately speaks of Lancelot's nephews.

Because we do not know in which order the tales of the Morte Darthur were written it is impossible to be certain at which point Malory decided to make the transformation. The case is a complex one, without analogy anywhere else in the

and the squire of sir Palomydes (784.3). The use of brethren in the following listing of knights from "Gareth" is ambiguous:

Than tume we to kyngè Arthure that brought wyth hym sir Gawayne, Aggravayne, Gaherys, his brethren; and than his neweys, as sir Uwayne . . . Than com sir Launcelot du Lake with his brethren, neweys, and cosyns, as sir Lyonell, sir Ector de Marys, sir Bors de Ganys, and sir Bleobrys de Gaynes. (344.7-13)

If his in the first instance refers to Arthur, then brethren must be a generic term meaning "closest kinsmen," but it could refer to Gawain. In the second case his obviously refers to Lancelot, but again it is difficult to tell whether Malory intended brethren specifically—thereby making Lyonel and Bors brothers of Lancelot, like Ector—or generically.

11 The hypothetical order of composition which Terrence McCarthy puts forth in "Order of Composition in the Morte Darthur" happens to give a less erratic pattern of changes:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tale</th>
<th>Bors</th>
<th>Lyonel</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>cousin</td>
<td>cousin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>cousin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>nephew</td>
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Morte Darthur, and there is no completely satisfactory solution. Yet one explanation does suggest itself. The relationship between Lancelot and Bors is most prominent in the final tale of the Morte Darthur where it parallels the relationship between Arthur and Gawain. After the final hostilities begin, two factions dominate the Morte Darthur: Arthur, his principal nephew, and his kindred on one side, Lancelot, his principal nephew, and his kindred on the other. Malory may well have transformed the relationship between Lancelot and Bors— and consequently between Lancelot and Lionel—in anticipation of this dramatic symmetry. The appellation cousin could remain as a substitute term for nephew. The study of Malory's motives for establishing the parallel kinship patterns belongs to a later chapter.

Malory may have given consideration as well to another possible symmetry, that between Gawain, Aggravain, Gaheris, and Modred on the one hand, and Lancelot, Ector, Bors, and Lionel on the other: brethren on both sides. This possibility could explain why he occasionally speaks of Bors and Lionel as the brothers of Lancelot. He apparently abandoned this

| 4 | brother        | brother |
| 7 | cousin        | nephew |
| 8 | nephew        |        |

I am not proposing this chart as evidence in favor of McCarthy's thesis but to suggest that no arrangement of the tales can really resolve the pattern into a clear and satisfying order. Relationship change within individual tales, and there can be no question of dissociating the two final tales.
relationship for the uncle-nephew pattern. Brother could be retained, after trial, as a generic term.

If Malory's plan for the cousins of Lancelot remains incomplete, rough-edged, it is perhaps because he was conscious of tampering with his sources in a matter of basic data and may have felt some hesitation to do so. Although Malory frequently uses the formula sister's children for nephews (and so describes Lancelot's nephews Blioberis and Blamour) neither Bors nor Lionel is described as Lancelot's sister's son. Gawain, in the last tale, constantly addresses Arthur as "uncle"; Bors never so addresses Lancelot. We sense the residual hold of tradition. The following passage also suggests indetermination. Ector (Lancelot's true brother) sees "hys brothirs shylde, sir Lyonel," on a tree and vows to "revenge his brother." When Ector finds Lionel this exchange takes place:

"Alas, brother!" seyde sir Ector, "how may this be, and where is my brother sir Launcelot?"
"Fayre brother, I lefte hym on slepe . . .

(259.9-11)

In the French prose Lancelot they do not address one another as "brother," and Lionel says that Tarquin mistreated him for being "cousins lancelot." Ector's use of the singular "my brother" intimates that the term, on Lionel's part, is generic. Yet the fact that it breaks from the French text and is not otherwise generically used in the Morte Darthur leads to speculation that Malory was, at this point, intending to create a new relationship in Lancelot's kindred.
Malory's treatment of the relationships which he received from Arthurian tradition is neither deliberately omissive nor desultory. Where genealogical elision does appear, as in the P-kindred, it may reflect obscurities inherent in the French romances. Malory's modifications of particular kin relations, though few and mostly incidental, nevertheless enhance the familial bonds between characters. The more significant changes, such as the addition of Gawain's sons and the modification of the relationship of Lancelot's cousins, are put to dramatic use in the final tale of the Morte Darthur. Malory's general policy was exactitude; his amendments reinforced the impression of a basic, coherent network of kin relationships underlying the Arthurian population of the romance.

Kindred unifies and divides, unifies, we might say, as it divides, brings together kinsmen but in distinct kin groups. It is not surprising, therefore, that the principal patterns associated with kinship in the Morte Darthur describe solidarity and hostility. It would be incorrect, however, to suppose a clear analogy between the brotherhood of related knights and the "fraternite" of the Round Table. Malory does not employ kinship as a direct and consistent symbol of chivalry any more than the French romance writers used it as a systematic symbol associated with love-theory. What kinship chiefly provides is a source of strong affective relationships between characters which Malory employs dramatically to represent the operations of the High Order of Knighthood. Nevertheless kinship does not regain in the Morte Darthur the thematic autonomy it lost with the advent of romance narrative in Europe.
The significance of kinship remains subordinated to Malory's statement on the excellence of chivalry. For this reason we do not find any real, tragic conflict between kinship and knighthood, no dilemma between equally commanding systems to perplex a knight and to demonstrate the limitations (the failure, as Moorman would have it) of chivalry. The binding and dividing power of kinship is determined not by consanguinity but by the knightly attitude of the participants: solidarity results from mutual possession or lack of knightly worth, antagonism is due to a conflict between true and false knights.

There are two basic patterns of kin relationships: intra-familial and inter-familial. The relations in either case may be of solidarity or hostility. An examination of these patterns as Malory depicts them chiefly in the first six tales will reveal his notions concerning kinship and its relationship to chivalry.

**Hostilities between Kinsmen**

The discords which we encounter between kinsmen in the *Morte Darthur* coincide with conflicts between worthy and unworthy characters. Within the major families, these discords occur almost exclusively in the A- and T-kindreds; virtually no iniquitous knights exist in the other two kindreds. The T-kindred, whose literary tradition centers on the rivalry between Tristram and his uncle Mark, is characterized by intra-familial hostility. Tristram's very birth causes, if not hostility, a family misfortune: his mother dies in childbirth telling the child "thou hast murtherd thy modir" (372.20).
When Melodyas, his father, remarries, Tristram's step-mother attempts to poison him and accidentally kills her own son instead and, on a second attempt, comes close to killing her husband. Though Tristram intercedes on her behalf, the consequence of these adversities is that Melodyas "wolde nat suffir yonge Trystrams to abyde but lyttll in his courte" (375-3-4).

The antagonism between Tristram and Mark begins over a rivalry for the wife of Segwarydes—"at the leste there befelle a jolesy and an unkyndenesse betwyxte kyng Marke and sir Trystrames, for they loved bothe one lady" (393-12-14)—and continues over Isolde. Tristram is not the only kinsman of Mark to suffer from the king's envy. When Mark learns of the victory of his brother Bodwyne over the Saracens "he was wondirly wrothe that his brother sholde wynne such worship and honour" (633.19-20), and slays him. This murder leads to hostility between Mark and his nephew Alexander, the son of Bodwyne, and after Mark kills Alexander between Mark and Bellengerus, Alexander's son.

A conflict develops between Tristram and his cousin Andret who, in this polarization of kin against kin and of good against evil knight, is in alliance with Mark. The relationship between Tristram and Andret begins on a benevolent enough note when Tristram avenges his cousin's defeat at the hands of Sagramour and Dodynas, challenging these two knights "because he was my cosyn that ye bete" (398.33-34). The battle ends in a chivalric reconciliation between Tristram and his opponents who ask him to "abyde in their felyshyp" (399.29-30). When we next hear about Andret on the other hand
it is to learn that he "that was nye cosyn unto sir Trystrams, lay in a watche to wayte betwyxte sir Trystrames and La Beale Isode for to take hym and devoure hym" (426.8-11, also 430.30-34). Tristram reproaches Andret that "thou sholdyst be my kynnysman, and now arte to me full unfrendely" (431.26-28).

Amity between kinsmen is, as we have seen, an inherent sentiment. "Unfrendely" relations are generally due to some form of envy, when initiated by the iniquitous character, a bitterness whose specific cause we do not always know. The reason that Andret encourages the rumor of Tristram's death is that "he wolde have had sir Trystramys londis" (499.4), and Tristram's step-mother tries to poison him for much the same reason: "because her chyldir sholde rejoyse his londe" (374.12). The envy can be moral rather than simply material, a resentment of the kinsman's personal superiority. Mark, as we saw, begrudges his brother's victories, and his "grete dispyte" for Tristram is aggravated by word "of the grete proues that sir Trystram ded . . . wyth the shyche he greved" (577.8). Morgan opposes Arthur out of pure envy: "kynge Arthur ys the man in the worlde that she hatyth moste, because he is moste of worship and of prouesse of ony of hir bloode" (145.33-35). Just as the antagonism between kinsmen may arise from an invidious resentment of a kin's "worship and prouesse," so, when it is the worthy knight who forsakes or opposes a kinsman, the reason is found in a disparity of moral degree. Ywain sets himself against his mother when he discovers her intent to kill Uriens. Galahaut refuses to avenge the death of his parents because it was their own "shamefull custom"
that destroyed them (417.17-18). And Gareth ceases to associate with his brothers because he finds them "evir vengeable (360.34).

One conflict between kinsmen, namely between the brothers Bors and Lionel in the "Sankgreall," shows a more complex correlation between consanguinity and chivalry. The discord differs from others of its kind in that the falling out between the brothers, though dramatic, is temporary and not due to envy. Bors sees Lionel being led along bound, naked, and bleeding, but just as he is about to rescue him a maiden implores him to save her from a ravisher. Bors chooses: he commends his brother to the care of Christ and rescues the maiden. When the brothers meet again, Lionel, now free, reproaches Bors for his decision and intends to put him to death for it. The battle which follows concludes with a heavenly voice telling the brothers to separate. While reproducing the basic outline of the French version of the story, Malory introduces several modifications which transform its significance. The clerical author of the Queste intends to formulate a dilemma which divine intervention alone can break. Neither fraternal love nor earthly chivalry can resolve the discord between the brother knights; there is no exit except by a spiritual leap, a passage out of natural affiliations into the supernatural family of the sons of Christ.

Malory, however, did not view the demarcation between the earthly and celestial orders of reality as absolute, and so somewhat minimizes the dilemma. The episode ends not in a saltus but in a reassertion of the fraternal and chivalric bond
between Bors and Lionel. The chivalric focus is set early in the story. In the _Queste_ the maiden appeals to Bors "par la foi que tu dois a celui [Ihesu cristi] qui hons liges tu es & en qui seruice tu tes mis" (_Sommer_ VI 126.4-5: by the faith that you owe Him whose liegeman you are and in whose service you have placed yourself). Malory alters this plea and adds to it: "by the faythe that he ought unto Hym 'in whos servyse thou arte entred and for the feythe ye owe to the hyghe Ordre of Knyghthode, and for kynge Arthures sake, which I suppose made the knyght'" (961.7-11). Bors is appealed to as a knight, his decision conforms to the oath taken by the knights, and it is unquestionably beneficial. "Ye have bettir spedde than ye wente," the maiden tells him after her rescue, "for and I had loste my maydynhode fyve hondred men sholde have dyed therefore" (962.7-9).

Bors encounters another quandry. A false priest shows him a body which he takes to be Lionel's. If Lionel is dead, it is because Bors failed to save him; Bors, however, does not regret having made the chivalric choice of saving the lady.

Yet mourns: "Fayre brother, sytthe the company of you and me ar departed, shall I never have g ' o y e  in my herte" (963.4-5).

The priest then informs Bors that the life of his cousin Lancelot depends on his yielding to a lady who loves him:

"For that shall befalle the now, and thou warne [reject] hir, that sir Launcelot, the good knyght, thy cousyn, shall dye. And than shall men sey that thou arte a man-slee, both of thy brothir sir Lyonell and of thy cousyn sir Launcelot, whych thou myght have rescowed easly, but thou wentist to rescow a mayde which perteyned nothynge to the. Now loke thou whether hit had bene gretter harme of thy brothers dethe, other ellis to have suffirde her to have lost hir maydynhode . . ."
Bors nevertheless persists in his refusal to succumb to seduction. He signs himself and is suddenly alone; the entire event, from the appearance of the false priest, has been a diabolical chimera. Neither the French author nor Malory pays much attention to the possible death of Lancelot once Bors is brought into the tower. Malory, I suspect, was satisfied to allow such a quandry—between natural and moral incentives—to lapse, and to this effect he may have added the observation that the "delytes and deyntees" of the tower caused Bors to forget Lancelot.12

An abbot later tells Bors that the devil employed these deceits upon him "for he knew thou were tendir-herted" (968.4). This explanation of the fiend's strategy does not appear in the French text. Bors' tender-hearted love for his brother shows itself when the two of them meet again, for "whan sir Bors saw hym he had grete joy of hym, that no man cowde telle of gretter joy" (969.7-8). Bors' fraternal benevolence is consistent with his chivalry; Lionel, said by the abbot to be "a murtherer and doth contrary to the Order of Knighthode"

12 The passage is not found in the Winchester MS., and Vinaver supplies it from the Caxton text. Here as elsewhere, we should bear in mind the caution that Malory had access to French MSS. no longer in existence, manuscripts which could have contained passages which appears original to Malory.
(968.11-12), refers in his reproach to family pride: "ye be the untrewyst knyght that ever cam oute of so worthy an house as was kyng Bors de Ganis, which was oure fadir" (969. 30-32). Bors is unable to oppose his brother, "inasmuch as sir Lyonell was hys elder brothir, wherefore he ought to bere hym reverence" (970.6-8). He allows himself to be beaten, and it is only after Lionel has killed a hermit and a knight who try to save Bors, who is too weak to intervene, that he raises his sword against his brother. Bors' speech at this point has no equivalent in the French manuscripts:

"Well," seyde sir Bors, and drew hys swerde, all wepyng, and seyde, "fayre brother, God knowith myne entente, for ye have done full evyll thys day to sle an holy pryste which nevertrespassed. Also ye have slayne a jantill knyght, and one of oure felowis. And well wote ye that I am nat aferde of you gretely, but I drede the wratthe of God; and thys ys an unkyndely werre. Therefore God shew His myracle uppon us bothe, and God have mercy uppon me, though I defende my lyff ayenst my brothir."

