

APPEARANCES AND REALITY IN THE VULGATE CYCLE

STRUCTURAL IMPLICATIONS  
OF  
APPEARANCES AND REALITY  
IN THE  
VULGATE VERSION OF THE ARTHURIAN ROMANCES

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## ABSTRACT

No serious investigation of the Vulgate Cycle has yet been undertaken to examine critically the relationship between appearances and reality with a view to understanding their function as literary devices and their implications for the structural unity of the cycle as a whole. Since aspects of appearances and reality are by no means consistent from the beginning of the Vulgate Cycle to the end, marked differences may be readily identified by the careful reader and from this, one may make at least some tentative conclusions concerning the authorship of this vast body of material.

In the Estoire, an essentially religious and didactic work, reality assumes the form of absolute truth which is equated with the Divinity, whereas illusion, most obviously arising in the dream, acquires the negative value attributed to the deception of Satan. Similarly, the Queste is essentially a religiously oriented, didactic work, but the dreams and visions which occur here are further complicated by the device of the search, which in this case centres upon Galahad. In the Merlin, appearances acquire the form of disguise, which then invariably becomes the means by which the essential truth or reality of a given situation is revealed. The

large body of material contained within the Lancelot Proper shows an increasing complexity in the use of literary devices which are associated with appearances and reality: disguise, mistaken identity, characters incognito and the boon. These provide the initial impetus for the many complicated quests for Lancelot which follow and offer a thread of unity and coherence to the multitude of adventures which the Knights of the Round Table undertake. The Vulgate Cycle culminates in the very sophisticated, psychological approach of the Mort Artu. Here, subtle illusion in the form of human folly reveals a man, who is fully aware of the truth of his own situation but who chooses to close his eyes to it and accept instead an illusion. In so doing, he brings total ruin and destruction upon himself and his kingdom.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the course of the past century countless words have been written and a great deal of controversy generated by the many attempts to arrive at a more complete understanding of that vast 13th-century prose work: The Vulgate Cycle Of The Arthurian Romances. Among the many scholars who have devoted themselves to this work several names come to mind immediately: Bruce, Frappier, Lot, Pauphilet, Vinaver et al. The work which they have done in their attempts to shed light on this great body of material has been of immense value in helping the modern reader to come to terms with the complexities of H. Oskar Sommer's seven-volume edition of the work. Sources and structure have been investigated; analyses and hypotheses have been advanced, examined and re-examined, so that to-day, many relatively firm conclusions concerning the nature of the Vulgate Cycle have emerged.

One intriguing area of interest, however, which may open several new paths of investigation has yet to be considered extensively or critically by scholars, even though it stands out clearly against the complex background of the material at hand. We refer to the very considerable role played by illusion and reality in all phases of the Vulgate Cycle, in the first instance as an effective literary device

in itself and secondly, as a means toward structural unity within each of the units of the broader work. However, as obvious as the presence of illusion and reality might be in the Vulgate Cycle there is, in fact, no one, single clear-cut aspect of either which is clearly and unmistakably identifiable throughout all sections of the work. Indeed, it is precisely the variety of the forms which both illusion and reality assume that underlines the need to investigate more closely.

Consideration of the Estoire del Saint Graal will readily reveal that in this portion of the cycle, reality acquires one predominant characteristic--its absolute nature, which makes it synonymous with truth. Reality, then, is absolute truth and hence, of positive value, while that which is not reality, i.e., that which is apparent reality, illusion or deception, while also absolute, possesses negative value. The former, aligned with the forces of good, is to be sought and fostered; the latter, associated with the forces of evil, is to be rejected outright. And so, out of the struggle between reality and illusion which occupies a substantial portion of the Estoire del Saint Graal there emerge religious overtones as the characters of the Estoire attempt to fathom and to understand the many dreams and visions which are the most frequent manifestations of illusion. It is their interpretation of these which will determine the course which their own future will take. In the Queste del

Saint Graal, such dreams and visions are again prevalent and again didactic. More often than not they, too, spring from a religious bias, and one might expect, that they, too, have an essentially similar role to play, but a new element, still an aspect of illusion--that of the disguise which leads to anonymity or mistaken identity--surfaces here and complicates the picture. While this device may be an extension of the various forms which are assumed by both Christ and the Devil in the Estoire, the search for a Galahad incognito would seem to be not unlike similar searches for a Lancelot whose outer appearance at any given moment is likewise unknown. In the Merlin as well, in particular in the continuation (Sommer: vol. ii, 88 ff.), illusion frequently assumes the form of the disguise of the central figure, Merlin himself. This, in turn, effectively serves the purpose of concealing the truth from those who discover it. The Lancelot Proper also makes extensive use of disguise, as well as characters incognito and mistaken identity; indeed, the very essence of the numerous searches which principally, although not exclusively, seek out Lancelot, is rooted in the fact that the character being sought is not readily identifiable by those who are looking for him. However, into this section of the work have been introduced several new elements--all aspects of the broader picture involving illusions and reality. Thus the boon, the ruse and even outright lies, all assume a role as



manifestations of apparent reality. Finally, in the Mort Artu, the end toward which the cycle has inexorably moved from the beginning, a unique and subtle aspect of illusion emerges in the form of human folly, which manifests itself in a willingness to close one's eyes to obvious truth and to accept illusion in its stead. It is this which inevitably leads to the total collapse of Arthur's realm and the ultimate demise of the Knights of the Round Table. No longer do disguises play an important role. The truth, reality, is there for everyone plainly to see if he will. Instead, cunning, deliberate deceit, rumour, and the withholding of vital information all emerge as effective means of obscuring the truth. But, significantly, they are generally effective only because those involved are prepared to accept them at face value. The outcome is inevitable.

In 1918, in his Etude sur le Lancelot en prose, Ferdinand Lot advanced the theory that a single author was responsible for the entire body of material which comprises the Estoire, the Lancelot Proper, the Queste and the Mort Artu: "D'un bout à l'autre, de l'Estoire à la Mort d'Arthur, langue et style sont identiques. D'un bout à l'autre on rencontre les mêmes particularités, les mêmes manies d'écrivain. Des situations analogues amènent l'emploi de formules semblables" (F. Lot, Etude sur le Lancelot en prose, p. 107). This hypothesis which, ". . . par sa nouveauté

. . . a plutôt effrayé que convaincu le monde des romanistes . . ." (F. Lot, Etude sur le Lancelot en prose, p. 443 n.1), did not, as a result, find universal acceptance; it was, however, defended in Le double esprit et l'unité du "Lancelot" en prose by Myrrha Lot-Borodine:

"La symphonie est achevée. D'un regard notre esprit embrasse l'ensemble, où tout--réalité, rêve, fiction et mystère--est soumis à une seule volonté créatrice. Il porte, cet ensemble, le sceau d'un génie individuel et non les traces d'une tourbe de conteurs, se juxtaposant l'une à l'autre, pour réunir péniblement les innombrables cailloux d'une mosaïque multicolore" (Myrrha Lot-Borodine, contained in F. Lot, Etude sur le Lancelot en prose, p. 456).

But, her arguments notwithstanding, dissenting voices were still heard. Pauphilet saw fit to remove the Estoire from the whole and to consider it, as does Jean Frappier, a "retrospective sequel," the work of "a continuator"

(Jean Frappier, "The Vulgate Cycle," contained in Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, [ed.] R. S. Loomis, p. 313).

As far as the Merlin (Sommer, vol. ii, 3-88) is concerned, most critics subscribe to the theory which would place it outside of the larger work. As A. Micha suggests, this prose version attributed to Robert de Boron has been ". . . incorporated in the Vulgate cycle and . . . brought into harmony with the later portions of that monumental work. . ."

(Alexandre Micha, "The Vulgate Merlin," contained in

A.L.M.A., p. 319). To the continuation which follows immediately after the prose Merlin (Sommer, vol. ii 88-466), Micha ascribes a date some time after the year 1230. "An anonymous author apparently felt the need for filling the gap between the youth and coronation of Arthur and his apogee" (A. Micha, p. 322). Thus it is generally accepted that both sections of the Vulgate Cycle, the Merlin attributed to Robert de Boron and the continuation which are contained in Volume II of Sommer's edition, post-date the main body of the larger work. Finally, the consensus of opinion regarding the Livre d'Artus (Sommer, vol. vii) generally considers this to be a late addition to the cycle, conceived as a series of episodes ". . . which are forecast in the Vulgate Merlin sequel which precedes it . . . [and] were invented to fulfil these anticipations, or borrowed from other sources for the same purpose" (Frederick Whitehead and Roger Sherman Loomis, The "Livre d'Artus" contained in A.L.M.A., p. 336).

In his article on the Vulgate Cycle, Frappier takes issue with some of the conclusions drawn by Ferdinand Lot. Specifically, he rejects the possibility that the author of the Estoire and the author of the Queste are, in fact, one and the same, relying on a ". . . comparison of the structure, the powers of characterization, and the quality of mysticism in the two works . . ." (Jean Frappier, "The Vulgate Cycle," contained in A.L.M.A., p. 315). For him, two considerations

are of paramount importance: "First, it seems clear that these [Lancelot, the Queste, and the Mort Artu] are the work of three separate authors; the possibility is not excluded that more than one hand had a share in the composition of the huge Lancelot, whereas the Estoire is a reworking by still another author of an older, earlier history of the Grail. The second conclusion is that all of these elements (except the Estoire) form a unified structure, bound together by preparations and prognostics on the one hand and by backward references on the other" (Jean Frappier, The Vulgate Cycle, contained in A.L.M.A., p. 315). Consequently, Frappier finds himself compelled to advance an alternate proposal in which he maintains that one man, a sort of master architect working on his own, conceived the total concept, the ultimate plan of the Vulgate Cycle and allowed others to bring his grand design to fulfilment.

Clearly there is no single consensus of opinion which would reconcile all of the various possibilities offered by the scholars who have delved into the complex mass of material contained in the Vulgate Cycle Of The Arthurian Romances. As a result we feel justified in deviating somewhat from the sequel of texts (Estoire, Merlin, Lancelot Proper, the Queste, Mort Artu and Livre d'Artus) left to us by Sommer for reasons predicated on our investigation of the role of illusion and reality in the Vulgate Cycle. For our purposes it has proved useful to follow a modified sequence: Estoire,

Queste, Merlin (with brief allusions to the Livre d'Artus), Lancelot Proper and Mort Artu, in order to show more clearly the nature and the function of the area we have chosen to examine. Although we would agree with Frappier that the Estoire probably stands alone, our reasons for doing so do not necessarily coincide with his. Proceeding from a consideration of the essential nature of illusion and reality and the function they assume, we become aware that this is unique to this particular section of the Vulgate Cycle. With its purely didactic and religious overtones, the Estoire does, however, bear some resemblance to the Queste, even though it falls far short of the artistic achievement of that section. We do not intend to raise here the issue whether the Estoire is to be dated prior or subsequent to the writing of the Queste (although this problem might well be worthy of further consideration). This is of decidedly less importance to us at this point than the recognition that the relatively skilful integration of the interplay between illusion and reality which marks the Queste is totally lacking in the Estoire. This would seem to indicate to us that the author of the former could hardly be the creator of the latter; the ability which that would imply was simply beyond his means. However, since this section does stand alone we have no hesitation in considering it first, for it does at least provide a chronologically sound beginning to the entire cycle.

The Queste has long been considered a part of Prose Lancelot, a sequel to the events of the Lancelot Proper culminating in the achievement of the adventure of the Grail. We have chosen to break with that traditional pattern in order to consider it immediately after the Estoire and before the Lancelot Proper because, from the point of view of the treatment of appearances and reality, the Queste seems to occupy a middle ground between the two. With the Estoire it has significant characteristics in common, in particular the treatment of dreams as illusion, which is apparent only in these two segments of the Vulgate Cycle. At the same time, it shares with the Lancelot Proper the concept of the search, which is in this case directed toward Galahad, who moves about the countryside incognito.

The Merlin and the Livre d'Artus, which we treat together, seem to stand by themselves as a separate unit, the nature of which is essentially quite different from that of the Estoire or the Queste when considered from the point of view of illusion and reality. That is not to suggest, however, that the Merlin attributed to Robert de Boron, nor, in particular, the continuation, is to be treated in a vacuum as though they were totally isolated from the rest of the work. Because we do encounter the element of disguise minus the intricacies of the search which we find in both the Queste and the Lancelot Proper, we feel justified

in considering these sections of the Merlin before we introduce the more intricate aspects of that same device in the Lancelot Proper.

It is not, however, until we consider the Lancelot Proper (Sommer, vol. iii to vol. v, p. 409) that all of the niceties of the device of the search motivated by a variety of apparent truths, illusions, and mistaken identities, really become apparent. Whereas the search for Galahad in the Queste remains basically simple and straightforward and originates primarily in the desire of Perceval and Bohort to be with him, the many searches which are spawned in the Lancelot Proper, with its boons and deliberate deceit, quests running parallel to each other and quests within quests acquire a complexity unknown to Queste.

We have chosen to consider the Lancelot Proper as the single unit it obviously is from the point of view of the treatment of illusion and reality and to put aside Lot's analysis which would see it as three units: the Galehaut, the Charette and its continuation, and the Agravain. This approach enables us to account more fully for Lancelot's early years and his initial exploits. With but a few minor exceptions (which may well be interpolations by a later hand), we note a remarkable consistency from the earliest sections of the text to the end. Thus we have treated this material, less the appendix (vol. v, 413-474), as a unit.

The Mort Artu, traditionally the final part of the Prose Lancelot, shows a tendency to put aside virtually all of the devices used in the treatment of illusion and reality in the segments we have examined above: the search, knights incognito, the boon, etc. to rely on a much more sophisticated treatment--a psychological treatment worthy of the most modern writers. It is this which sets this segment off from all the others. This is the high point, artistically and structurally, the culmination not only of the story itself toward which all events have inevitably tended, but also of the Vulgate Cycle. In a fashion unequalled anywhere else in the entire work, the Mort Artu suggests in the subtlety of its treatment of illusion and reality that this is, in fact, one of the great masterpieces of mediaeval French prose.



## CHAPTER I

### L'ESTOIRE DEL SAINT GRAAL (Sommer, vol. 1)

The nature of reality is clearly and obviously defined in the Estoire del Saint Graal, where it assumes the form of an absolute which is synonymous with truth in a strictly religious and Biblical sense. That which is real is true, and that which is true is of God. In other words, reality or truth is made manifest in God, the Holy Trinity and the Church and these alone are the acceptable norms. As a result of this, any deviation, any "apparent" reality, which tends to obscure the essence of that absolute, and any half-truths which purposely obliterate the total picture must, therefore, be associated with the forces of evil, which unceasingly try to corrupt and confound it by cunning and deceit. These must be recognized and overcome by the forces of good, i.e., by reality and truth. Clearly then, the theme of the Estoire is didactic; its principal thrust is deeply rooted in Christian dogma.