(973.23-31)

13 The Queste says at this point that Lionel "na en soi nule vertu de nostre signor qui en estant le tiegne" (Sommer VI, 133.24-25: has in him no virtue of Our Lord to sustain him). This change is yet another example of Malory's shift from a religious to a chivalric ethical measure. Lionel is not, in the rest of the Morte Darthur, portrayed as a "murtherer," and Malory may have been anticipating his killing of the hermit and Colgrevaunce. I suspect that Malory was somewhat con­strained by his sources—as in the case of Gawain—to produce a somewhat inconsistent character in Lionel.

14 This passage too would seem to be of Malory's own invention. It does not appear in the French MSS.

15 Malory later forgets the death of Colgrevaunce who turns up again in the Urry list. He is the knight, among those who ambush Lancelot in Guinevere's chamber, whom Lancelot kills for his armor (1167.20 ff.).
Bors' decision to act seems as much due to a desire to defend chivalry as to self-defense.

The miracle which Bors calls for takes place. A celestial voice prevents him from slaying his brother and tells him to "go hens and beare felyship no lenger with thy brothir" (974.11-12). The episode ends, in the Queste, with Bors reprimanding Lionel for having killed Colgrevaunce and insisting that he must leave to join Percival. In the Morte Darthur there is reconciliation:

Than he seyde to his brother, "For Goddis love, fayre swete brothir, forgyffe me my trespasse!"
Than he answered and seyde, "God forgyff you, and I do gladly."

(974.14-17)

The brothers will be found in one another's company in the following two tales. Malory's conclusion perhaps not altogether effectively reaffirms Lionel's good character. Malory did what he could with the text at hand, and what he most clearly did was to form a coincidence between the figure which kinship makes in this episode and the chivalric relations of Bors and Lionel. Bors' knightly good will is reflected in his affection for his brother: he does not, as the Queste says, abandon "toute naturel amor por lamor de ihesu crist" (Sommer VI 134.5: all natural love for the love of Jesus Christ). This natural love, on the contrary, prompts him to pray for the miracle which leads to the end of the discord of brothers and to the reconciliation of knights.
Solidarity between Kinsmen

In the story of "Lancelot and Elaine," Caster asks for and receives knighthood from his uncle, King Pelles. It is a trivial episode important only because, as a result of the knighting ceremony, Lancelot, undergoing a period of madness, is recognized. The knighting provides the story-teller with an expedient situation for the discovery of Lancelot, and the fact that Caster is Pelles' nephew provides an expedient justification for the knighting: "So hit befelle that kyng Pelles had a neveaw whos name was Caster; and so he desyred of the kynge to be made knyght, and at hys owne rekeyste the kynge made hym knyght" (823.5-8). Caster's relationship to Pelles answers all circumstantial questions concerning the episode and we move to a more important scene, Lancelot's reunion with Elaine. An assumption of solidarity between kinsmen makes this expedient possible. This is obvious enough. An interesting feature of this episode, however, is that it is virtually unique in not being the cause or consequence of any conflict. Alliances between kinsmen are usually associated, in some manner, with a conflict between good and unworthy knights.

The alliance of kinsmen against a mutual enemy or the effort to assist a kinsman in difficulty is a common enough motif in the Morte Darthur. These motifs may be classified according to their moral and affective contents. In some the affiliated knights are united in a worthy chivalric purpose, in others they are not but are united against a good knight. In some there is a strong statement of affective alliance, in
others kinship appears as evidently little more than a device for justifying an alliance between two or more knights, or the alliance is affective enough but tending to fraternal hostility in the midst of an apparent solidarity. There exists, as we will see, a relationship between the moral quality of an affiliation and the degree of expressed affective solidarity. Only knights joined in worthy ventures show love, and uncontaminated love, for one another.

In the "Tale of King Arthur," Pellinor, in pursuit of the lady Nenyve, discovers her as she is being fought over by two men, one her abductor, Outlake, and the other Meliot de Logres, her cousin. There is no question that Meliot's assistance is morally and naturally appropriate: "Thys lady," Meliot explains, "ys my kynneswoman nye, my awntis doughtir, and whan I herde hir complayne that she was with hym magre hir hede, I waged batayle to fyght with hym" (115.17-20). The urgings of chivalry and family coincide, and when Meliot learns that Pellinor is a knight of the Round Table he expresses pleasure "that such a noble man sholde have the rule of my cousyn" (117.3-4). There is some irony in the fact that Pellinor assists Meliot in saving his kinswoman from her abductor for, in his eagerness to pursue Nenyve, Pellinor has neglected to help a lady in difficulty. She dies, and he learns that she was his daughter. This disclosure heightens the effect of Pellinor's momentary lapse from chivalry: in the general oath-taking that follows Pellinor's return to Camelot
the knights vow, among other things, "allwayes to do ladyes, damesels, and jantilwomen and wydowes socour" (120.20-21).

The association of kinsmen against a common enemy does not always describe an alliance of right against wrong. It is usual to find two or more unworthy knights, brothers, confronting a worthy knight. This multiple alliance would appear to enhance a knight's accomplishment in defeating it. Ywain overcomes Hew and Edward of the Red Castle, two brothers who "woll fyght bothe at onys with one knyght" (177.30). Gareth kills two knights at a ford, and they are later identified as brothers. Palomydes defeats the traitorous brothers Helyus and Helake at the Red City. Lancelot fights Brewnis sans Pite and his brother Bartelot, and Galahad battles seven knights "and all were brethirme" (888.6-7). Marhault fights a duke and his six sons "at onys," though they attack him "by couple" before he defeats the lot of them together. These opposition kin sets are composed on the whole of minor and even anonymous characters. These groups function as a single entity, an unchivalric enemy who fights in inequitable competition; they represent a magnified opposition which is nevertheless vulnerable to defeat by single-handed knightly valor. Yet these relationships lack substance. Only in the case of Hew and Edward is there any expressed sentiment between the brothers: after Edward is slain, Hew's "corrage" abates and he yields

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16 R. T. Davies, in "Was Pellinor Unworthy?," Notes and Queries, 202 (1957), p. 370, argues that Pellinor is not to be held to blame for his daughter's suicide. Vinaver, Works, pp. 1333-1334, discusses this issue in the light of Malory's alterations of the French text.
to Ywain making "grete sorow for his brothirs deth." (178. 30).

The sequential battle presents a different pattern from that in which the brothers fight "at onys." This battle, in which the brothers attack one after another, usually begins as a result of their failure to recognize the worth of their opponent. The series of encounters gives the opponent a chance to worth as a knight, and at its conclusion the brother knights put aside any residual hostility to ally themselves to their victorious opponent. Blood yields to chivalry.

Marhalt's fight against the duke and his sons is partly sequential. After the duke and his sons yield to him they promise "by their comunal assent . . . never to be fooys unto kynge Arthure, and thereuppon at Whytsonday nexte aftir to com, he and his sonnes, and there to putt them in the kynges grace" (175.5-8). It is characteristic of several sequential battles in the Morte Darthur that the king group in opposition is reconciled to the Arthurian community of knights. These battles are different from the former non-sequential type as well in that virtually all of the knights survive and that the confrontations do not clearly describe a chivalric opposition of right against wrong.

In Marhault's encounter, the duke and his sons are enemies to the knights of the Round Table because Gawain slew a seventh brother; given Gawain's knightly track record we are permitted to assume that the killing of the brother was an unchivalric deed. Gawtere, Gylmere, and Raynolde challenge Lancelot, who is wearing Kay's armor, believing him to be Kay
and wishing to "assay hym for all his pryde" (275.20-21). The Black, Green, and Red Knights, and Persuante of Inde battle Gareth thinking him to be a kitchen knave. The offense (holding knights prisoner) of Playne de Fors, Playne de Amoris, Plenoryus, Pyllownes, Pellogres, and Pelaundris, who are defeated by La Cote and Lancelot, is played down in the Morte Darthur. The fact that the brother knights are not united in absolute misdeed assures their eventual reconciliation as a group to the knights of Arthur's court. The fraternal bond takes on a higher, chivalric significance of affiliation.

Gawtere, Gylmere, and Raynolde (or Arnolde) are also sent to Camelot but they are presumably already knights of the Round Table. They are numbered among the knights at the healing of Sir Urry and among those killed by Lancelot when he sets Guinevere free from execution. Most of these brother knights appear in the Urry list of Round Table knights.

Gawtere attacks Lancelot in the belief that he is Kay, and therefore fair game; when he is felled, Gylmere charges in to "rescow oure brothir" (275.35). When Gylmere falls in turn, Raynolde says to Lancelot, "thou arte a stronge man, and as I suppose thou haste slayne my two bretherne, for the whyche rysyth my herte sore agaynste the. And yf I myght wyth my worshippe I wolde not have ado with the, but nedys I muste take suche parte as they do" (276.9-13). Here again the demands...

17 In the French Lancelot proper (Sommer V, 307.33 ff.), Lancelot is attacked by four unnamed knights who are not said to be brothers. Lancelot requires only the fourth knight to be present at Arthur's court on Pentacost Day, and indeed he alone shows up (Sommer V, 315.21 ff.).
of chivalry and kinship coincide; "worship," as Malory generally uses it, is a chivalric attribute and its appearance here is an indication that Malory saw no essential incompatibility between loyalty to kin and knightly motivation. The other brothers regain consciousness and come to the assistance of Raynolde, and all put up a good fight and are defeated a second time. Even so, Raynolde would continue to battle Lancelot but Lancelot ends the conflict:

"Now let be," seyde sir Launcelot, "I was not far frome the whan thou were made knyght, sir Raynolde, and also I know thou art a good knyght, and lothe I were to sle the."

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

"As for that, be as be may . . ." (276.27-34)

The episode ends on a note of knightly reconciliation, a reconciliation between Lancelot and the brothers and a renewed assertion that knighthood overrides kinship. This reassertion, however, does not depend on an annihilation of the value of natural brotherhood: at the close of the scene the brothers are together, "and ecchone of the bretherne halpe other as well as they myght" (277.2-3).

The encounter between La Cote and Lancelot and the six brothers is, of this type of battle, the least explicit in the matter of kinship. La Cote Male Tayle overcomes the first two brothers fighting at once, defeats them and meets with the third, "Plenoryus, a full noble knyght" (473.4-5), and is overcome. Plenoryus, recognizing that La Cote would have beaten
him had he been "freysshe," treats him well: "for youre noble
dedys of armys, I shall shew to you kyndenes and jantilnes all
that I may" (473.26-28). Lancelot arrives on the scene and,
after a rather long effort, gains victory over Plenoryus who
yields to him. Lancelot then, almost incidentally, jousts
"with othr three of hys brethim" (475.2). If there is no
reference at the end of the episode to the brothers as a unit,
it is because Malory chose to focus his complete attention on
Plenoryus. This knight will appear as a member of Lancelot's
party once "slander and strife" has broken up the Round Table.
Yet however much Malory emphasizes chivalric values in this
episode, he does not, finally, disrupt the relationship of the
brothers; Plenoryus "and hys brethern fyve" (475.20) are sent
to Arthur's court to become his knights. The minimization of
kinship is, I think, strategic rather than thematic: Malory
received this set of six brothers from the Prose Tristan but
had no desire to develop a significant association of knighthood
and kinship.

Such an association is well developed, however, in the
battle of Sir Gareth against the four brothers, an episode
which some scholars think may have been based on the one we
have just examined. Whatever the relationship between these
two stories, the "Gareth" series shows an explicit concern with
the issue of consanguinity and a far greater integration of
this issue with the knightly themes. As Gareth meets and
defeats one brother after the other it becomes increasingly
apparent that he is indeed a "noble knyghte . . . come of full
noble blood and of kynges lynage" (307.17-23). And though he
overcomes more of them the brothers are increasingly willing to recognize his worth and yield to him. The concern of the brothers is not so much revenge but the fact that they are being defeated apparently "of a knavis honde" (305.15). Gareth's defense is that he slew the first of them, the Black Knight, "knyghtly and nat shamfully" (305.20). Gareth's battles against the four knights describe an incremental repetition: the merit of his knighthood is proven against increasingly powerful and significant knights. The fact that these knights are brothers allows a transition from one stage to the next, a reason for the repeated confrontations. Yet beyond the structural function of this relationship is the implication that there is no shame in renouncing the revenge of a kinsman chivalrously defeated. The brothers, who once "had holdyn werre ayenste the knyghtes of the Rownde Table" (338.22-23), are eventually promised by Arthur to be made "all uppon a day knyghtes of the Table Rounde" (338.10).

These examples suggest that the kinsmen who flock together in the Morte Darthur are knights of like chivalric feather.18 This is generally the case: alliances form between worthy kinsmen or unworthy kinsmen and rarely across these moral lines. The development of such an oblique alliance, that of Gawain and his cousin Ywain in the "Tale of Arthur," describes the extent to which the state of a familial relationship

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18I will continue speaking, for simplicity's sake, of knights and chivalry while recognizing that the women of the Morte Darthur are often deeply involved in situations involving kinship. There is no significant distinction in Malory between male and female ethic.
reflects the comparative merit of knights. King Arthur, having escaped being killed by his sister Morgan, mistakenly judges that her son, Ywain, "is accounseyle with hir to have me distroyed" (158.6-7), and puts him out of court. "And whan sir Gawayne wyste that, he made hym redy to go with hym, 'for whoso banysyth my cosyn jarmayne shall banyshe me'" (158.14-16). The "whoso" is, of course, Gawain's uncle, but Gawain, a character whose consistency Malory did not entirely succeed in producing, is nevertheless regular in the passion and tenacity with which he reacts to injuries against kinsmen. This quality eventually gives Malory the means to create in Gawain a rich and complex rather than merely uneven character. Yet the Gawain of the first tale is still the demeaned knight of the later French tradition. As the cousins depart from Camelot one is a knight who has already in a previous adventure behaved "fowle and shamefully" (106.22) and will by betraying Pelleas again show himself "false" and "uncurteyse;" the other is a knight suspected of treason who must reaffirm his good character. The cousins travel together, meet Marhaus, and fight him, though not at once, and when the battle ends with neither Gawain nor Marhaus the decided victor the two knights

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For an account of the progressive vilification of Gawain's character in the history of the French romances, see Fanni Bogdanow, "The Character of Gawain in the Thirteenth-Century Prose Romances," Medium Aevum, 27 (1958), 154-61. Influenced by contradictory traditions, Malory produces a somewhat schizophrenic Gawain in the early tales of the Morte Darthur. Though he fails in his adventure with the damsel, Gawain is nevertheless momentarily seen in his early role as a teacher of courtesy: "'Gramercy,' seyde sir Marhaus, 'of your jentylnesse! Ye teche me curtesy'" (160.33-34).
"kyssed other and there they swore togedyrse eythir to love
other as brethirne" (161.21-23). This triple solidarity of
kinship and sworn brotherhood continues: when Marhaus "wyste
that they were kynge Arthurs syster-sonnes he made them all
the chere that lay in his power" (162.13-14).