Within the work itself, that which is of God is obvious and unmistakable to those like Joseph of Arimathea or his son Josephe who, by virtue of their faith, find themselves committed to the Heavenly Kingdom. They recognize immediately

the presence of truth whether it be revealed in visions, dreams and apparitions, miracles or prophecies. They perceive it as it is disclosed in countless references to light or brightness (4:14, 4:29, 5:19-20), in the sudden presence of the handsome man who succours those devout souls who seek to know the One Reality (e.g. 4:15, 27:33, 68:25, 93:24, 193, 31), or in the Holy Cross in diverse situations (62:15, 74:18, 117:22, 121:24). To be sure, they may weaken from time to time as Josephe did when Satan deceived him as he baptized the people of Orcaus; for this an angel punished him by wounding him with a lance in his thigh (77:16-17), but basically, this was but a single moment of indecision when the Devil caught him off his guard and it served to warn him of the eternal presence of evil. However, there are others like Evalac and Seraphe, who, in the first instance, are not aware of the nature of truth and must be won over to it after a life and death struggle with the forces of evil. These types are infinitely more numerous, and about them centres the greater part of the action of the Estoire. It is at this point that the many manifestations of "apparent" truth or reality make their appearance.

Unfortunately for those who must learn to recognize truth, the forces of evil have at their command means which are similar to those of the forces of good. They make use of visions, dreams and the like in order to confuse their

intended victims, for their ultimate goal is diametrically opposed to absolute reality in every case. It becomes a question of obscuring the real nature of truth by deceit and hence of leading astray those whom the powers of Heaven would win over. The problem presented to the individual, therefore, becomes one of judgement: what is real and what is not? The ultimate decision which he makes is a critical one. Although in the Estoire the struggle between the two sides must ensue, good must triumph over evil precisely as God must inevitably triumph over Satan. Thus it becomes the didactic function of the Estoire to outline the process by which this is accomplished, first of all within the limits of its story and then, by extension, within man in general and the author's audience in particular.

The single-minded preoccupation of the author of the Estoire del Saint Graal with religion, dogma and faith and the often trying repetition associated with its didactic function, tend to make an objective appreciation of the work difficult for the contemporary reader. As a result, the prevailing opinion among a great majority of the modern critics could best be summarized by the somewhat negative judgement of the Estoire made by A. Pauphilet, who was not at all impressed by the talents of the author of this work, and by Jean Frappier, who echoes this evaluation by concluding that the work is ". . . in fact a retrospective sequel

[to the Prose Lancelot, the Queste and the Mort Artu]

. . . due to a continuator whose talent was not equal to his pious intentions" (A.L.M.A., p. 313). While it might be readily conceded that the author of the Estoire is, indeed, not one of the leading writers of the Middle Ages, such harsh condemnation of his skill is perhaps not entirely warranted--at least not before other factors pertinent to an appreciation of mediaeval literature have been considered.

In the presidential address delivered by Eugène Vinaver to the Modern Humanities Research Association in 1966, the suggestion was made that certain Aristotelian concepts of literature which are accepted as criteria for judgement by critics of to-day, were not necessarily those of the writers of the Middle Ages. "To Saint Bonaventura order and perfection were synonymous with the elaboration of the material, with its multiplication and its development, whereas to us terms such as order and perfection naturally suggest a process of simplification" (Form And Meaning In Mediaeval Romance, p.11). Vinaver suggests that the mediaeval concept of "amplificatio" which he defines as: ". . . linear or horizontal extension, an expansion or an unrolling of a number of interlocked themes" (Form and Meaning, p.11f), is highly significant, and indeed formed the basis of elegant literature of the day. "Combined as it was with the practice of interlacing the process of

digression would not only justify, but call for the very things that our conventional poetics condemn: it would call not for 'unity', which restricts the work to essentials and deprives it of potential ramifications, but for expansion and diversity, for growth, both real and hypothetical: real when a theme or a sequence of themes is lengthened within an existing work, hypothetical when the author projects a possible continuation to be taken up by his successor who in turn will bequeath a similar projection to those who will follow him" (Form and Meaning, p. 12). In other words, the structural aspects of a particular work had a very distinct and vital role to play both in the presentation and in the understanding of a piece of mediaeval literature. Nowhere is this any more true than in the Estoire del Saint Graal, where the repetition of a very definite structural pattern emerges, clarifying and intensifying the one essentially didactic message of the work to which we have alluded above; namely, that God is the One Reality--Absolute Truth. It is worth noting that this same structural pattern further contributes to the episodic nature of the Estoire, which, in itself does little to enhance the work for the reader of to-day. To the careful reader, however--to the audience aware of the structural importance of mediaeval literature--this critical pattern is obvious, and necessary, and, dependent as it is upon the nature of reality in which it finds its origin, it is essential that the basic effect

of this pattern be understood.

The structural aspects of the Estoire are inextricably bound together with the nature of reality, for each of the important larger episodes of the work stems from a series of visions, dreams and apparitions which, initially, cannot be interpreted by the character to whom they are revealed. This inability to intepret the hidden meaning of such phenomena, i.e., to determine what is real and what is apparent, provides the impetus, the point of departure, for the next stage of development in the search for reality and truth, be that conscious or not at this point, for the individual himself becomes the battleground on which the struggle for his soul is fought between the forces of Heaven and Hell. Miracles and the fulfilment of prophecies, along with the concrete proof of the awful power of God, are pitted against the cunning and deceit of the Devil, until at last the former carries the victory and Satan is defeated, thus proving the essential superiority of good. Only at this point in the episode does the author bring events to a climax by coming full circle to the initial vision or dream; only now can reality be distinguished from appearances and the truth known.

Once the climax of each episode has been reached, the poet, invariably returns to yet another vision or dream from which he will again seek to prove his thesis ". . . through the

amplification and expansion of the matter itself . . ."

(Form and Meaning, p.13 ). Consequently, the work assumes the form of a series of peaks and valleys issuing from an obscure revelation, either real or apparent, and culminating in its resolution, only to return again to a new and similar vision and set everything into motion once more. As we shall see, in spite of the occurrence of such isolated events in the course of the story, there are several leit-motifs which recur from time to time and weave the threads of the entire fabric into a unified whole.

In a broad sense, the author of the Estoire del Saint Graal has employed a structural pattern which is present as well in a somewhat modified form, in particular, in the Queste del Saint Graal, which Pauphilet suggests pre-dates the Estoire (Romania , xlv, pp. 524-7). The notion of the Arthurian knights of the Round Table:--Galahad, Perceval or Bohort--setting out to discover the ultimate reality, the Grail, being sorely tried during their quest for that reality and finally coming to absolute truth in its achievement, differs only in degree from the trials experienced by characters such as Mordrain or Nascien before they can be made aware of their final lofty goal. Indeed, the fact that the actions of the Arthurian knights are clearly foretold in Nascien's and Mordrain's day serves to strengthen the ties between the two works.

In general terms, the quest for the Grail represents the resolution of the polar opposites of the earthly and the divine--the sublimation of the worldly service of the knight into the heavenly service of God. Galahad, Perceval and Bohort are aware of this and Mordrain and Nascien must come to a similar realization within the context of their lives. Wittingly or not, at first, they, too, are involved in a quest for absolute reality, for a truth not always clearly visible to man because of the very nature of the world in which he lives. Only men of God, steadfastly resolute and unwavering before their ideals, men such as Galahad, can discover the ultimate truth and then only after trials and tribulations which must be overcome. Others may fall short of their achievements, but they must continue to seek out truth, conquer it by vanquishing all that is not truth, or that which is only illusion or appearance, for man is constantly and eternally led astray by half-truths, apparent reality and deceit, and he must guard against the acceptance of these as absolute. The quest, whether on Galahad's level or on that of Mordrain and Nascien or even of the reader himself, must inevitably lead to ultimate truth, free of illusion and misleading appearances, to the perception of reality as it really is; namely, as the reflection of God on earth.



It remains for us now to examine in more detail some of the specific episodes which make up the Estoire del Saint Graal and to consider the way in which appearances and reality are intricately woven into the structural pattern of the work.

The structural pattern which has been outlined above begins in the introduction to the Estoire proper, where the author casts himself in a role not unlike that of Joseph of Arimathea, of Mordrain and Nascien and ultimately of Galahad, for to all of them is revealed a significant aspect of ultimate reality. Opening his text with a greeting: "A tos cheaus ki lor cuers ont & lor creance en la sainte trinite" (3:3-4), the poet then proceeds in characteristic mediaeval fashion to establish the credibility of his work by basing it upon the authority of the one True Reality, the Holy Trinity. In a scene which calls to mind Joseph of Arimathea's receipt from the hands of Christ of the bowl which is to be the Grail, the author receives from Him a small book which Christ, Himself, has written. The parallel is obvious. However, being human, he wavers and for this he must suffer: "Car il te couenra auant paine souffrir que tu le raies mais" (8:18-19), until he has atoned for his sin and overcome his doubts with the help of Christ. Concrete evidence of this assistance finally convinces him that an illusion has not deceived him: "Et quant la vanite del chief

mestoit passee si ouuri les iex . mais iou .ne vi entor moi  
 nule riens de ce que ie auoie deuant ueu . Anchois tenoie  
 tout a soigne dusques a che que ie trouai en ma main le  
 liuret ensi comme li grans maistres li auoit mis" (5:21-4).  
 The validity of what he is about to say remains above  
 question.

Certain leitmotifs which indicate the presence of Christ  
 and the powers of good and which recur with great frequency  
 throughout the work, appear here for the first time. He is  
 portrayed as a most handsome man: "le plus bel home qui  
 onques fust" (4:15). Often his appearance is marked by  
 great light and blinding brightness: "Et se la clarte fu  
 deuant grande encore fu ele ore plus a chent double"  
 (5:19-20). Miracles and visions follow the receipt of the  
 book by which the author (and his audience) become firmly  
 convinced of the power of God. The climax of this episode  
 is reached when the author recognizes that this experience  
 which he has had, has been a remarkable insight into the  
 ultimate reality. Consequently, he sits down to record the  
 contents of the marvellous book.

This, then, is the structural pattern which the poet estab-  
 lishes early in the Estoire and maintains throughout most of  
 the work. To a given character is revealed an aspect of  
 ultimate reality which he is either incapable of grasping  
 at that point in time, or which he hesitates--even if only

for a moment--to accept completely. Miracles emanating directly from God then convince him of His power and lead him to a total acceptance of God as Absolute Truth. The pattern is then repeated with a new vision and a new revelation of ultimate reality as the point of departure.

In the Estoire, even the most superficial reader can hardly have difficulty discerning what is real and what is apparent, in spite of the fact that the central character of a particular episode may often find himself unable to distinguish clearly between apparent reality and actual fact. Thus, he is often incapable of interpreting obvious conventional phrases or symbols which assume the form of leitmotifs and which recur frequently throughout the work. A brief examination of some of these would be useful at this point.

We have already alluded to the idea of brightness and light which indicate the presence of God, Christ, the Trinity: "si grant clarte" (4:14 and 4:23-4), "un grant brandon de feu" (4:29-30). The opposite element, darkness, refers, of course, to the Kingdom of Hell and to Satan, Himself: "li uoiles de cele neif estoit tous noirs & la neif estoit toute couerte de noire couverture" (94:37-95:1). And again: "Après si vit vne si grant oscurte quil ne ueoit goutte nient plus que sil fust en abisme" (96:31-2). A Christ-like individual usually appears as a handsome man, ". . . il veoit de iouste lui vn home de moult grant

biaute . . ." (148:37-149:1) or: "il u[e]oient que cils qui estoit en la nacele sambloit viel homme durement . et nepourquant il estoit moult biaux de sa uiellece" (187:5-7). Always he is supremely confident and reassuring: ". . . vn home uestu de robe blanche . . . lor dist seigneur ne vous esmaies . iou ne sui pas chi uenus por uostre mal mais pour uostre bien" (193:31-40). This is Hermone's spirit here. As we shall see elsewhere, particularly in the Queste, with but few exceptions (e.g. 105:5), Satan's guise is usually that of a woman, beautiful and beguiling: ". . . vne dame la plus bele quil eust onques veue" (95:4) or, ". . . vne damoisele . la plus bele et la plus cointe que vous onques ueissies . et uestue si richement que merueillier vous peussies de lui ueoir" (189:19-21). Once again, "il se regarde si uit la damoisele . qui se fu mue en samblanche danemi" (202:3-4). Finally, ". . . & tant quil auint que li anemis saparut a lui en la fourme de la feme nascien . . ." (235:12-13).

Countless such references make even the most casual reader well aware of true or apparent reality by which a character may be confronted, even if the character himself must first follow a slow and often painful process of recognition.

Such a technique is obviously didactic, for it allows the reader (who is, by now, fully aware of the nature of things) to sit back and observe the reactions of the central figure in an episode as the events unfold before him and to judge

for himself how he might act in similar circumstances.

The scenes involving Evalac constitute the next episode in the unfolding of the Estoire. Evalac, who is inclined to doubt certain basic aspects of Christianity, such as the Virgin Birth, the Trinity and the Incarnation, has a vision in which absolute truth or reality is revealed to him. At that point in time, however, Evalac is totally unable to understand the nature of that truth and, as a result, he relies upon his learned clerks to disclose the meaning of his vision. As heathens, neither he nor they are yet aware of certain manifestations of the Kingdom of Heaven: ". . . brances toutes dun grant & dune maniere . & de ces brances estoit la moiene dune maigre escorce . & les autres . ij . lauoiert ausi clere comme cristal . . ." (27:31-33), nor of the thinly veiled references to Christ: "Et quant il orent ce fait si uirent que sans en issi" (28:3-4) and, "Et li rois . . . vit quil i auoit lettres en cascun arbre . dont les vnes estoient dor & les autres dargent & les autres daisur . & disoient les letres du premier . cis forme . & les autres disoient . cis sauue . & les tierces disoient . cis purefie" (28:21-24). Thus, they cannot correctly interpret them. Such visions reveal truths--Christian reality--of which Evalac is still ignorant. Joseph, aware of this, intervenes on his behalf: "biaus sire enuoie au roi eualac urai conseil . . ." (29:30) and sets in motion the events

which are to try Evalac and prepare him for the climax of this episode at which point he will clearly realize, ". . . que vos estes vns diex qui a pooir & signerie sor toutes creatures del monde" (29:36-7). The similarity of the pattern to that of the introductory scenes is obvious. There can be no doubt about the outcome, for Josephe, also in a vision of the Holy Spirit as fire, is told that his prayers will be answered: "Ioseph tes paroles sont oies de ton creator . & bien saces que li rois eualac recheura ma creance prochainement . Car il a a nuit ueu vne partie de mes demonstres . & il tenuoiera demain querre por sauoir & entendre que ce senefie" (30:5-8). Evalac will be converted. Thus, the reader is well aware of the ultimate outcome from the beginning, while Evalac, groping to understand what he has seen, is now put to the test by becoming the battleground on which is fought the eternal struggle between the forces of good and those of evil. His own soul will be the prize of victory.