This unity breaks up, however, during the chivalric
test (of the three damsels) which follows. Gawain, Ywain,
and Marhaus part in pursuit of separate adventures; Gawain
alone fails chivalry. Ywain and Marhaus overcome, as we have
seen, groups of kindred knights and send them to Arthur's
court thereby helping consolidate the chivalric community.
Ironically, Gawain, who has set out from Camelot as a matter
of family principle (or more precisely of an impulse inspired
by consanguinity), betrays kinship when he betrays his knight-
hood. Pelleas requests Gawain's assistance on the basis of
faith to his family blood and noble descent: "syn ye ar no
nye cosyn unto kyng Arthure and ar a kynges son, therefore
betray me nat, but help me" (168.10-12). Gawain promptly
tells Ettard that he is "of the courte of kynge Arthure and
his sistyrs son" (169.9-10), a formula which Ywain in his
adventures could, but does not, use. Gawain's intent is
perverse enough and the lady succumbs to "so well-borne a man"
(169.20). Once the knights regroup at the end of their adven-
tures, no mention is made of the bonds between them. On the
contrary, Malory emphasizes Gawain's distinction from his two
companions: "sir Marhaute and sir Uwayne brought their damsels
with hem, but sir Gawayne had loste his damesel. . . . The
damesell that sir Gawayne had coude sey but lytyll worshyp of
hym" (179.2-8). Gawain's respect for kinship appears, from the moment he leaves his uncle to accompany his cousin, somewhat arbitrary; through his unchivalric behavior he betrays his relationship to Arthur and sets himself apart from his knightly cousin, Ywain. All that remains for Gawain at the end of the story is to be "spared" by Pelleas "for the love of the kynge" (180.1).  

The "Naturall Love" of Kinsmen

The brothers Blamour and Blioberis, Lancelot's nephews, accuse Angwysshe, King of Ireland, "that he had slayne a cosyn of thers in his courte in Irelonde by treson" (404.31-32).  

Angwysshe enlists Tristram as his champion to fight against Blamour. What is unusual about the fight which follows is the emphasis which Lancelot's nephews place on family honor; there is nearly nothing like this elsewhere in the Morte Darthur. The tone is exceptionally heroic:

Than seyde sir Bleoberys to his brother sir Blamoure,
"Fayre dere brother," seyde he, "remembir of what kynne we be com of, and what a man is sir Launcelot de Lake, nother farther ne nere but brethryne chyldirne. And there was never none of oure kynne that ever was shamed in batayle, but rathir, brothir, suffir deth than to be shamed!"

"Brothir," seyde sir Blamour, "have ye no doute of me, for I shall never shame none of my bloode. . . . Well may be happyn to smyte me downe with his grete

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20Gawain avoids the consequences of an earlier misadventure thanks to his relationship to Arthur. As the king's nephew he is released from captivity and is given "leve to go unto kynge Arthure for hys love" (108.16).

21In the French, Blamour alone challenges Angwysshe (cf. Vinaver, Works, p. 1461, n. 404.16-18); Malory establishes the relationship between the brothers at the very start of the episode.
Blioberis' admonition is not to be found in any extant version of the French Tristan. When Blamour is defeated he asks Tristram to slay him, "for I had lever dye here with worship than lyve here with shame" (409.28-29). Blioberis concurs: "rathyr than he be shamed I requyre you [Judge] lat sir Trystrames sle hym oute" (410.25-26).

Heroic as it is, however, this self-sacrifice to family prides is a false measure of a knight's excellence and in addition a misrepresentation of what Malory saw to be the true value of kinship. The reconciliation that follows the battle appears abrupt and heavy-handed unless we remember that Malory's intention was not to depict subtle progressions of character so much as to present a chivalric resolution to the conflict. The kings sitting in judgement point out to Blioberis that Tristram and Angwysshe "have pite on sir Blamoure his knyght-hode" (410.28-29). The resolution is not juridical, that is, concerned with the proof or disproof of Angwysshe's crime against the kinsman; that issue recedes before a greater one, chivalric fraternity.

Sir Trystrames and sir Bleoberys toke up sir Blamoure, and the two bretherne were made accorded wyth kynge Angwysh and kyssed togydir and made frendys for ever.

And than Blamoure and sir Trystrames kyssed togedirs, and there they made their othis that they wolde never none of them two brethirne fyght wyth sir Trystrames, and sir Trystramys made them the same othe. And for that jantyll batayle all the bloode of sir Launcelott loved sir Trystrames for ever.

(410.33-411.8)\(^{22}\)

\(^{22}\)Later envy sets this alliance momentarily back. Tristram is so victorious that "all the noyse and brewte felle
One reason why knightly brotherhood can so readily dissipate the potential power of "clan loyalty" is that Malory treated kinship primarily as a relationship between individual knights, and secondarily as an association to a kindred. We have an indication of this in Blioberis' admonition: Blamour must not only remember his "kynne" but "what a man is sir Launcelot" and how close their relation to him is. When Tristram spares Blamour it is partly "for sir Launcelottis sake" (409.35-36).

The motivational basis of kinship in the Morte Darthur is the relationship of kinsman to kinsman, and a number of passages reveal the essentially affective quality of these relationships. Hew weeps for his fallen brother, and Reynold's heart "ryseth sore" when he thinks his brothers slain (178.30, 276.11). Cador, during the continental war, grieves for a fallen kinsman—"now carefull in myne herte that now lyeth dede my cosyn that I beste loved" (215.4-5)—as does, in a rather more ferocious tone, the enemy warrior Feraunt (236.17). Pellam tells Balin, who has just killed his brother, "there shall no man have ado with the but I myselff, for the love of my brothir" (84.25-26). When Palomides vows to Lamorak that he will "love you dayes of my lyff afore all other knyghtes excepte my brother sir Saphir," and Lamorak replies, "I say the same . . . excepte my brother sir Torre" (603.6-10), the

to sir Trystram, and the name ceased of sir Launcelot. And therefore sir Launcelottis brotherne and his kynnymen wolde have slayne sir Trystram bycause of his fame" (785.1-4). Lancelot demonstrates in response that chivalry accounts for more than family honor, warning his kinsmen that "and ony of you all be so hardy to wayte my lorde sir Trystram wyth ony hurte, shame, or vylany, as I am trew knyght, I shall sle the beste of you all myne owne hondis" (785.6-9).
sentiment is not conditional. Rather we feel that the love of kin and the love of knights are like one another in magnitude and kind. Ector prefacing a piece of chivalric advice for Lancelot with the statement: "I am youre brothir, and ye ar the man in the worlde that I love moste" (831.20-21). Later Ector refrains from fighting with Galahad partly "for naturall love, for because he was hys uncle" (981.30). Percival's aunt rejoices when she learns of her nephew's arrival "for mykyll she loved hym toform passyng any other knyght; she ought so to do, for she was hys awnte" (905.11-12). Percival's sister tells him he is the man "I moste love" (985.5-7: I love most). Harmance of the Red City is "destroyed in his owne defaute; for had he cheryshed his owne bloode, he had bene a lyvis kynge and lyved with grete ryches and reste" (712.1-3). This sentiment of "naturall love" shows itself in Gawain's spontaneous generosity toward Gareth: Gawain "had reson to proffer hym lodgyng, mete, and drynke, for that proffer com of his bloode, for he was nere kyn to hym than he wyste off" (295.32-34). True, in this last passage Malory is setting up a contrast between Gawain's familial incentive and Lancelot's purely chivalric motivation. It is not, however, the mere fact that Gawain is prompted by kinship that makes his "reson" appear inferior to Lancelot's but that, for all his love for Gareth, he lack's Lancelot's "grete jantylnesse and curtesy" (295.35).

Of all the stories in the Morte Darthur, the tale of Balin and Balan dramatizes most impressively the theme of kinship. After a career charged with misfortune Balin fulfills the prophesy: "Ye shall sle with that swerde the bests frende
that ye have and the man that ye moste love in the worlde, and that swerde shall be youre destruccion" (64.9-11). That man is his brother, and repeated motif of the death of kindred anticipates the unwitting double fratricide which ends the tale. When he first appears, Balin has spent months in prison "for sleynge of a knyght which was cosyne unto kynge Arthure" (62.35-36). The damsel who brings to court the sword by which Balin will kill Balan is seeking to achieve proxy vengeance on her brother for killing her lover. Balin kills the Lady of the Lake in Arthur's court because "she was causer that my modir was brente thorow hir falsehode and trechory" (66.13-14); the Lady herself has just accused Balin and the damsel of slaying her brother and father. We know nothing else of these reported homicides. They give the story a "push" from the outside, they set Balin's fate in motion---and this is a tale in which we very much feel the press of external circumstances, the buffeting of events over which Balin has little control. It is dramatically appropriate that a tale which ends in fratricide should begin as this one does.

While giving us no direct account of these preliminary events, Malory lets us understand that Balin has not acted unchivalrously: his misfortunes stem from doing good on adverse occasions. After leaving court, Balin slays Lanceor, "an orgulus knyght," and is told that "the kynne of thys knyght woll chase you thorow the worlde tylle they have slayne you" (71.14-15). Nothing comes of this warning, but it allows Malory to maintain the motif of kinship in association with the theme of chivalric action. Balin, in the company of Balan,
then vanquishes Arthur's enemy Royns and in a later battle Nero, the brother of Royns. In the course of this later battle Pellinor slays King Lot, and so begins the long-lasting hostility between Pellinor, his sons, and the Orkeneys. Malory, while condensing his French source, continues to preserve references to strife associated with kinship. He anticipates the hostility of Arthur's sister Morgan and the treason of "Mordred hys owne sonne" (79.5-6). There is a further prophesy "that sir Gawayne shall revenge his fadirs dethe" (81.17-18).

When Balin eventually kills Garlon it is not just for Garlon's offenses against him, but for the sake of his host whose son Garlon has wounded. The death of Garlon leads to the Dolorous Stroke, the catastrophic wounding of Pellam, who is attempting to revenge the death of his brother, Garlon. Even the episode of Gamysshe of the Mownte includes some reference to the issue of kinship: Gamysshe slays the daughter of his lord, Duke Harmel.

All this adumbrates the climax of the story, the tragic strife between the brothers. During the course of the tale these events and references to hostilities occasioned by kin relationships show a stark contrast to the amity between Balin and Balan. At their first meeting, the brothers "put of hyr helmys and kyssed togydirs and wepte for joy and pite" (70.4-5). Balan helps Balin regain the good will of King Arthur; it is only when the two brothers are together during the battles against Royns and Nero that Balin can be said to have good fortune. When he is alone, apart from his brother, Balin fails, if not in intent at least in the consequences of his actions.
And yet this benevolent and fortunate relationship—so different from every other motif of kinship in the tale—concludes in self-destruction. The story of Balin is marked throughout by tragic reversals, but in the end it does not succumb to an effect of absolute irony. The natural and chivalric relationship between Balin and Balan is not wholly overwhelmed by the adversities of circumstance, and if in the end fate does not destroy chivalry it is because of the fraternal love of the two knights.

In the *Suite du Merlin* Balin's first sight of Balan on the island provokes an intuitive near-recognition of his brother. Observing how gracefully his opponent prepares himself for combat, Balin "li souvient maintenant de son frere. . . . Ensi li dist ses cuers vraies nouvieles de son frere; car maintenant si tost coume il le vit si li souvint de li. Et il estoit bien voirs disans ses cuers" (*Suite II, 48–49*: now was reminded of his brother. . . . Thus his heart told him true knowledge of his brother; for now as soon as he saw him he was reminded of him. And his heart was telling the truth). Malory alters this passage in two respects: he has Balan, not Balin, nearly recognize his brother, and he omits all reference to the "cuers." #23 "Whan this knyghte in the reed [Balan] beheld Balyn hym thought it shold be his broder Balen by cause of his two swerdys, but by cause he

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#23 Malory may have been led into this alteration by a misreading of the French, as Vinaver suggests. But I do not think that it was error that prevented Malory from including the passage of the "nouvieles" of the heart, an omission which Vinaver finds "regrettable."
knewe not his sheld he demed it was not he" (89.9-12). Balan's judgement depends on two conflicting pieces of external circum­stantial evidence. The reason for Malory's alterations is to avoid attaching the responsibility of the battle to the inner man, where, in Balin's own words, "manhode and worship ys hyd" (63.25). Malory's Balin is not portrayed as denying the inherent motions of natural love; the conflict is transposed, it conforms to the potential discord, expressed throughout the tale, between circumstance and chivalry and not between kinship and knighthood. Balin agrees to battle the knight of the island saying "my hert is not wery" (88.27). To have been obliged to deny the intimations of his heart would have shown Balin to be somewhat short in fraternal love, at least part responsible for the fratricide. As Malory tells the story Balin's heart, in chivalry and love, remains entire.

The sword by which Balin demonstrates that he is a "clene knyght withoute vylony" is the instrument of his brother's death. While the fratricide is, as Arthur calls it, "the grettist pite that ever I herde tell off two good knyghtes" (92.13-14), it transcends pathos. The fraternal bond between Balin and Balan, "that were two passynge good knyghtes as ever were in tho dayes" (92.17-19), is an affective counterpart of the chivalric bond between them. This union is strengthened, in death and despite death: "we came bothe oute of one wombe, that is to say one moders bely, and so shalle we lye bothe in one pytte" (90.26-28). Death indeed is the only exit from the final imposition of circumstance; if either brother had survived he would have been obliged to continue the "ylle customes" of
the island. In the end there is no real tragedy. Fraternity survives fratricide, and chivalry survives the unfortunate battle between two good knights.