The means by which Evalac is converted, i.e., the means by which he is brought to a recognition of the reality or absolute truth which is being revealed to him, arises often in prophecies and miracles; all are, in the first instance, didactic in nature, for they gradually but clearly disclose to Evalac, as well as to the audience, the power and efficacy of God. Thus, the logical progression of development from his revelation of reality, through his efforts at

interpretation, now leads to the testing of Evalac, by which means God seeks to convince him that He is the only reality. Through the use of miracles, the power of God is made manifest to Evalac and his court in a concrete way. The clerk who argues falsely is struck dumb and blind (44:12-18), while, in the name of God, Josephe binds a devil which can subsequently do only his will (45:28-30). Both of these events are clearly intended to sway Evalac to the Christian side and to reveal to him the essential reality of the power of God. Prophecies serve a similar function. Josephe, for example, foretells of God's revenge upon Evalac, revealing to him a remarkable knowledge of the heathen's past as well. Almost immediately Josephe's words are revealed as truth.

Perhaps most significant in this process of trial and tribulation leading to truth is the appearance of the white knight. His blatantly didactic function reveals him to be an obvious manifestation of the divine. His physical appearance unmistakably aligns him with the forces of good: ". . . j . chevalier . . . tous armes si ot a son col . j . escu blanc a vne uermelle crois . & ses chevaus estoit ausi blans comme flour" (62:21-4), while his sudden presence at this most crucial moment in Evalac's life proves beyond a doubt that Christ, Himself, has answered his prayers. Evalac has just recalled Josephe's instructions to look upon the shield which the former has given him to behold when he finds

himself in dire straits. This he does and immediately observes Christ on the Cross. His prayer which follows calls forth the aid of the white knight who is visible only to Evalac, and with his help, Evalac triumphs. Thus an apparition, divine reality in a concrete form, brings about a miracle which draws Evalac closer to the truth of Christianity.

That Christ, Himself, has appeared to Evalac in the form of the white knight is ultimately proved by the miracle of the figure which appears on the cross of Josephe's shield:

" . . . cil qui la furent i virent vne crois toute uermeille en apert & . j . crucefis dont il estoit aus quil estoit noueement crucefijes" (74:19-20). It heals Clamacides (74:20-7), the man whose arm has been severed from his body. Gradually, the truth which Evalac has sought to understand becomes clear to him, but he has not yet unfolded all of the mystery of the vision. In a similar way, Christ appears twice to Evalac's wife, Sarracinte--once while she is with her mother and once while she is alone. The common denominator, the leitmotif which unifies these diverse episodes, is again the red cross which is, in this instance, borne by the most handsome man alluded to above. On the first occasion of a visit, both were converted to his way. Sarracinte retains her faith for over twenty-five years until her husband finally accepts it as well. All of this, then, leads directly to the conversion of Evalac, who, after he



has been made aware of the miracle of the Cross and the power of the Christian God, comes to accept the Holy Trinity as absolute and ultimate reality: "biaus sire diex de la qui mort ie porte le signe ramenes moi a uostre creance receuoir pour monstrier as autres par moi que vous estes vrais dieus & tous poisons de toutes terrienes coses" (62:18-20).

Only now can Evalac's original dream be revealed as a manifestation of true reality. Structurally, the high point of this episode occurs with the baptism of Evalac: ". . . & si tost comme cascuns ot recheu baptesme troua on en son front son non escrit" (75:10-11). Although Evalac, whose Christian name is now Mordrain (75:9-12), has accepted the ultimate reality of the Church, that is not to say that in his new life Mordrain will not be further tested. Relying upon the "linear or horizontal extension" of his material, the author introduces further examples of his thesis concerning the nature of God as ultimate reality.<sup>1</sup> Once again a dream, the meaning of which remains obscure to Mordrain, provides

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<sup>1</sup>Carried by a whirlwind to an unknown place, Mordrain is fed by a lion. At the same time, a wolf endeavours to take this food from him (Good vs Evil). Then Mordrain loses his crown and catches sight of his nephew being borne into the distance by a huge bird. From his body issue nine rivers (the offspring of Mordrain's nephew), one of which stands out by virtue of the fact that it is smaller and swifter than the others. To this descendant Christ will reveal the truth. Finally, he sees a man descend from Heaven, his hands and feet punctured by nail-holes.

the starting point. Clearly, the lion, the wolf and the giant bird have symbolic meaning, as do the man who descends from Heaven and the lake, and rivers which issue from it. The truth of Mordrain's dream has not yet been interpreted to him when he is suddenly carried away to a rock some seventeen days' journey hence. The history of this rock on which he is abandoned has a very real significance within the context of our investigation, for it was from this very stronghold that the pirate, Forcaire, used to plunder those whom he had deceived: "Et quant il faisoit bien oscure si metoient . j . brandon de fu sor la roche & cil qui le fu ueoient se traioient cele part comme cil qui ne sauoient pas le peril qui i estoit" (89:18-21). Thus, in a spot where appearances once led men to their destruction, Satan, too, relies on cunning and deception to win possession of a man's soul. Once again Mordrain is tested, for he must recognize the identity of the Evil One in his disguise and reject him outright in favour of the forces of good. The various forms which deceit, i.e., appearances, on the one hand and truth, i.e., reality on the other assume are significant.

The battle lines for Mordrain's soul are clearly and unmistakably drawn by two visions which appear to Mordrain. The first of these takes the form of a ship with a white mast on which the now familiar shape of a red cross is imprinted: "Cele nef estoit petite mais ele estoit a

merueilles bele . car li mas estoit ausi blans comme flor  
 de lis . & desus en haut auoit vne crois uermeille" (93:18-  
 20). There can be little doubt in the mind of the reader  
 that this vision is aligned with the forces of Heaven; the  
 appearance of a handsome man who emerges from the ship con-  
 firms this fact: ". . . iou sui apeles par mon droit non  
 tout en tout" (93:34-5). The warning which he delivers to  
 Mordrain to keep the faith then sets the stage for a second  
 apparition, the latter diametrically opposed to the former  
 (a black ship instead of a white one, a woman--the symbol  
 of deceit--instead of a man). At this point, the author of  
 the Estoire takes up an earlier allusion to Mordrain's  
 statue of a beautiful woman (83:8-16) and fuses it with the  
 classical Biblical imagery of the deceit of Eve in the  
 Garden of Eden, from which ultimately springs his repeated  
 portrayal of woman as the Great Deceiver. With this image  
 in mind, he allows Mordrain to be tempted by her beauty and  
 her words. But Mordrain withstands her attempts against  
 him--although not without difficulty--and comes to recognize  
 woman for what she is: a manifestation of the forces of  
 evil, the Devil in disguise. He prays for strength against  
 "lengin du diable."

The situation is again extended in a linear fashion for it  
 is now repeated seven times over a period of seven days; on  
 each occasion, Mordrain must resist with all his strength.  
 Like Adam who was deceived by the Devil through Eve, Mordrain

is confronted by the false illusions designed to ensnare him. If he can withstand these tests, if, he is told:

" . . . tu as boin cuer & boine creance & tu te ueus tenir estable encontre toutes les coses que tu uerras . . ."

(99:37-100:2), he will triumph. The struggle is intense and Mordrain almost succumbs to the false illusion of the brother of his former seneschal--in reality, the Devil Himself, but at the very last moment he saves himself by making the sign of the Cross. Finally, his trials are past; the false illusions which tempted him are revealed for what they, in reality, are: " . . . & saces bien que cestoit li diables qui cascun ior parloit a toi en forme de feme" (106:1-2). Mordrain now knows that the good man in the ship was true reality, for indeed, it was Christ, Himself, who had visited him. Once again, his trials now at an end, the episode reaches a climax in the interpretation of Mordrain's earlier vision which reveals that his line, through his nephew, Nascien, will culminate in Galahad, the perfect knight. Structurally, then, Mordrain's initial vision leads by means of a life and death struggle to a new and higher level of achievement--to a recognition of reality. Obviously, the purpose is didactic; the lesson learned first by Adam and later by Mordrain can be applied with equal validity to the reader of the Estoire as well.

In the meantime, while Mordrain finds himself far removed on the island and is being tried by powers greater than

himself, Nascien is cast into prison on suspicion of being involved in his disappearance. Once again, repetition, arising in the linear structure of the Estoire, occurs as Nascien's faith is simultaneously put to the test in much the same way as Mordrain's: "Ensi fu nascien en prison . ne onques li dyables ne le pot tant pener quil le peust mener a desesperance ains croit a dieu & disoit sire aoures soies vous quant vous me consentes ce auoir car ie lai bien deserui car moult fui oses quant iou uous ui sacrer que nus hons morteus ne doit ueoir sil nest nes de tous pechies" (88:20-4). His adventures serve to reinforce what has already been proved concerning Mordrain; namely, that God is the only Reality.

The adventures involving Nascien and Celidoine, like those of Mordrain, are rooted in the miraculous: both father and son are suddenly whisked away out of the hands of Calafér while Nascien's wife, Flegentine, is bidden in a dream to follow him. In the meantime, Nascien finds himself alone, but not without faith, on the "isle tournoiant" which is located in the Western Sea. Here, his new-found faith is put to the test in much the same way as Mordrain's was. In a vision of white birds he sees himself, as well, winged and able to fly, and readily gives up his heart to be devoured by one of the birds in the dream (117:27-118:2). However, the explanation of these events remains a mystery

to him, for it is revealed in symbolic terms which he is not really capable of fully understanding at that time. From his heart, Nascien is told, will come the lion who will overcome all earthly beasts and ultimately reach the gates of Heaven. Unknown to Nascien, this dream is, in fact, a prophecy which will be fulfilled during the Queste del Saint Graal, for it concerns the ultimate discovery of the Grail and the knight of Nascien's line who will achieve that ultimate plateau--Absolute Truth. Nascien's trials and the purification of his faith continue. In a vision, a beautiful ship arrives, and having read the warning posted on it, he enters and miraculously finds everything exactly as Solomon had left it so long ago. There follows a lengthy didactic passage which retells the story of Adam and Eve, of Cain and Abel and of Solomon and explains in detail how the King came to build the ship on which Nascien now finds himself. This passage serves as a prophecy which is ultimately to be fulfilled in the pages of the Queste.

At this point, Nascien falters and expresses his doubts concerning the authenticity of Solomon's bed. As a result of this brief moment of weakness, Nascien is instantly punished by God: the wonderful ship is torn asunder and the unfortunate man is hurled into the water. The ship and its contents vanish. Immediately, Nascien recognizes his error and prays to God for forgiveness. Having failed his first test, he prays for strength to withstand the trials which he must

endure: "sire par ta pitie ne suesfre puis que ie soie ietes des mains a cel anemi que ie el pooir al autre ne chaie" (137:29-37). Clearly, he is aware that deception may lead him astray and thus, his words are, in fact, a prayer that he might be better able to distinguish between appearances and reality. When at last another ship comes into view, it seems that his prayers have been answered. Characteristically an old man again reveals the truth which the central figure is seeking by explaining the real nature of Solomon's ship and its contents. At this point, although the climax of the episode has not yet been reached, the author once again expands his story in a linear fashion and turns his attention to the separate story of Celidoine. He, too, finds himself on an island where, instead of seeing a vision himself, he interprets the meaning of a dream which the heathen Label, King of the Persians, has had and which his wise men are incapable of fathoming (145:11-16). In a scene reminiscent of Josephe's prediction of God's revenge on Evalac for scorning the Christian faith, Celidoine possesses Label's most carefully guarded secret. Thus, to prove the validity of his words, Celidoine reveals that Label has treacherously murdered his own sister. During the hours that follow, Label is forced to suffer mental anguish and torment as he ponders Celidoine's words, and just as Evalac was won over by the power of God, so too is Label ultimately baptized. Once again, His power will be

employed in a very concrete way to lead the heathen's soul to God.

Celidoine must now interpret Label's second vision, which also further extends the linear structure of the Estoire. Once again the poet makes use of the leitmotif of Christ as a handsome man who personally intervenes to take charge of him and protect him. Celidoine explains that when Label is turned away from the Holy City and falls among thieves, he has, in fact, fallen prey to the Devil Himself. Having rejected the only reality, Label becomes the victim of deceit: "Donques . . . dois tu entendre lanemi . qui tous iours gaite a geter homme de boine voie . et a deceuoir . . ." (151:32-4). The intimate presence of Christ who has appeared to Label is sufficient to win him over in baptism. With the prospect of baptism of the heathen king a reality, a new climax is reached and, in keeping with similar high points in previous episodes, a dream or vision which has gone unexplained is now clarified. In this instance a hermit expounds a dream which we, as readers, learn for the first time but which Label had many years ago. The sum total of the interpretation is revealed in the words of the King: "Et bien sai ore tout certainement que il nest autres diex for celui que vous aoures . Car il seuls connoist la uerite de tout le monde" (157:8-10) and Label is saved before his death which Celidoine had earlier predicted.



The next episode of the Estoire involves messengers sent by the wife of Nascien to learn of the fate of her husband.

One of them, too, has a vision in which Joseph of Arimathea explains to them that their master is on board a ship which he points out to them in the distance (164:33-165:15).

Arriving at the edge of the sea, they discover a ship on which is the daughter of King Label, the only survivor of a massacre of her people by King Meleans of Terse. In this ship, they all set out to learn the truth of the words Joseph has spoken to them in their vision. They are sorely tried in the days which follow and some of their number are killed. When Label's daughter reaches the point of despair, the most important purpose of this journey in search of Nascien becomes evident: her conversion to Christianity. Again, direct intervention by God at a time of extreme crises will convert her.

On the surface, the following episode of the Estoire, the story relating details of Hippocrates' life many years before (171:1-182:33), would seem to digress but, in fact, this interpolation extends further in linear fashion the theme of the deceit of woman. Using deception himself, Hippocrates "restores to life" the son of the King of Persia, who only seemed to be dead. Hippocrates' trained eye recognizes this and allows him to make the most of the situation. Indeed, he even uses deceit to win the woman who is ultimately to deceive him in turn and bring about his downfall. Here

again, the leitmotifs of deception and the beautiful woman go hand in hand and stand out in direct contrast to the reality which is God. In an obvious parallel drawn by the author of the Estoire, the talents of Hippocrates and Christ are closely compared with the result that Hippocrates, himself, ultimately admits that the power of Christ to heal is superior to his own.

Again the episode is extended in a linear fashion, for Hippocrates fails to learn from his experience and when he again restores to health the son of a king--this time King Antoine--who only seems to be dead, he tries to exploit the advantage of this appearance for his own purposes. In return for restoring the youth, Hippocrates demands the hand of the king's daughter. Once again he is deceived by beauty and does not recognize the true nature of the lady who, because of her hatred for him, ultimately poisons him. Vain pride and the wiles of woman have led to his destruction.

"... et que deable cose et moult doutable auoit en femme  
car encontre son grant enging . ne puet sens domme durer"  
(183:1-3).