The Revenge of Kinsmen

The most frequent kinship motif in the Morte Darthur is the motif of revenge; it is also the most consequential, for it is Gawain's determination to avenge the death of Gareth that propels Arthur and Lancelot to war and finally brings down the Arthurian reign. The death of Gareth coalesces the kindred of Arthur and the kindred of Lancelot into hostile parties just as earlier the death of Lot set Gawain and his brother against the house of Pellinor. Neither of these conflicts can be said to describe clan warfare, however. The Lot-Pellinor feud is not so much a feud as a unilateral attempt on the part of the Orkeney brothers to destroy Pellinor and his sons. The final battles between Arthur and Lancelot, though provoked by considerations of kinship, are not entirely determined by issues of consanguinity. Clan hostilities are uncharacteristic of the romances, whose interest generally turns toward individual rather than communal man. Even in the Morte Darthur, with its strong focus on chivalry, the association of kin groups with the motif of revenge is exceptional; Malory viewed chivalry less as a societal code than as a personal, inherent value with societal repercussions.

The pattern of injury and retribution is often incomplete; out of the three dozen or so episodes in the Morte Darthur which describe the revenge of kindred virtually none is given
a full narrative account. In several of the episodes the injury to the kinsman serves as an expedient explanation for hostility. Tristram, for example, travels to Brittany to be healed by Isode le Blaunche Maynes. The voyage is important, the cause of his wound is merely occasional and it is very briefly reported:

And so uppon a day sir Trystrames yode into the foroste for to disporte hym, and there he felle on slepe. And so happynde there cam to sir Trystrames a man that he had slayne his brothir. And so whan this man had founde hym he shotte hym thorow the sholdir with an arow, and anone sir Trystrames sterte up and kylde that man.

(432.27-32)

This is the complete episode, and there is no previous account of the slaying of the anonymous brother of this anonymous man. In other examples, Balin slays the Lady of the Lake to revenge the unrecorded murder of his mother, and King Angwysshe is "appeled" for killing a cousin of Blamour and Bleoberis. Lamorak discovers several knights waiting to ambush Lancelot "that sleweoure broder" (485.19-20). On another occasion Tristram is challenged by a knight, his host, who accuses him of having slain his brother. Though Tristram offers to "make amendys unto my power" (703.5), the knight (again an anonymous character) seeks only blood revenge, but is himself beaten by Tristram.

On the other hand, revenge may be promised and never reported or be merely chronicled in passing. When Brewnor le Noyre, La Cote Male Tayle, arrives at Arthur's court he is wearing a coat that "sate overthwartely" on him. The garment belonged to his father and is a memento of his father's death:
"Thus to have my fadyrs deth in remembraunce I were this coote tyl I be revenged" (459.23-25). La Cote departs on an adventure that has nothing to do with his father's death. The tale closes with the following observation: "sir Plenoryus brethrine were ever knyghtes of kynge Arthurs, and also, as the Frenshe booke makith mencion, sir La Cote Male Tayle revenged the deth of hys fadir" (476.23-25). The story of revenge is reduced to framework. Likewise a brief summation is all that records the revenge of the deaths of Bodwyne, Tristram, and Alexander:

But, as the booke tellyth, kynge Marke wolde never stynte tylle he had slayne /Alexander/ by treson. And by Alis he gate a chylde that hyght Bellengerus le Beuse, and by good fortune he cam to the courte of kynge Arthure and preved a good knyght. And he revenged his fadirs deth, for this false kynge Marke slew bothe sir Trystram and sir Alysaundir falsely and felonsly. (648.4-10)

These examples, a few out of many, indicate that Malory was not primarily interested in revenge as a self-sufficient narrative motif. On the whole Malory regards the conflict which arises from injury to kinsmen as a chivalric conflict, a contest between worship and disworship.

The ethics of revenge depend on the quality of the injury: revenge is just when the offender has acted feloniously. Several worthy knights undertake to avenge an injured kinsman; among them are Balin, Blamour and Bleoberis, Lamorak, La Cote, Berluse, Alexander, Bellenger, and Saphir. Aggloval, for one, tells Goodwyne that he has no cause to seek to revenge the death (by Aggloval) of his brother Gawdelyne: "I avow I slew hym, for he was a false knyght and a betrayer of ladyes and of good knyghtes" (812.5-7). The discord between Darras
and Tristram, both good knights, ends in concord. Darras places Tristram, who has killed three of his sons and wounded another two in tournament, in prison along with Palomydes and Dinadan, Tristram's companions. Yet he resists family pressure to kill the prisoners. "There cam fourty knyghtes to sir Darras that were of hys owne kynne, and they wolde have slayne sir Trystram and hys felowis, but sir Darras wolde nat suffre that" (540.23-26). When Tristram sickens in prison, Darras, a good knight, has him released. Because the slaying of the sons was no treasonable deed, the two knights are easily reconciled.

"Sir, as for me, my name ys sir Trystram de Lyones, and in Cornwayle was I borne, and nevew I am unto kyng Marke. And as for the dethe of youre two sunnes, I myght nat do withall. For and they had bene the nexte kyn that I have, I myght have done none othirwyse; and if I had slayne hem by treson other trechory, I had bene worthy to have dyed."

"All thys I consider," seyde sir Darras, "that all that ye ded was by fors of knyghthode, and that was the cause I wolde nat put you to dethe. But sith ye be sir Trystram the good knyght, I pray you hartyly to be my good frynde and unto my sunnes."

(552.18-28)

Malory's version of Darras' reply significantly differs from that in the French test in which there is residual hostility: "je ne faiz mie tant pour nule amour que je aie en vos comme je fais pour l'onneur de chevalerie mettre en avant" (Prose Tristan, MS. B. N. fr. 334, f. 284v, col. 1: I do not do this so much for any love I have for you as I do it to promote the honor of chivalry).24 Darras' repeated request that Tristram

"be good frynde to my sunnys two that bene on lyve" (552.16) shows that his strong sense of chivalric mesure and justice does not obviate his paternal love.

Darras is portrayed as a man who is both good father and good knight in circumstances that would appear to make both impossible, or at least implausible. To avert any impression of a forced or awkward note, Malory omits the actual account of the death of the sons as well as any irresolution on the part of Darras. The point of the episode is not to emphasize the potential incompatibility of kinship and chivalry but to show that at the heart of chivalry no debate exists, no rift, no tragic opposition of values. Chivalry lies at the center of human nature, and the center does hold.

The Lot-Pellinor Feud

The "Lot-Pellinor Feud" is a conventional misnomer for the disconnected series of episodes and references which ensue from the account of Lot's death by Pellinor's sword early in the Morte Darthur. This extended story is not properly a feud, that is, an injury followed by a succession of reciprocal retaliations. This "feud" is unilateral: the sons of Lot eventually kill Pellinor and later Lamorak, his son. Yet the sons of Pellinor (Lamorak, Percival, Aggloval, and Tor) take no retaliatory action at all after the deaths of their kinsmen. Pynell le Saveyge, he of the poisoned apples, makes the only attempt on Gawain's life; Pynell is identified as a cousin of Lamorak, and the episode is meant to link the previous misbehavior of the Orkeney with the impending jeopardy of Lancelot.
and Guinevere. The Lot-Pellinor Feud entirely lacks that sense of pathetic momentum usually characteristic of the motif. The characters are not caught up in an ever growing volley of injuries, and indeed the driving force behind the vindictive persistence of the Orkeneyrs is not clan loyalty. The Orkeney brothers are knights who all, save Gareth, individually fail at chivalric virtue, moved by their own "evyl wyll," and these failures corrupt the blood bonds between them and block any sentiment of family love. The family is disrupted by its arrogated self-defence; unchivalric action is by nature disruptive.

In The Book of Kyng Arthur, Charles Moorman analyzes what he regards as the three great narrative themes of the Morte Darthur: the love of Lancelot and Guinevere, the Grail quest, and the Lot-Pellinor feud. According to Moorman, these three themes together describe "the rise, flowering, and decay of an almost perfect civilization": the failure of love, of religion, and of chivalry. Moorman's semi-botanical metaphor expresses his interpretation of the chivalry of the Morte Darthur as a temporal value, budding forth from the "old" and primitive pre-Arthurian chivalric code and passing on after a season of glory. Moorman sees as the "most important symbol of the decay of the new chivalry . . . the bitter feud between the houses of King Lot of Lowthean and Orkeney . . . and of King Pellinore, King of the Isles." He regards the

26Moorman, p. 53.
single-minded vindictiveness of the Orkeney family as a survival of the values of the "old" knighthood: "The new knights, particularly Lancelot, accept the new chivalry readily enough, but the older families, such as that of King Lot, are slow to change and hold tenaciously to an older, more barbaric code of clan loyalty." 27

Moorman's thesis suggests several questions, not the least of which concerns the distinction between chivalry and a chivalric civilization which, as Moorman says, "cannot long be maintained." 28 But did Malory consider the passing of Arthur's reign to be a sign of the failure of a chivalric code or a sign of man's imperfect ability to actualize immutable chivalric ideals? Malory and his contemporaries regarded chivalry as an inherent and perpetual value, and indeed one whose excellence could be demonstrated by its antiquity. Moorman's distinction therefore between "old" and "new" knighthood appears dubious, as does his distinction between the "new knights" and the "older families." There is no indication in the Morte Darthur that Malory viewed one kindred as being older than another. If we take expressed degrees of ancestry as a criterion we find that Gawain has no given ancestor beyond his father (or maternal grandparents) while Lancelot's

27Moorman, p. 62. Larry Benson, Malory's Morte Darthur, p. 144, also regards the kindred as the entity which defines the function of kinship in Malory: "The king presides over great family groups--Lancelot and his brethren, Gawain and his--who owe their first loyalty to their family leader . . . and who look remarkably like the great families that controlled the density of Malory's England."
Malory shows no interest in distinguishing the age of families. The story of the "Lot-Pellinor Feud," as Malory tells it, is remarkably sketchy. The deaths of Lamorak and Pellinor, central as they are to the narrative, are anticipated and later reported in retrospect, but not described when they occur. Malory appears uninterested in the dramatic series of offense and escalated retribution and what it reveals about the "barbaric code" of clan loyalty. He does not wish to establish a thematic conflict between consanguinity and knighthood. The story, if we can call it that, is told marginally, and with a margin that emphasizes evaluatory comment. In his narrative management of the Lot-Pellinor feud, Malory spends less attention on event than on the affective motivations of the Orkeneyes and the judgements of good knights. By giving such prominence to the chivalric standard, against which the actions of Gawain and his brothers are judged, Malory avoids making of the Lot-Pellinor feud a "symbol of the decay of the new chivalry," as Moorman describes it.

Malory's account of the death of Lot connects the event with its consequence:

So there was a knyght . . . called Pellynore, which was a good man off prouesse as few in tho dayes lyvynge. And he strake a myghty stroke at kynge Lott as he fought with hys enemyes, and he fayled of hys stroke and smote the horse necke, that he foundred to the erthe with kyng Lott. And therewith anone kynge Pellinor smote hym a grete stroke thorow the helme and hede unto the browis.

Than all the oste of Orkeney fledde for the deth of kynge Lott, and there they were takyn and slayne, all
Malory's statement, "But kynge Pellynore bare the wyte," is notable. It suggests that any particular blame of Pellinor is unjustified, but more importantly it places emphasis on the "wyte," on perception and judgement of the event, on the reaction of Gawain and his brothers.

The first reaction comes immediately after Gawain's knighting, at the honoring of Pellinor at the Round Table.

And thereat had sir Gawayne grete envy and tolde Gaherys hys brothir,

"Yondir knyght ys putte to grete worship, whych grevith me sore, for he slew oure fadir kynge Lott. Therefore I woll sle hym," seyde Gawayne, "with a swerde that was sette me that ys passynge trencheaunte."

Gaheris observes that the time and place are wrong (the Orkeney's are rarely in total agreement over this business) and Gawain concedes. In the Suite, however, Gawain makes a somewhat longer reply: "Mais a moi, qui sui chevaliers, en laissies prendre la venjanche, et je vous di que je la prendraii si haute coume fieus de roi doit faire de chelui qui son pere occhist" (Suite, II 76: But let me, who am a knight, take revenge, and I tell you that I shall take as great a revenge as the son of a king must upon him who killed his father). Malory omits this speech with its appeal to knighthood and to the devoir of a king's son. Instead he has Gawain respond with "grete envy" to Pellinor's "grete worship," creating a contrast between
Pellinor's worship and the lack of it which Gawain demonstrates immediately after his knighting. Shortly Gawain will show himself unmercifully vindictive towards a knight who has killed his dogs: "'Thou shalt dey,' seyd sir Gawayne, 'for sleynge of my howndis!'" (106.15-16). Gawain's responses to injury are inordinate—later he accuses Lancelot of killings his kinsmen "in the despite of me"—and such an inordinate response prompts Gaheris to observe of him that "a knyght withoute mercy ys withoute worship" (106.24-25). These conducions of Gawain are what decide Gareth to withdraw "from his brother sir Gawaynes felyship, for he was evir vengeable, and where he hated he wolde be avenged with murther: and that hated sir Gareth" (360.33-36).

This almost arbitrary hate on Gawain's part resurfaces against Lamorak who is being celebrated for his victory over the Orkeneys at a tournament. Gawain speaks to his brothers:

"Fayre bretherne, here may ye se: whom that we hate kynge Arthure lovyth, and whom that we love he hatyth. And wyte you well, my fayre bretherne, that this sir Lameroke woll nevyr love us, because we slew his fadir, kynge Pellynor, for we demed that he slew oure fadir, kynge Lotte of Orkeney; and for the deth of kynge Pellynor sir Lameroke ded us a shame to oure modir. Therefore I woll be revenged."

(608.13-20)

The speech is instigated by the "grete despyte" and anger which the Orkeneys feel over their defeat and the recognition of Lamorak as a "knyght pierles." Gawain interprets Lamorak's actions—his victory, his love for their mother—as being inspired by a desire for revenge when, in fact, they are not. In other words, the feud exists in the minds of the Orkeneys
who demed that Pellinor slew Lot; it expresses their failures at achieving chivalry.

Gareth has already dissociated himself from his brothers, and the pursuit of revenge causes a further disintegration of the kindred. Gawain and his brothers send for their mother in order to use her to entrap Lamorak, her lover. Gaheris kills her while she is with Lamorak, "for she shall never shame her chyldryn" (612.35), but spares Lamorak to avoid the shame of killing a naked man. Behind this action is the ancient injury—"thy fadir slew oure fadir" (612.24–25)—but again we sense the presence of a private grudge, a tendency to see dishonor where none exists: "thou Lamorak haste put my bretherne and me to a shame" (612.23–24). After the killing of Margawse, Arthur banishes Gaheris from the court and Gawain is "wrothe that sir Gaherys had slayne his modir and lete sir Lamerok escape" (613.10–11). Though ostensibly acting according to their common identification as a kin-set, the Orkeney brothers are in fact individually revealing their lack of worship. Insofar as they fail to be governed by their inherent sense of chivalry, they exclude themselves from the moral community of knighthood; and since outside the bounds of good there is only chaos the brothers find themselves divided among themselves. The foundation of chivalry upon noble descent, which is shared by all knights, signifies a certain principle of universality and cohesion in chivalry. By abandoning his "vengeable" brothers Gareth shows himself to be the son of a king while they would seem to be acting rather as the sons of King Lot, yet even this bond fails them.
Lamorak's death, like his father's, is reported posthumously. Reports of the death are combined with condemnations of the perpetrators: "wyth grete payne they slew hym felounysly, unto all good knyghtes grete damage!" (688.9-10). "Ye four bretherne . . . be called the grettyste distroyers and murtherars of good knyghtes that is now in the realme of Ingelonde. . . . Ye . . . slew a bettir knyght than ever any of you was, whyche was called the noble knyght sir Lamorak de Galys" (691.27-32). Even Gareth condemns this "treson," "bretherne as they be myne" (699.30-31). The knights who pass judgement on the homicides of the Orkeneys do not regard them as acts founded on family loyalty and honor, nor even as acts of revenge, but as felonies against chivalry which is indeed what they are.

This survey of intra- and inter-familial relationships in the Morte Darthur illustrates Malory's basic approach to the treatment of kinship. His concern typically formulates itself at the specific level of kinsmen rather than at the more general, societal level of kindreds. The expression "clan loyalty" does not accurately describe what in the Morte Darthur is primarily a collection of motivational relationships between cognate characters. The attachment to a kindred derives from an effective loyalty to one or a few kinsmen; each family circle is defined, we might say, less by its circumference than by the radii and chords which connect its members. These relations, expressing love or discord, are consistent with the chivalry of the participants; shared chivalry results in a close bond of amity between kinsmen. Kinship becomes, therefore,
one of Malory's means of dramatizing knightly relationships in the *Morte Darthur*. Lancelot's kindred, not plagued by permanent discords between its members, blessed by an overall chivalric membership, becomes a vehicle for asserting the permanence of chivalry after the collapse of the Arthurian society.
CHAPTER V

"THE BLOODE OF SIR LAUNCELOTT"

Of the four major kindreds in the Morte Darthur, only Lancelot's forms a structural, moral, and dramatic unit. In no other is the whole group ever regarded as a functional entity regardless of Malory's meticulous records of the various inter­relationships. Although different subgroups of the A-kindred, Lot's sons for example, are occasionally seen in action together, the whole kindred—a family tree with many branches is never represented as a unit. Nor is the T-kindred and the somewhat bisected P-kindred. A- and T- are characterized, moreover, by several hostile relationships. These kindreds amount, really, to the sums of their parts; the blood of sir Lancelot is by contrast outstandingly uniform. Despite a certain ambiguity in the nomenclature of the relationship between Lancelot and Bors and Lionel, its structure is, unlike that of the P-kindred, without division. Though Bors and Lionel find themselves at violent odds in the "Sankgreall," there is no permanent internal hostility such as we find among Arthur's kinsmen and Tristram's, and even with their momentary lapses the knights of Lancelot's kindred may all be described as good knights. They are in fact so described in the Morte Darthur. Finally, the whole kindred—exclusive of course of the ancestral members—is brought into action as a unit, especially in the final tale. Of the principal four, only the L-kindred is designated as an entity. Malory's purpose behind this singular uniformity is
to fashion a chivalric group to carry on the ideals of knighthood after the destruction of the Arthurian realm.¹

The definition of Lancelot's kindred is progressive and directed toward the function of representing a chivalric community. After a preliminary alliance of Kings Ban and Bors with Arthur in the war against the rebel kings, their respective sons, Lancelot and Bors de Ganis, with their kinsmen assist Arthur in the continental war against Rome. Lancelot and his kinsmen and the kindred continue to appear as worthy knights in "Launcelot du Lake" and "Tristram." In "Launcelot and Elaine," the penultimate book of "Tristram," Bors and Galahad are singled out: Galahad dominates as Lancelot's primary kinsman in the "Sankgreall," and Bors becomes increasingly

¹The lists of Lancelot's kinsmen are fairly constant throughout the *Morte Darthur*. Ector, Bors, Lionel, Blamour, Blioberis, Galuhodin, and Galuhud appear together as knights of Arthur's party at Castell Perelus (344.12-14) in the quest of Tristram (537.33-36) and at Guinevere's banquet (1048.18-20). At this last event Lancelot is not present, and Alydube is mentioned apart. Alydube and Bellyngere le Bewse are added to this catalogue as knights of Lancelot's kindred at the tournament of Winchester (1071.22-26). These two knights are not associated with the L-kindred in the Urry list (Alydube is altogether absent from the list), while Menaduke, Vyllars, and Hebes le Renowe are added to it and Gahalantine replaces Galuhud (1148.6-10). Helain le Blank, the son of Bors, and quite a minor figure is listed apart. The full catalogue of Lancelot's kin (with the exception of Alydube) appears at the head of the list of knights who side with Lancelot after his discovery with the queen (1170.11-14). Bellyngere is also mentioned, but among the friends of Lancelot. The same list, kin and well-wishers, in virtually the same order names the knights advanced by Lancelot in France (1205.1 f.). Bors, Gahlyud, Gahlyodin, Blamour, Blioberis, Vyllars, and Clarrus (who though never indicated as a kinsmen of Lancelot seems to be regarded as one by Malory) join Lancelot in religion and subsequently, with the late addition of Ector, return to France (1254.32-28 and 1259.34-36).
important as the first of his kin after the death of Galahad. In the final two tales the bond between Lancelot and Bors grows, and the blood of Lancelot increasingly becomes the focal point of chivalry. At the end of the Morte Darthur the blood of Lancelot shares a common symbolic task with noble blood in signifying the persistence of chivalry.

Lancelot and His Kindred

Kings Ban and Bors, "two brethren beyond the sea," are Arthur's first allies. Lot, though an enemy, describes Ban as "the most valiante knyght of the worlde, and the man of moste renowne, for such two brethime as ys kynge Ban and kynge Bors ar nat lyvynge" (32.34-36). This description, not found in the two extant manuscripts of the Suite, anticipates the kind of praise which Lancelot later consistently receives. There is however no active relationship in the Morte Darthur between father and son. In his first appearance as a knight, in "Lucius," Lancelot has become like his father before him a military ally of King Arthur and the chief of his kindred, pledging to the campaign against Rome "that of good men of armys aftir my bloode thus many I shall brynge with me: twenty thousande ..." (190.2-3). Before the battle on the road to Paris, Lancelot speaks for the heroic determination of his kindred: "as for me and my cousyns of my bloode, we are but late made knyghtes, yett wolde we be loth to lese the worship that oure eldyrs have deservyd" (213.33-35). Cador reports after the battle that "of the knyghthode of sir Launcelot hit were mervayle to telle. And of his bolde cosyns ar proved
full noble knyghtes" (217.11-13). At the end of the war Arthur, now emperor, commands "sir Launcelot and sir Bors to take kepe unto their fadyrs landys that kings Ban and kynge Bors welded and her fadyrs" (245.13-15). These lands are rendered "for to mayntene your kynrede, that be noble knyghtes, so that ye and they to the Rounde Table make your repeyre" (245.21-23). Early on in the Morte Darthur, then, Lancelot is closely identified with members of his kindred, all of whom are called good knights, and Bors acquires a special place among them.

The first section of the tale of "Sir Launcelot du Lake" recounts Lancelot's rescue of two of his kinsmen, Lionel and Ector, and others from Tarquin's prison. The episode gives evidence of Lancelot's outstanding prowess, and it shows the attachment of his kinsmen: when Lancelot departs from the court with Lionel, Ector becomes "wroth with hymself /for having been left behind/ and made hym redy to seke sir Launcelot" (254.28-29); and after their rescue the two men ride off to seek Lancelot: "We woll fynde hym and we may lyve" (269.3-4). Lancelot's kinsmen are named in Arthur's party at Castell Perelus in the tournament at the end of the tale of "Gareth." Gareth and his newly won allies fight against his uncle's party—which contains not only Lancelot's kin but Gareth's own

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2Wilson, "Malory's Early Knowledge," p. 46, believes that the passage has its source in the Vulgate Lancelot (Sommer V pp. 322 f.), a theory with which Vinaver agrees (Works, p. 1406, n. 245.20). Malory is obliged to create a conclusion to the continental campaign not in the alliterative Morte Arthure. It is interesting that he should include reference to Lancelot and his kindred.
brothers. Though Gareth and his knights defeat several of Lancelot's kin, Lancelot will not join the field against him (though he does not recognize the knight he himself knighted) simply because Gareth has proven his merit and deserves the prize: "whan a good knyght doth so well uppon som day, hit is no good knyghtes parte to lette hym of his worshyp" (348. 34-349.1). This willingness to allow chivalric considerations to govern does not interfere with the unity between Lancelot and his blood: the kindred at times discovers its sense of worship in its chief knight.

There are a number of references to Lancelot's kin in "Tristram," where its attachment to Lancelot is more strongly asserted and where the kindred is represented as a cohesive and chivalric unit. The chivalry of the blood is chiefly reflected in its prowess:

--"Thes that ar comyn of kynge Banys bloode, as sir Launcelot and these othir, ar passyng good harde knyghtes and harde men for to wynne in batayle as ony that I know now lyvyng" (407.16-19).

--"As for sir Launcelot, he is called the noblyst of the worlde of knyghtes, and wete you well that the knyghtes of hys bloode ar noble men and drede shame" (408.1-3).

--"I warraunte he ys of kyng Bannys blode, whych bene knyghtes of the noblyst proues in the worlde, for to accompte so many for so many" (516.26-29).

--"Well may he be called valyaunte and full of proues that hath such a sorte of noble knyghtes unto his kynne. And
full lyke ys he to be a nobleman that ys their leder and
governoure" (526.20-23).

--"I know hym well for a good knyght and a noble, and commyn he is of noble bloode, and all be noble knyghtes of the blood of sir Launcelot de Lake" (694.6-9).

--"He is wellcom," seyde they [Helyus and Helake], "but is hit sir Launcelot other ony of his bloode?"

"Sir, he is none of that bloode," seyde the messyngere.

"Than we care the lesse," seyde the two brethirme, "for none of the bloode of sir Launcelot we kepe nat to have ado wythall [i.e. in battle]" (716.31-36).

The blood of Lancelot can be regarded not only as a group of chivalric knights, but as a chivalric group of knights:

And than the Kynge with the Hondred Knyghtes, and an hondred mo of North Walis, sette uppon the twenty knyghtes of sir Launcelottes kynne, and they twenty knyghtes hylde them ever togydir as wylde swyne, and none wolde fayle other. So sir Trystram, whan he behylde the nobles of thes twenty knyghtes, he mervayled of their good dedys, for he saw by their fare and rule that they had leyr dye than to avoyde the fyld.

(526.12-19)

They stand together against common enemies:

"Sir Palomydes," seyde sir Ector, "wyte thou well there is nother thou nother no knyght that beryth the lyff that sleyth ony of oure bloode but he shall dye for hit."

(687.26-28)

This speech indicates a certain sentiment of indiscriminate revenge on the part of Lancelot's kindred. It is important to note nevertheless that when revenge is actually brought to bear, as by Blamour and Blioberis, the circumstances and consequences do not violate knighthood. Dinadan reports one
reason, chiefly anticipatory, why Lancelot's kindred remain close to him:

"For sir Gawayne and his bretherne, except you, sir Gareth, hatyth all good knyghtes of the Rounde Table for the moste party. For well I wote, as they myght, prevayly they hate my lorde sir Launcelot and all his kyn, and grete pryvay dispyte they have at hym. And sertaynly that is my lorde sir Launcelot well ware of and that causyth hym the more to have the good knyghtes of his kynne aboute hym."

(700.1-8)

In this last passage Malory locates the Round Table and Lancelot's blood on a common ground defined by the "dispyte" of the Orkeneyes. In the final tale, Arthur and what remains of the Round Table will become associated with Gawain in this "dispyte," and it is "sir Launcelot and all his kyn" who will then bear what had been, before its division, the chivalric identity of the Round Table. Still, the kindred experiences some momentary contretemps. At the tournament of Surluse, Lancelot, in disguise, battles and overcomes Ector and then Blioberis. The episode has no real consequences and is especially interesting as a foreshadowing of a later and more serious confrontation between Lancelot as his kinsmen. It is Guinevere who requests that Lancelot be present at Surluse and, perhaps, that he be there in disguise. In "Launcelot and Guinevere," he will oppose Arthur's party at the tournament at Winchester despite the presence of his own kinsmen in that party—this on account of a quarrel with the queen.

Toward the end of "Tristram," when Tristram's reputation is at its peak, even eclipsing Lancelot's, "sir Launcelottis bretherne and his kynnysmen wolde have slayne sir Trystram because of his fame" (785.2-4). Like every other lapse of
chivalry in Lancelot's kinsmen, this one is quickly brought to rights again, confirming Malory's earlier remark that "all the bloode of sir Launcelott loved sir Trystrames for ever" (411.7-8). Lancelot's own understanding of chivalry, transcending the clannish small-mindedness to which his kinsmen temporarily succumb, induces him to threaten his kin with the promise that "as I am trew knyght, I shall sle the beste of you all myne owne hondis. Alas, fye for shame, sholde ye for hys noble dedys awayte to sle [Tristram]!" (785.7-9). Lancelot appears successfully to reawaken his kindred's sense of right since Tristram and Isolde happily take residence in Lancelot's castle, Joyous Garde. The moral tenor of this speech is quite the opposite from that of Gawain's conspiratorial harangue to his brothers after their defeat at the hands of Lamorak. Yet, paradoxically, while Lancelot places knighthood over kinship and Gawain appeals to kinship in an unknightly fashion, the blood of Lancelot survives unified and Gawain's is forever divided.