The appearance of yet another ship returns the reader to the episode of the maiden and the messengers. This ship, ugly and black, is manned by another obvious manifestation of the devil who attempts to deceive them into paying him homage. Their faith, however, holds firm and they entrust themselves

to God. "Et li autre dient quil ne croient mie quil soit hom comme autres . mais anemis qui est uenus pour nous deceuoir & engignier . et pour nous oster de no droite uoie et de no droite creance" (186:28-31). Having overcome this satanic trial represented by the giant in the ship, they then witness the appearance of an old man, handsome in spite of his years. Outlining the need for their faith, he proceeds to explain to them that the first ship was only an illusion of reality. In actual fact, he tells them, it was a fiend manned by a fiend and they would have led them all to Hell if they had succumbed.

Linear extension is carried even further. Again a ship appears and again it is clearly a manifestation of the Devil. The lure of Hell is obvious to those who have faith and, in spite of the many lights which illuminate the superstructure, these, too, are recognized as a ruse of Satan. Within the ship, a beautiful woman demands homage from them in return for their salvation, promising earthly pleasures and joy, but she, too, is turned aside (189:15-191:2). A short time later a man with a lion at his side appears on another ship and bids the messengers and the maiden accompany him to Nascien. Like similar figures before him, he proves to be yet another manifestation of good and, true to his word, leads them to Nascien. This, in itself ostensibly their reward for their pains, is only secondary. The real reward lies in the recognition of God's power and in the

ultimate acceptance of the reality of the Christian God by Label's daughter who is baptized Sarracinte (195:31-2).

The next episode of the Estoire is set into motion by a vision by which Nascien is sent to find his son. Two events prove significant in showing the power of God and His ways: the first results in the death of Nabor and the second in that of Karabel. Both are concrete proof ". . . que chou est ueniance de ihesu crist . si deueriemes uoloir que tous li mondes le seust comment che fu . que li vns et li autre y peussent prendre exemple" (200:33-5). Tempted by a beautiful woman, Nascien almost succumbs, but at the last moment he rises above the temptation. ". . . il . . . lieue sa main et fist en son front et en son pis le signe de la vraie crois . & quant il ot ce fait . il se regarde si uit la damoisele . qui se fu mue en samblanche danemi" (202:1-4).

Another vision, this time on board ship, brings together the leitmotif of the man of God and the red of the Cross, for Nascien sees ". . . uns hom vestus dune reube vermelle . . ." (202:19). From this celestial messenger Nascien receives a scroll on which are recorded the names of the descendants of his line who will follow him. Once again, truth is revealed in a vision in the form of a prophecy concerning the coming of Lancelot and ultimately Galahad. But, as so often in the past, there remains an element in this vision as well which

Nascien does not completely understand and he prays for enlightenment concerning these details. Visions follow quickly upon one another and yet another miraculous ship with an old man at the helm leads to an explanation. The old man reluctantly explains the symbols of the dog and the lion in Nascien's dream, but shows his displeasure with him for asking. The episode culminates as Josephe and Nascien are reunited in Britain and the real presence of God is proved again.

A familiar structural pattern emerges as Duke Ganor has a dream of a stream from which issue people as white as snow (the newly-baptised). Some are made black by a cloud and imprisoned in a dark valley (those who sin again). Others remain free; they are the true Christians. Since the wisest of the heathen sages cannot explain it (219:11-220:14), it remains for Josephe to clarify the truth of what the Duke has really dreamt. Seeing that Josephe has successfully undermined their position, Lucan, the philosopher challenges him, but like Evalac's clerk before him, Lucan is punished by God: "si commenca lucans a crier & a braire & a faire la plus forte fin del monde . & prinst sa langue a .|j . mains & le commencha a depechier de ses ongles & arachier hors de sa goule . & quant il ot vne pieche fait si forte fin si chai mort a la terre" (220:36-221:2). The revelation of Ganor's past by Josephe is not only proof of God's

active intervention; it also calls to mind an earlier linear extension of the plot in which Josephe revealed Evalac's past and Celidoine disclosed Label's.

Having then been convinced by the power of God, Duke Ganor must now have his new faith tested. Accordingly, God stands with him and his people and thus the first of the battles of the Christians on the island of Britain culminates in victory and in visible proof of the power of God which is the only reality (228:12-231:3).

Yet another episode is set into motion by a vision. Mordrain, who is on his way to Britain, sees the Saviour on the Cross and is told to avenge Him (232:15). He and his people are tried by the Evil One, who has once again assumed the form of a woman. He is ultimately driven from the ship on which they are journeying, but he carries with him the castellan of Colombe, who had wickedly coveted the wife of Mordrain. Once again, we have the testing of the faith of one of the converts and concrete proof of the power of God over sin and evil. Finally, this episode culminates in the reunion of Mordrain and Nascien.

One scene from the Saracen-Christian struggle which takes place over the following pages is worth noting (244:29-246:21). In order to achieve his own ends, Agrestes makes use of deception by accepting baptism and later renouncing it secretly to Lancoine who has done likewise. He then

proceeds to torture and put to death those who do not return to the old faith, but in the end, he must pay for this deceit: the power of God is turned against him and he goes mad after experiencing the most horrible punishment. His situation is similar to that of Evalac's clerk and Lucan, the philosopher. Clearly, the power of God will avenge itself upon anyone who will not recognize the Absolute.

Thus the structural pattern has been established and repeated countless times in order to show the power of God, the only Reality, and to win over to the Christian faith all those who can be saved. For the modern reader, however, frequent references to miraculous ships and visions which cannot be explained become tedious to say the least. As the Estoire continues to unfold and similar scenes repeatedly present themselves, the author seems to become entangled in his preoccupation with linear expansion with the result that as he progresses through the last third of the text, he displays considerably less skill in the treatment of the material he presents than he did in the first two-thirds of the book. In any case, after the death of the central characters such as Joseph and Nascien, the pattern is abandoned and the final several pages are devoted to preparations for and predictions of events which will occur in subsequent volumes of the Vulgate Cycle.

## CHAPTER II

LA QUESTE DEL SAINT GRAAL (Sommer, vol. vi, pp. 3-199)

The Queste del Saint Graal, like other volumes of the Vulgate Cycle, relies for much of its effectiveness upon the interaction which occurs between the way things really are and the way they merely seem to be. The framework of the story--the search for Galahad by several of the knights of the Round Table: Perceval, Bohort, Lancelot, Gauvain and Hector and the achievement of the Grail--reflects this clearly, for motivation for each of these several characters is in no small measure directly dependent upon Galahad's desire to move about the countryside incognito.<sup>1</sup> As a result of this, the development of the plot line through the necessary stages which must lead to the experience of the Grail is directly influenced by the fact that Galahad conceals his identity in arms with which others are not familiar and deliberately tries to avoid recognition by the knights of the Round Table. His imposing figure as the Knight with the White Shield arouses the curiosity of those who seek to discover his identity and intensifies their determination to meet him face to face.

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<sup>1</sup>A similar technique on a much more elaborate scale will characterize the Lancelot Proper.



Having acquired the miraculous shield with the red cross emblazoned upon it which King Baudemagus sought to win, and bearing new arms which he received from the monks of the abbey to which he took the wounded King, Galahad no longer resembles the knight whom the companions of the Round Table first came to know. Lancelot and Perceval, for example, both recognized him by sight and yet, when they met him as they were riding together ". . . nel connurent pas, come cil qui tiex armes n'avoient pas aprises a veoir" (56:4-5).<sup>1</sup> From now on, disguise and anonymity will suit Galahad's own purposes, which, of course, are synonymous with a predetermined divine plan for the ultimate achievement of the Grail. Consequently, Lancelot and Perceval, in particular, are motivated to seek out, each on his own, the Knight with the White Shield whom they have earlier encountered. Perceval, more cautious, returns to the anchoress who knew this knight, while Lancelot more impetuously insists: ". . . que el retorner ne s'acorderoit il mie volentiers, ainz ira après celui qui l'escu blanc emporte: car il ne sera ja mes aaise devant que il savra qui il est" (57:8-10). The course of their quest, then, takes them through the many adventures, trials and tribulations leading to Lancelot's repentance and to Perceval's ultimately successful achievement of the Grail.