Lancelot and Galahad

"Launcelot and Elaine," last but one of the sections of "Tristram" and the story of Galahad's conception, and the "Sankgreall" mark a shift in the treatment of the relationship between Lancelot and his kinsmen. Dinadan's allusion to a certain dependence on kin by Lancelot begins to become apparent, but whereas in the final tales this dependence is outwardly political, here it is essentially moral and focused on Galahad, the son. Up to now the relationship has been more often than
not distinguished by detachment on the part of Lancelot, the knight errant. Henceforward he is more and more physically associated with his kinsmen, especially Galahad and Bors, and his kindred. The relationship is increasingly translated into action, and as the Round Table approaches its dissolution the bonds between Lancelot and his blood grow more apparent.

An anticipatory reference in the "Tale of King Arthur" gives us a sense of Malory's efforts to deal with a distinction so intergrally part of the French Queste that he could not ignore it, yet one to which he could not accommodate himself. The Cistercian author of the French grail romance asserts a real distinction between celestial and earthly chivalry, between sinless and sinful knights, and therefore between Galahad and Lancelot. Galahad replaces his father as premier knight of the world because he is not of the world; he is the best knight in an order of chivalry which transcends Lancelot's and he is consequently the qualitatively superior knight. Malory on his part recognizes the difference between sinful and sinless man but will not extend this distinction to apply to the nature of chivalry itself. Irreligion and sin in a knight are signs of personal chivalric failure and not the marks of an inferior grade of chivalry. And Malory goes further than this; he uses the categorical distinction forced upon him by the Queste to the rather subversive end of asserting the primacy of both Lancelot and Galahad. The superlative they share as "best knight" excludes neither because Malory manipulates the reference against which each is evaluated.

We read in "King Arthur:"

"There shall never man handyll thys
swerde but the beste knyght of the worlde, and that shall be
sir Launcelot other ellis Galahad, hys sonne" (91.21-23).
This noncommittal "other ellis" is the measure of Malory's
delusive definition of the relative worth of Lancelot and Galahad.

There are some unequivocal statements, usually issued
by anonymous, quasi-religious figures, of Galahad's superiority
over his father. A maiden bearing the grail tells Bors that
the child Galahad "shall be muche bettir than ever was his
fadir, sir Launcelot, that ys hys owne fadir" (798.27-28).
Soon after, an old man in a vision tells Bors that Lancelot's
sin, his adulterous relationship with Guinevere, disqualifies
him from ever achieving the grail quest: "for had nat bene hys
synne, he had paste all the knyghtes that ever were in hys
dayes. And tell thou sir Launcelot, of all worldly adventures
he passyth in manhode and proues all othir, but in this
spyrytuall maters he shall have many hys bettyrs" (801.29-33).
Elaine, however, adopts a more secular view when she tells
Lancelot that she does not doubt that their son "shall preve
the beste man of his kynne except one" (832.12-13).

The "Sangkreall" continues Malory's effort to avoid
representing Lancelot and Galahad as embodiments of different
ideals of chivalry and to stress, in several additions to the
French source, that Lancelot remains without "thy pere of ony
erthly synfull man" (934.22-23; also 863.30-31, 948.20-29,
and 941.19-25 where Lancelot is numbered as a fourth knight
of the grail). Another telling addition occurs after Lancelot's
confession and repentance. His confessor assigns a penance
and, Malory adds, tells him to "sew kmyghthode, and so assoyled
hym" (899.5: to pursue knighthood, and so he absolved him). Lancelot has promised in his contrition to leave wickedness and "to sew knyghthode and to do fetys of armys"). There is no absolute demarcation, in the Morte Darthur, between spirituality and knighthood, between Galahad's world and Lancelot's. When the son becomes a part of the father's chivalric recovery it is not as the perfect man leading the sinner, but as knight to knight and son to father.

Lancelot's confession follows a battle between himself and Galahad "new dysgysed. Ryght so hys fadir, sir Launcelot, dressed hys speare and brake hit uppon sir Galahad, and sir Galahad smote hym so agayne that he bare downe horse and man" (892.33-36). This defeat, in a "worldly" exercise, is followed by a spiritually significant disablement. When the grail approaches him Lancelot finds himself unable to "stirre nother speke," and during this incapacity his horse is taken from him. Lancelot, the active knight, is thrown into inaction on account of his "olde synne." His son Galahad, who indirectly owes his existence to the sin—the analogy with Christ is evident—strikes that first disabling blow.

When Lancelot learns that Galahad is his son he reflects that he might benefit from his prayers "unto the Hyghe Fadir,

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When Gawain is advised to perform penance in order to be successful in the grail quest he replies that he "may do no peneunce, for we knyghtes adventures many tyme suffir grete woo and payne" (892.19-20). Gawain offers no such explanation in the French. Malory may have intended to lessen the impression of Gawain's stubbornness in sin. Gawain's argument, taken at face value, indicates some expiatory benefit in knight errancy and does bring to mind Lancelot's confessor's advice to "sew knyghthode."
that I falle nat to synne agayne" (931.30-31). In the Queste
(Sommer VI, 99.10 ff.) Lancelot remarks that such a son as
Galahad would pray God "ior & nuit" to save an erring father
from damnation; Lancelot is allowing himself "moult grans
confors" in this thought, easing himself out of the responsi-
bility of questing for his own salvation. The hermit with
whom he is conversing points out that the son does not bear
the father's wickedness, nor the father the son's, "por ce
ne dois tu pas auoir esperance en ton fil mais seulement en
dieu" (Sommer VI, 99.18-19: therefore you should place your
hopes not in your son but only in God). In translating this
passage Malory omits "en ton fil:" "And therefore beseke thou
only God" (931.5), and entirely alters the sense of the French
by having the "good man" tell Lancelot, "Truste thou well . . .
thou faryst muche the better for hys prayer" (931.1-2). Malory
is averting the distinction between relative and absolute
good; in chivalric men all good things thrive: the love of
God, among them, and the love of kin.

This chivalric integration of sentiments and values
can be detected in the brief episode of the six-month on-board
fellowship of Lancelot and Galahad. Unhorsed once again after
failing to join the right side in an allegorical melee between
black and white knights, Lancelot is told by a supernatural
voice to board a ship. There he experiences "the moste swettnes
that ever he felte, and he was fulfylled with all thynge that
he thought on other desyred" (1011.14-16). The humbling
incapacitations which Lancelot has lately suffered now take
the form of a joyful and willing submission to the provision
of his "swete Fadir, Jesu Cryste." Lancelot, of all men, becomes one of the lilies of the field. Yet even this spiritual joy and satisfaction is displaced by the arrival of his son at ship-side:

And than sir Launcelot dressed hym unto the shippe and seyde,
"Sir, ye be welcom!"
And he answered, and salewed hym agayne and seyde,
"Sir, what ys youre name? For much my herte gevith unto you."
"Truly," seyde he, "my name ys sir Launcelot du Lake."
"Sir," seyde he, "than be ye wellcom! For ye were the begynner of me in thys worlde."
"A, sir, ar ye sir Galahad?"
"Ye, forsothe."

And so he kneled downe and askyd hym hys blyssynge. 
And aftir that toke of hys helme and kyssed hym, and there was grete joy betwyxte them, for no tunge can telle what joy was betwyxte them. And there every of them tolde othir the aventures that had befalle them syth that they departed frome the courte.

(1012.7-23)

As Vinaver remarks, Malory's translation of the French "moult le desir a savoir" by "much my herte gevith unto you" suggests that Galahad "was not merely anxious to know the stranger's name, but drawn towards him because it was his father." After father and son spend half a year together in "many straunge adventures and peryllous which they brought to an end" (103.7-8), Galahad is told that he has "bene longe inowe with youre fadir" (1013.19), and is sent off in quest of the grail. They part in tenderness—"he wente to hys fadir and kyste hym swetely" (1013.22)—and reciprocal requests for prayers. The

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4 Works, p. 1578, n. 1012.11-12.
resolution of the crisis posed by Lancelot's adultery is made tangible in the "grete joy" which his son gives him and the adventures they accomplish together. Thereafter, despite a persistent habit of trusting all too much in his own might, Lancelot achieves the grail quest as much as he was meant to.

The achievement of the grail quest by Galahad, Percival, and Bors coincides with their identification as the children of Christ. At the climax of the quest, Christ addresses them as his "trew chyldren" and his "sunnes." Reciprocally, God, and in particular Christ, is repeatedly prayed to as Father. The apostrophe, "A, swete Fadir Jesu!," first occurs in "Tristram" where it is used more as an expletive than a supplication. It appears in the "Sankgreall," often with the adjectives "fayre" and "swete" (F. = biaus, dols), on several occasions: once by Lancelot's ancestors (928.26-27), by Bors (966.13-14), by Galahad (1013.32), by celestial voices (1015.7), by Elaine of

5. They are called "My sunnes, and nat my chyeff sunnes, my frendis, and nat my werryours" (1013.18-19). "My werryours" is Vinaver's emendation from Caxton. The Winchester MS gives "myne enemies," the reading Vinaver had in the first edition of Works. The passage offers a darker crux, "my chyeff sunnes," of which Vinaver remarks, in his notes to the shorter edition of Works, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), p. 766, n. 604.24, "there seems to be no satisfactory explanation." The only explanation I can offer is that Malory read the French fillastre (stepsons) as fil laste (beaten, failed sons) and translated the word as myscheved sunnes, a later scribe rendering that into my chyeff sunnes. Yet this explanation lacks the elegance of simplicity, demanding too much in a double misreading. Malory did encounter the word laste in his French sources but, as far as I can tell, did not translate it as myscheved. Nor, though the motifs of achieving and mischieving run through the "Sankgreall," does Malory ever use the preterite this way.

Other possible interpretations of "my chyeff sunnes" suggest themselves but they are even more speculative. The riddle remains.
Astolat in "Launcelot and Guinevere" (1093.13), and six times by Lancelot (930.30, 1011.17, 1013.36, 1014.26, 1015.11, 1016.5). Lancelot's prayers to Christ the Father, begging "pite" for his sinfulness and thanking God for his mercy, become more frequent as Lancelot comes near to seeing the grail.

Malory received the idea of the paternity of Christ and of the filiation of good men from his French source. From the Queste he also received the narrative device of the three grail knights leaving a kinsman to join the grail quest:

6 There is a strong Christian tradition behind the idea of the paternity of God, less evident, in the West at least, behind the paternity of Christ. The tradition has a Biblical foundation in both testaments. Abraham is told by God to leave his patrimony in order to found a new nation: "Egressere de terra tua, et de cognitione tua, et de domo patris tui" (Gen. 12.1). God regards this nation as a son: "Filius meus primumogenitus Israel" (Ex. 4.22, also Dt. 1.31, 8.5, 14.1, 32.6, and Mal. 1.6). The paternal God is a loving God: "quia puer Israel, et dilexi eum: et ex AEgypto vocavi filium meum" (Hos. 11.1, also Is. 63.16). The king of Israel is considered the adopted son of God: "ipsum enim elegi mihi in filium, et ego ero ei in patrem" (1 Ch. 28.6, also 28.9, 2 Sam. 7.14, Ps. 2.7). In the New Testament there are numerous references to the Father: "unus est enim pater vester, qui in coelis est" (Matt. 23.9). In Ephesans (3.14-15) Paul speaks of God as the Pater who gives his name to the Christian Patria. Christ, of course, teaches his followers to address God as "Pater noster" (see Matt. 6, Luke 11).

Patristic writers on God's paternity to man especially employ the story of Abraham and the Lord's prayer as the basis for commentary. Cyprian (P.L. 4, cols. 535-543) encourages the believer to renounce his earthly father in order to become the son of God. Later homilies de oratione dominica produce what become conventional observations on the kindness of God and the brotherhood of man—though one sermon by Saint Bernard fails even to speak of the paternity of God (P.L. 183, col. 181). Yet the idea of the paternity of Christ forms an essential element in the spirituality of the Cistercian author of the Queste. The earliest extant mention of Christ as father of the faithful is found in an epistle attributed to Clement (2 Cl. 1.4). The appellation of Christ as father of men derives from his status as sole mediator vis-à-vis creation. Attributing paternity to Christ may have held too great a suggestion of monarchianism to survive as a common tradition in Western Christianity.
Percival takes leave of his aunt; Bors, as we saw in the last chapter, parts with Lionel; and Galahad goes from his father to join the others. Percival's departure is only the beginning of a series of spiritual adventures which end in his discovery of his own sister on the ship called Faith. The author of the Queste may have intended to represent in these departures from kindred the abandonment of a natural for a supernatural family. In the Morte Darthur Malory's management of a reconciliation between Bors and Lionel weakens any effect the French author may have conceived. Furthermore, there is little suggestion of abandonment in Galahad's leave-taking from Lancelot. Malory alters the French slightly to allow Galahad the hope of a reunion with his father: "Fayre swete fadir, I wote nat whan I shall se you more tyll I se the body of Jesu Cryste" (1013.23-24).7

Galahad's affection for his father persists. Having been nominated by Christ as his "sonne," and sent away from Britain to Sarras, Galahad asks three knights of Gaul "to salew my lorde sir Launcelot, my fadir, and hem all of the Round Table" (1031.28-29). On his deathbed the following year Galahad asks Bors, who is to return to Britain, to "salew me unto my lorde sir Launcelot, my fadir, and as sone as ye se hym

7In an earlier passage, Malory gives Galahad an expression of hope of the company of his father, where the French does not. Bors regrets the absence of Lancelot and wishes he "were here." Galahad replies "That may nat be ... but if hit pleased our Lorde" (984.17-18). His reply, in the Queste, is not conditional: "Ce ne puet ore estre pues qu'il ne plaist a nostre signor" (Sommer V 143.38-39: That cannot be since it--he?--does not please our Lord).
bydde hym remembir of this worlde unstable" (1035.10-12). Bor returns with the message: "Sir Galahad, youre owne sonne, salewed you by me, and . . . prayed you to remembir of thys unsyker worlde, as ye behyght hym whan ye were togydirs more than halffe a yere" (1036.27-30). Galahad's final admonition to his father recapitulates the lesson of his very existence. And yet it is in the company of his son aboard ship that Lancelot recovers his spirit after the admission of his sin. Though Galahad's story brings a special emphasis to the religious dimension of chivalry, it does not do so at the expense of secular chivalry. Indeed the religious and secular are interrelated aspects of the same reality. Galahad becomes a son of Christ without having to abandon his affection for his natural father, and Lancelot arrives at religious and moral insight into his status as knight by way of his natural love for his son. In the Malorian chivalric man, there exists a fundamental coincidence and integration of religious, moral, and affective motions.

The religious emphasis of the "Sankgreall" anticipates the turn to religion with which the Morte Darthur closes, but in neither the tale nor the whole book does this emphasis entail a denial of the value of the secular features of chivalry, nor of the value of the natural love of kinsmen. Kinship, indeed, comes to represent, in the final tales, the survival of chivalry as a complex human ideal.
The Final Tales

At the close of the "Sankgreall," Bors replaces Galahad as the kinsman with whom Lancelot will be most closely affiliated:

Than [having heard Galahad's message] sir Launcelot toke sir Bors in hys armys and seyde,

"Cousyn, ye ar ryght wellcom to me! For all that I may do for you and for yours, ye shall fynde my poure body redy atte all tymes whyle the spyryte is in hit, and that I promyse you fethfully, and never to fayle. And wete ye well, gentyl cousyn sir Bors, ye and I shall never departe in sundir whylis oure lyvys may laste."

"Sir," seyde he, "as ye woll, so woll I."

(1036.33-1037.7)

The relationship between the two cousins will eventually be framed as one of uncle and nephew for the purpose, I assume, of presenting a chivalric contrast to the strangely misguided relationship of Arthur and Gawain in the final tale of the Morte Darthur, the "Morte Arthur." In the final tales, Arthur's kindred misserves itself (as it has in the past) by the ill will of some of its members ostensibly promoting the honor of the family. Lancelot's kindred, on the other hand, will share in time of crisis a chivalric common purpose.

Some time after Lancelot's return from the grail quest, Guinevere, frustrated by his new-found respect for chastity, sends him out of the court. Going, he points out that should she fall into distress, "than ys there none other helps but by

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8 Such an assertion can only stir up the dogs of war on the issue of the unity of the Morte Darthur. The problem, with respect to the conclusion of the "Sankgreall," is discussed in Works, p. 1583, n. 1036.19-1037.7.
me and my bloode" (1046.23-24), a prediction soon to come true. In order to show a carefree face despite Lancelot's absence, the queen gives a dinner, and it is disrupted by Pynell's misfiring attempt to poison Gawain with apples. When Patryse innocently dies of the poison, his cousin, Mador de la Porte, holds the queen responsible. Bors is to champion her cause, but Lancelot arrives at the last moment, takes on Mador and defeats him. Lancelot's kinsmen celebrate his return: "Than the knyghtes of hys bloode drew unto hym, and there aythir of them ade grete joy of othir" (1059.2-4). After Guinevere's rather gloomy banquet and its consequences the Round Table seems eager to associate itself with the cheer of Lancelot's blood: "And so there was made grete joy, and many merthys there was made in that courte" (1059.8-10). If there is anything secure in this "unsyker worlde," it is the unity of Lancelot's kin.

The relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere remains unappeased after his return. A quarrel prompts Lancelot to fight at the tournament at Winchester (though he has not entirely recovered from a wound received from Mador) and to fight in disguise against Arthur's party even though, as the queen remarks, "full many harde knyghtes of youre bloode" will be in that party (1066.15-16). His awkward decision seems to grow out of a pique at Guinevere's inconstant mind and her unreasonableness. The consequences are mixed. To make himself unknown he borrows a sleeve from Elaine of Astolat who eventually dies of unrequited love for him. Incognito he is wounded by Bors, and when his identity is made known Guinevere is angry
that he should have worn another woman's token. On the other hand, Lancelot gains the lasting companionship of Elaine's brother, Lavayne, and the bond between Lancelot and Bors survives their passage through conflict.

At the tournament of Winchester Bors smites Lancelot "by myssefortune," and Lavayne, who is not of Lancelot's kindred, comes to his rescue, and together they unhorse nine of the kinsmen. Lancelot defeats Lionel, Bors, and Ector. He comes in the pride of battle, to the verge of slaying them, but the sight of their faces prevents him, "for, as the booke sayth, he myght have slayne them, but whan he saw their visages hys herte myght nat serve hym thereto, but leffte hem there" (1072. 31-33). Lancelot's decision to fight at Winchester and to oppose Arthur has not much merit; his emotional entanglement with the queen manifests itself in improdence and misjudgement. He places himself, and his kinsmen, at the risk of what in Malory is a particularly tragic action, the slaying of kin. This is Lancelot's chief fault: misjudgement due to overtrusting

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9Vinaver, Works, p. 1600, n. 1065.23-24, considers that Lancelot stayed behind not on account of his wound but for the love of the queen. This is difficult to see. Malory omits the reason of love though it appears in his sources. The text suggests that Guinevere stayed back only after she knew that Lancelot was remaining behind. Malory is somewhat ambiguous about the relationship between the lovers after the quest of the grail. Their love becomes even "more hotter" than before, giving rise to scandal, but Lancelot then begins to withdraw from the company of the queen. Malory is dark about the moments they spend together, especially at the time of the ambush: "For, as the Freynshe booke seyth, the quene and sir Launcelot were togydirs. And whether they were abed other at other maner of disportes, me lyste nat thereof make no mencion, for love that tyme was nat as love ys nowadayes" (1165.10-13). Malory has as always a care for Lancelot's chivalry.
action. But, in this case, blood runs thicker than slaughter, and tragedy such as Balin and Balan succumbed to is avoided. The power of consanguinity upon the "herte" is reaffirmed and, in the midst of the tournament and its revels of bloodshed, the motions of blood are seen as a force of pacification.

Although at the end of the battle Lancelot excuses himself from the field "for I am never lyke to ascape with the lyff" (1073.22), he tells Lavayne, "for ever my harte gyvith me that I shall never dye of my cousyne jermaynes hondys" (1074.27-28). He recovers, but before he does, Gawain predicts the affective consequences of the battle:

"The man in the worlde that loved beste hym hurte hym. And I dare sey," seyde sir Gawayne, "And that knyght that hurte hym knew the verry sertaynte that he had hurte sir Launcelot, hit were the moste sorow that ever cam to hys herte."

(1079.27-31)

When indeed the courte learns that it was Lancelot who fought wearing the red sleeve of Elaine on his helm, the reaction of the kindred is sorrow: Bors "was an hevy man, and so were all hys kynnysmen. But whan the quyene wyst that hit was sir Launcelot . . . she was nygh ought of her mynde for wratthe" (1080.19-22). Bors must point out to her that Lancelot wore the sleeve not on account of any betrayal of the queen's love but in order that his kinsmen not know him. The associated reactions of Bors and Guinevere set in contrast the steady and loyal fraternal love of one and the changeable, fault-finding, entangling love of the other.

The reunion of Bors and Lionel is an occasion for each to reflect on his failings against kinship and chivalry--the
two realities are virtually conflated—and to reassert the bonds which are to endure against the coming upheaval:

And when sir Bors saw sir Launcelot lye in hys bedde, dede pale and discoloured, anone sir Bors loste hys countenaunce, and for kyndenes and pite he myght nat speke but wepte tendirly a grete whyle. But whan he myght speke he seyde thus:

"A, my lorde sir Launcelot, God you blysse and sende you hasty recoveryng! For full hevy am I of my mysfortune and of myne unhappynesse. For now I may calle myselff unhappy, and I drede me that God ys gretely displeasyd with me, that He wolde suffir me to have such a shame for to hurte you that ar all oure leder and all oure worship; and therefore I calle myselff unhappy. Alas, that ever such a caytyff knyght as I am sholde have power by unhappines to hurte the moste noblyst knyght of the worlde! Where I so shamefully sette uppon you and overcharged you, and where ye myght have slayne me, ye saved me; and so ded nat I, for I and all oure bloode ded to you their utteraunce. I merwalye," seyde sir Bors, "that my herte or my bloode wolde serve me. Wherefore, my lorde sir Launcelot, I aske you mercy."

"Fayre cousyn," seyde sir Launcelot, "ye be ryght wellcom, and wyte you well, overmuche ye sey for the pleasure of me whych pleasith me nothynge, for why I have the same isought; for I wolde with pryde have overcom you all. And there in my pryde I was nere slayne, and that was in myne owne defaughte; for I myght have gyffyn you warnyng of my beynge there, and than had I no hurte. For hit ys an olde-seyde sawe, 'there ys harde batayle thereas kynne and frendys doth batayle ayther ayenst other,' for there may be no mercy, but mortall warre. Therefore, fayre cousyn," seyde sir Launcelot, "lat thys langage overpasse, and all shall be wellcom that God sendith. And latte us leve of thys mater and speke of some rejoysynge, for thys that ys done may nat be undone; and lat us fynde a remedy how sone that I may be hole."

(1083.12-1084.12)

They don't speak of "som rejoysynge" but of Guinevere's wrath and Elaine's love. The pattern is maintained. Lancelot's erotic involvement with the queen induces him to lapse from chivalry and eventually results in the division of the chivalric society of the Round Table; kinship on the other hand reconciles
affective and moral impulses in the individual and serves as the basis for a surviving community of knights.

For all his failings, Lancelot remains "the moste noblyst knyght of the worlde," a fact given supernatural reaffirmation in the episode of "Sir Urry." His enemies become the enemies of chivalry, and when Bors warns that "we that ben of hys blood wolde helpe to shortyn their lyves" (1087.26–27), he is defending his cousin's chivalric honor. While the blood of Lancelot defines a specific kindred, one therefore exclusive of other knights, the basis for the identification of the kindred, the sentiments of kinship themselves, transcends the limitations of clan. These sentiments of natural affiliation do not replace the sense of chivalric fellowship in the final tales of the *Morte Darthur* but become rather the most dramatic symbol of the fellowship. It is important to note that the men who gather around Lancelot are not exclusively his kinsmen. There are knights such as Neroveus, who was knighted by Lancelot, and Plenoryus, whose companionship Lancelot gained in battle. There are more recent friends such as Lavayne and Urry. And there are those who join him "for sir Lamorakes sake and for sir Trystrames sake" (1170.27–28), for the sake of two other excellent knights. But this is looking ahead to the final tale. In "Launcelot and Guinevere" Gareth joins Lancelot's party against his uncle Arthur's at the Great Tournament. When his party is defeated, the king blames his nephew in particular "because he leffte hys felyshyp and hylde with sir Launcelot" (1114.8–9). Gareth replies that Lancelot made him knight, "and when I saw hym so hard bestad, methought hit was my worshyp to
helpe hym" (1114.10-12). Arthur then concurs in a philosophical vein: "For ever hit ys . . . a worshypfull knyghtes dede to help and succoure another worshypfull knyght whan he seeth hym in daungere" (1114.20-22). So Arthur unwittingly justifies the later congregation of worthy knights behind Lancelot when Lancelot is endangered by the enmity of Arthur and Gawain.

The "Morte Arthur saunze Guerdon" opens with a scene of a discussion among the Orkeney brothers over Lancelot's relations with the queen. Yet the brothers are anything but unanimous in their estimate of what ought to be done. Aggravain and Mordred are eager to entrap the lovers while Gawain, Gaheris, and Gareth refuse to associate themselves with any such action. Gawain points out that Lancelot has been helpful to all of them and counsels that "such noble dedis and kyndnes shulde be remembird" (1162.18). Aggravain and Mordred nevertheless reveal their suspicions to Arthur, and do so, as they say, because they are "your suster sunnes." Yet their real motivation has nothing to do with feelings of kinship. Malory describes them as "two unhappy knyghtis" who "had ever a prevy hate unto the quene, dame Gwenyver, and to sir Launcelot" (1161.9-13). Gawain reproaches Mordred for his inclination toward evil: "for ever unto all unhappynes, sir, ye woll graunte" (1161.31-32: for you will always acquiesce to any mischief). Later Arthur himself blames the actions of his nephews on their "evyll wyll . . . unto sir Launcelot" (1184.9-10). Here as in the Lot-Pellinor feud it is personal spite rather than family honor which is at the root of conflict.
The conflict divides the Orkeneys and it unites the
blood of Lancelot, and does it in a rather mysterious fashion.
After slaying his ambushers, Lancelot leaves the queen's room
to find all his companions already armed.

"Jesu mercy!" seyde sir Launcelot, "why be ye all
armed? What meanyth thys?"

"Sir," seyde sir Bors, "aftir ye were departed
frome us we all that ben of youre bloode and youre
well-syllars were so adretched that som of us lepe
oute ofoure beddis naked, and some in their dremys
cought naked swordys in their hondis. And therefore,"
seyde sir Bors, "we demed there was som grete stryff
on honde, and so we demed that ye were betrapped with
som treson; and therefore we made us thus redy, what
nede that ever ye were in."

(1169.6-15)

What brings these knights to Lancelot is a kind of subconscious
manifestation of what Arthur called "a worshypfull knyghtes
dede to help and succoure another worshypfull knyght." Learning
of the ambush Arthur foresees the end, "the noble felyshyp of
the Rounde Table ys brokyn for ever, for wyth hym woll many a
noble knyght holde" (1174.15-16). Arthur has lost his tenure
as dean of chivalry.

The event which finally assures the break-up of the
fellowship of the Round Table is Lancelot’s accidental slaying
of Gareth during his rescue of the queen from execution by fire.
Gawain's resultant hostility toward Lancelot makes any reconcilia-
tion impossible. The significance of Gawain's response to the

10 Compare with the passage from the stanzaic Morte
Arthur (ll. 1876-77):

Owre knyghtis haue be drechyd to-nyght,
That som nakyd oute of bed spronge.

King Arthur's Death, ed. Larry Benson (Indianapolis: Bobbs-
Merrill, 1974).
death of his brother is not that it is vindictive, but that this particular death should move him to such extremes of hate. Gareth, after all, has been the most distant and uncompromising of Gawain's bretheren. And yet the contrast between Gawain's response to the death (by Lancelot) of his brother Aggravain and his two sons Florence and Lovell and on the other hand the death of Gareth is remarkable. Learning of the former he says, "howbehit I am sory of the deth of my brothir and of my two sundes, but they ar the causars of their owne dethe" (1176. 8-9). As for Gareth's death, he refuses at first to believe it on account of the chivalric relation between Lancelot and Gareth: "for I dare say my brothir loved hym bettir than me and all hys brethim and the kynge bothe" (1185.1-3). Never­theless, while Gawain recognizes that Gareth, had Lancelot wanted it, "wolde have ben with hym ayenste the kynge and us all" (1185.4-5), the merest statement from an unnamed messenger that "hit ys noysed that he slew hym" causes Gawain to believe, exclaiming, "Alas . . . now ys my joy gone!" (1185.7-8). He promises "for the deth of my brothir, sir Gareth, I shall seke sir Launcelot thorowoute seven kynges realmys, but I shall sle hym, other ellis he shall sle me" (1186.10-12). Gaheris, who dies alongside Gareth, is not even mentioned.

This, then, is an interesting paradox. Gawain is moved by something more than the death of a kinsman, he is moved by the death of the most chivalric of his brothers at the hand of the knight for whom he had the greatest chivalric regard. In the death of Gareth, chivalry is, if accidentally--and Malory makes this clear--violated. An accidental fratricide is
nevertheless a grievous thing, and Lancelot's killing of Gareth can be regarded as a chivalric analogue to fratricide. Gawain's extraordinary response, while not out of character, can be explained as grief over the betrayal of chivalry, as he sees it, by its noblest knight, Lancelot. Gawain repeatedly addresses Lancelot now as "false and recrayde knyght." Yet Malory is, after all, careful to absolve Lancelot of any direct blame in the death of Gareth to the point of having him say that "by Jesu, and by the feyth that I owghe unto the hyghe Order of Knyghthode, I wolde with as good a wyll have slayne my nevew, sir Bors de Ganys, at that tyme" (1189.17-19, also 1199.13-14). Incited, then, by an apparent eclipse of chivalry Gawain falls back on a false dependence on kinship: the need to revenge the injured brother (he later reproaches Lancelot for killing Aggravain as well) and the ruthless alliance with his uncle. This process heals neither family nor the Round Table, but gives Mordred occasion to rebel against his uncle, causing an even deeper split. Lancelot, on the other hand, supported by his kin yet recognizing that chivalry has precedence over kinship, heads a kindred that comes to represent the survival of chivalry.

Arthur, whom Gawain repeatedly and insistently calls "myne uncle the kynge," is dominated by his nephew; as Lucan observes, "my lorde Arthure wolde accorde with sir Lancelot, but sir Gawayne woll nat suffir hym" (1213.3-4). The process, begun early in the Morte Darthur, of disintegration within the A-kindred continues, reaching a climax when old incest returns to haunt Arthur. While the king is besieging Lancelot in France,
Mordred, left behind as regent, usurps the throne and plans to marry Guinevere, "which was hys uncle's wyff and hys fadirs wyff" (1227.10). Galahad, the son of Lancelot's sin, is instrumental in his father's deeper perception of chivalry; Mordred, the son of Arthur's sin, brings about his downfall and death. But Lancelot is willing to pursue chivalry, while Arthur, near the end, seems to lose the will for reasonable action and accelerates the very collapse he laments. Through the motifs of kinship associated with the A-kindred is seen the decay of a chivalric society, while through those associated with the L-kindred is seen the survival of another. Lancelot brings the Arthurian unity to France:

And so they shyped at Cardyff, and sayled unto Benwyke . . . But say the sothe, sir Launcelott and hys neveawis was lorde of all Fraunce and of all the londis that longed unto Fraunce; he and hys kynrede rejoysed hit all thorow sir Launcelottis noble proues.

And thus he departed hys londis and avancéd all hys noble knyghtes. And firste he avancéd them off hys blood. . .

Thus sir Launcelot rewarded hys noble knyghtes, and many mo that mesemyth hit were to longe to rehers.

(1204.17-1205.23)

Gawain himself, at his dying moment, recognizes Lancelot's persistent chivalry, "floure of all noble knyghtes that ever I harde of or saw be my dayes" (1231.8-9). So addressing Lancelot in a letter, and referring to himself as "kynge Lottis sonne of Orkeney, and systirs sonne unto the noble kynge Arthur" (1231.9-11), Gawain asks him to come to the rescue of the king "for he ys full straytely bestad wyth an false traytoure whych ys my halff-brothir, sir Mordred" (1231.27-29). His chivalric sense has been variable throughout
the Morte Darthur, yet Gawain ends his life in clarity. He recognizes that what is right about the motions of kinship is what conforms to a sense of chivalry.

After his death, and after the death of Mordred, Arthur, dying, is left with a kinswoman and a kinsman: Morgan and Constantine. In an odd scene Morgan, Arthur's sister and his ancient enemy, arrives in the company of two good queens with a ship to take him to the vale of Avalon. "A, my dere brothir!" she asks, "Why have ye taryed so longe from me?"

(1240.23-24). Constantine, whose relationship to Arthur Malory does not mention in this tale, is heir to the throne. The great chivalric society is gone, but chivalry does not die. Constantine "was a ful noble knyght, and worshypfully he rulyd this royame" (1259.28-29). It is primarily among Lancelot's blood, however, that we see knightliness continue. The kindred is still drawn toward their noble chief even after his disappearance into religious life:

And than sir Lyonel toke fyftene lordes with hym and rode to London to seke sir Launcelot; and there syr Lyonel was slayn and many of his lorde. Thenne syr Bors de Ganys made the grete hoost for to goo hoome ageyne, and syr Boors, syr Ector de Maris, syr Blamour, syr Bleoboris, with moo other of syr Launcelottes kynne, toke on hem to ryde al England overthwart and endelone to seek syr Launcelot.

So syr Bord by fortune rode so longe tyl he came to the same chapel where syr Launcelot was. ...

And wythin halfe a yere there was come syr Galyhud, syr Galyhodyn, sir Blamour, syr Bleoberis, syr Wylyyars, syr Clarrus, and sir Gaahallantyne. So al these seven noble knyghtes there abode styl. And whan they saw syr Launcelot had taken hym to suche perfeccion they had no lust to departe but toke such a habyte as he had.

(1254.19-1255.2)

The kindred follows the lead of "the nobleste knyght of the
and after he dies it is his brother Ector, arriving only in time for the funeral, who speaks the elegy to the "hede of al Crysten knyghtes" (1259.9-10).

The principal kinsmen of Lancelot are together to the end, united in heroic death:

The Frengshe book maketh mencyon—and is aucitorysed—that syr Bors, syr Ector, syr Blamour and syr Bleoberis wente into the Holy Lande, theeres Jesu Cryst was quycke and deed. And anone as they had stablysshed theyr londes, for, the book saith, so syr Launcelot commaunded them for to do or ever he passyd oute of thys world, there these foure knyghtes dyd many bataylles upon the myscreeantes, or Turkes. And there they dyed upon a Good Fryday for Goddes sake. (1260.7-15)

And so ends the Morte Darthur, with the death of some of Lancelot's blood together in defence of Christian holy places and on the anniversary of the death of Christ. The love and fellowship of kinsmen, and regard for religion, belong to chivalric heroism.

The knight of noble descent possesses a potential and inherent inclination to chivalric virtue, which in Malory's Morte Darthur represents human excellence. Realizing this potential means recognizing that chivalric judgement, the recognition of another's good will, takes precedence over any passionate responses arising from kinship. Noble blood should lead to a perception of the value of consanguinity that engenders any conflict between kinship and knighthood. As a source of "naturall love" kinship comes to represent the fellowship of men and, in the kindred of sir Lancelot, a fellowship of such worth and proportion as to carry the ideals of the Round Table beyond its destruction. In the blood of sir Lancelot, noble
blood and consanguinity are joined in the significant function of representing the high and timeless nature of chivalry.

The death of Arthur, the end of his reign, the death of Lancelot and the final death of Lancelot's kin charge the Morte Darthur with an effect of finality. The institutions of man are fragile, his actions not universally successful—even in the finest of the species—and his history is a pattern of mutability. But if something does survive and somewhat vanquish the vagaries of time and action, it is that quality of human nature which, for Malory and his contemporaries, was cast in the antiquated but still forceful stereotype of chivalry. Far from being, as Moorman argued, a symbol of the failure of chivalry, kinship (and for that matter noble descent) signifies its durability. Nothing in the Morte Darthur endures with such stability as kinship values, especially as they are represented in the most chivalric of the kindreds, that which, like an ellipse, forms about the two epicenters of the best knights of the world, Lancelot and Galahad, father and son.
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231


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APPENDIX I

A-KINDRED in the MORTE DARthur

BELINUS BRENNIUS 188.6 of my bloode elders (ARTHUR)

HELEN 188.10
CONSTANTINE 188.9 Oure kinnesman

UTEHER YGERNE 7.6 DUKE OF TINTAGEL

ELAYNE 10.7 NENTRES
(SM=Morgans)

ERLE OF PASE niece 643.31 cousi cousin 643.8 643.6

MORGAN URIENS RADENAGUS cousin 79.9

MELIAGANT 344.22 259.1

YWAIN 210.7

IDER LOVELL 189.21 210.29

B ARTHUR MARGAWSE LOT

41.19 MORDRED

41.5

361.7 GARETH—LYONESSE niece 361.11

AGGRAVAIN LAWRELL 361.10

GRINGAMORE

LYONET GAHERIS 361.9

cousins 445.1

GAWAIN———-EDWARD OF ORKNEY SADOK

(many odir 579.24)

241
The following characters are said to be of Ban's or Lancelot's kindred:

ALYDUKE, GALYHUD, GALYHODIN (1071.25)

GAHALANTYNE, MENADUKE, VYLLARS LE VALYAUNTE, HEBES LE RENOWNE (1148.8)

AUNSERUS THE PYLGRYME 644.26 f.

LA BELLE AYLS ALYSAUNDIR (T-kindred)

BELLEMBERUS LE BEUSE
P-KINDRED IN THE MORTE DARTHUR (Pellinor branch)

(PELLAM OF LYSTENOYSE)

LADY OF THE RULE 119.30

PELLINOR 101.6

AYRES

HARLON

ALYNE

TOR 12 sons

ARGUSTUS

NANOWNE 441.14

LE PETYTE cousin

PYNELLE LE 1048.24

SAVEAYGE cousin

LAGORAK

DORNAR

AGGLOVAL

PERCIVAL

HERMYNDE HARMAUNCE 715.30

* These sons, according to Malory, are born in wedlock. Their mother appears at 809.30, identified only as "a quene in tho dayes."
P-KINDRED IN THE MORTE DARTHUR (Galahad's ancestry)

(PELLAM) nyghe his kin 85.28

(PELLAM) cousin nyghe 793.18

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA

JOSEPHE

Galaad

879.31

1026.7

DAVID

SOLOMON

MARY

JESUS

991.14

991.25

991.33

859.13

865.10 (LANCELOT)

(GALAHAD)

LABOR

986.26

82.23

MAYMED KYNGE (PELLAM OF LYSTENOYSE)

GARLON

PELLES (MAYMED KYNGE) 989.33

nephew 823.5

CASTOR

ELIAZAR

ELAINE

LANCELOT (L-kindred)

grauntsyre

861.1

990.13

niece 1028.6

GALAHAD

a cousin jermaine 907.13

at gooth
**T-KINDRED IN THE MORTE DARThUR**

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<td>MELYODAS</td>
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| 433.19                |               |
| KEYHYDYS              |               |

| 433.32                |               |
| ISOLDE                 |               |

| 549.8                 |               |
| ANDRET                | ARGUYS        |

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| BELLYNGERE            |               |

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<td>LE ORPHELYNE</td>
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* four unnamed nephews (sc. 412.15)
APPENDIX II

The Relationship of Bors de Ganis and Lyonel to Launcelot in Le Morte Darthur.

(Book 2)

— 213.33, 217.11: References to Lancelot's cousins: these are obviously Bors and Lyonel (216.24).

— 245.13-15: Lancelot and Bors are mentioned respectively as the sons of kings Ban and Bors, therefore cousins germain.

These relationships are not found in Malory's source for "Lucius," the alliterative Morte Arthure, and were known to him through the French romances.

(Book 3)

— 253.22: Lyonel is called Lancelot's nephew.

— 255.14-17: Lyonel is given as Ector's brother.

— 256.9-11: Ector and Lyonel address one another as brother, and Ector refers to Lancelot as "my brothir."

— 261.21: Lancelot speaks of Lyonel as his brother.

— 263.34: Lancelot "wolde seke his brothir sir Lyonel."

None of these references is to be found in the French Lancelot where Lyonel is referred to as "li cousins germains lancelot."

(Book 4)

— 344.11-15: "Than com sir Launcelot de Lake with his bretherne, nevewys, and cosyns, as sir Lyonel, sir Ector de
Marys, sir Bors de Ganys, and sir Bleobrys de Gaynes, sir Blamour de Gaynys and sir Galyhody, sir Galyhud, and many mo of sir Launcelottys kynne."

(Book 5)

—797.22: "sir Bors de Ganys that was nevew unto sir Launcelot." In the French source Bors at this point calls Lancelot "mes sires & mes cousins germains."

—798.7: Bors is again referred to as Lancelot's nephew. The French has "le cousin de . . . lancelot."

(Book 6)

—854.1-2: Bors and Lyonel are called two of Lancelot's cousins. Likewise at 854.34 and 855.33.

—964.1, 11, 28: Lancelot is called Bors' cousin.

—1037.1, 5: Lancelot addresses Bors as "cousyn."

This is consistent with the relationship in the Vulgate Queste.

(Book 7)

—1047.25, 35: Lancelot addresses Bors as his brother.

—1083.2, 32, 1084.30, 1087.10, 1088.21: Lancelot and Bors are called cousins and so address one another.

The passages at 1047 are very likely Malory's own (See Vinaver's notes in Works, p. 1596). As for the second group (1083-88), the stanzaic Morte Arthur establishes no relationship between Lancelot and Bors and Lyonel, though Bors and Lyonel are found in the company of Ector who is called Lancelot's brother. In the Mort Artu, Ector, Bors, and Lyonel
are referred to as li • iij • cousin" (Sommer VI 230.4) and Bors is called "li cousin lancelot" (Sommer VI 221.19).

(Book 8)

—1164.34, 1166.18, 22, 1169.16, 1170.3, 1189.19, 1193.30: Bors is repeatedly referred to or addressed as Lancelot's nephew.

There is no precedent in the sources for this relationship.