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<sup>1</sup>All quotations from the Queste have been taken from Albert Pauphilet's edition, Paris, 1967.

Hector and Gauvain, too, are affected by Galahad's disguise in a most direct way. When the latter happens upon a castle where a tournament is in progress, he decides to lend his support to the defenders of that castle. He attacks Gauvain when he does not recognize him in full armour and wounds him, at the same time putting Hector to flight. Here, too, Galahad chooses not to reveal himself at this moment, for the hour is not yet come: "Et quant il voit qu'il n'est noienz del retorner, si s'en vet si coiemment que nus ne set quel part il est alez; si emporte d'ambesdeus parz le los et le pris del tornoiement" (196:29-32). Time is not yet ripe for the final adventure of the Grail to begin. Shortly thereafter, Perceval and Bohort are reunited with Galahad for the culmination of their adventures. But even in this scene, recognition is not automatic. Initially, Galahad does not know them: "Et quant il les ot, si lor demande qui il sont et por coi il dient qu'il l'ont tant attendu" (199:24-6). Not until they have removed their helms can the joyful reunion take place: "Et lors fu ajorné, si s'entreconurent . . ." (200:2-3). From this point on, they experience the adventure in ultimate reality together.

In addition to the obvious role which disguise plays in integrating the many threads of adventure in the Queste del Saint Graal, another more intricate and complex device is also important in distinguishing appearance and reality. The recurring dreams and visions which played such an

integral role in the Estoire also characterize the Queste, and generally speaking they fulfill similar functions in these two sections of the Vulgate Cycle. In the Estoire, as we have indicated, dreams and visions reveal certain essential truths to principal characters of the story, and, since this is usually done in an enigmatic way, the possibility for misunderstanding or misinterpretation invariably exists. In many instances, what seems on the surface to be true is, in fact, usually only an illusion created by the Devil to deceive his unsuspecting prey and win him over for the Kingdom of Hell. Before they can distinguish the difference between appearances and reality, most of the characters to whom dreams or visions are revealed must first experience an extended period of trials and temptations which slowly but surely lead them to complete understanding of the scenes which have been revealed to them. When they have been tested and no longer found wanting, they are then able to make a decision--a decision which may invariably be reduced to a choice between God and the Devil, between salvation and damnation. Consequently, these dreams which are essentially didactic fulfill the important function of bringing certain central characters, such as Mordrain, Nascien, the daughter of King Label or Duke Ganor, to God. Similarly, many of the principal characters of the Queste also experience dreams or visions, are deceived by the

Devil and succoured by God in their trials as they seek to distinguish the reality from the illusion of the dream. In comparison with the essentially repetitive nature of the events of the Estoire, however, it is worth noting that such repetition appears far less frequently in the Queste. When it does occur and a character is motivated by more than one dream or vision, they are usually spread out over several pages and woven together with other parts of the story. Thus, for example, the dreams and visions which Lancelot experiences are interspersed between passages relating the adventures of Perceval, Bohort, Gauvain and the others. It may, therefore, be said that the substantially shorter length of the Queste is in no small measure a direct result of less frequent repetitive situations. Whereas the style of the Estoire is such that essentially similar scenes follow hard upon one another (e.g., the many appearances of ships manned by manifestations of God or the Devil), that of the Queste is quite different. In the first instance, dreams and visions tend to be progressive rather than repetitive, i.e., each additional vision adds something new to the experience of earlier ones so that one detects a cumulative process rather than one which reiterates an experience already outlined in preceding passages such as is found in the Estoire.

Broadly speaking, the principal characters of the Queste who are visited by dreams and visions may be divided into

two main groups according to their success or failure in their quest for the Grail. On the one hand, there are the three knights of the Grail: Galahad, Perceval and Bohort, but within this group, Galahad stands apart from the other two, for unlike them, he is never really seriously tested and found wanting. Within the second group, Lancelot will be considered separately from Gauvain, Hector and the other knights of the Round Table who fail to achieve their goal. He is sorely tested and ultimately seeks forgiveness in repentance whereas the others do not. This action, a sort of purgatory to which he is compelled to submit, has the effect of redeeming him, at least in the Queste, for the Kingdom of Heaven in spite of the error of his ways, although, as we shall see, his good intentions are short-lived: "Mes comment que Lancelos se fust tenuz chastement par le conseil del preudome a qui il se fist confés quant il fu en la queste del Seint Graal et eüst del tout renoiee la reïne Guenievre . . . si tost comme il fu venuz a cort, il ne demora pas un mois après que il fu autresi espris et alumez come il avoit onques esté plus nul jor, si qu'il rencheï el pechié de la reine autresi comme il avoit fet autrefoiz" (La Mort [ed.] Frappier, p. 3, 11.1-10). As far as Gauvain and Hector are concerned, at least in the Queste, they fail to respond to the opportunity to seek salvation. It is not until the Mort Artu that they are redeemed.

In spite of this division, however, the Queste still retains a unity of plot not found in the Estoire, for as we have indicated, against a background of the appearance and apotheosis of Galahad are interwoven the adventures of the remaining important characters of the work: Perceval, Bors and Lancelot. The others, all from the second group, play only a peripheral role in this particular section of the Vulgate Cycle. Since the adventures of each of these main characters are primarily motivated by a dream or a vision which occurs at a crucial point in time and since interpretation of the contents of the dream or vision remains a mystery to all of them, each must be led through a period of tests and trials in much the same way as Mordrain and Nascien are put to the test in the Estoire until they become aware of the truth which has been revealed to them. Let us consider the nature of the dreams and visions of Perceval, Bohort and Lancelot as well as those of some of the minor characters, in turn in an attempt to establish their relationship to illusion and reality within the larger context of the work.

The adventures of Perceval, the most perfect knight after Galahad, tend to be more nearly akin to those which characterize the Estoire than do the adventures of Lancelot, but the reasons for this are at least in part to be found in the nature of the trials which he, and later to some extent, Bohort undergo. Unlike Lancelot whose behaviour has clearly

directed him into the camp of the Devil from which he must now extricate himself, both Perceval and Bohort are tested to determine whether or not they are worthy to be Knights of the Grail, but there is never really any question that they will forfeit the Kingdom of Heaven even though they are tempted by Satan: "Car ce savons nos bien, en cest païs et en maint autre leu, que au parsommer avra trois precieux chevaliers qui avront le los et le pris de la Queste sor toz les autres . . . li chevaliers que vos querez [sera] li uns et vos li autres, et li tierz Boorz de Gaunes" (73:9-14). Their adventures are destined to prove their worthiness.

Perceval's adventures begin when he and Lancelot have taken leave of each other. Lancelot impetuously sets out on his own to search for the knight bearing the white shield while Perceval makes his way back to a recluse. Neither is aware at this point that the man they seek is, in fact, Galahad, who has chosen to remain incognito for the present. Here with the recluse, his aunt, Perceval is made aware that he is now entering upon a most crucial phase in his life: the beginning of this phase will occur in the very immediate future and, significantly, will be marked by a vision. In the light of this prophecy and warning, then, Perceval rides out in his quest for Galahad and the Grail and soon finds himself before a monastery. In a scene reminiscent of Lancelot's first encounter with the Grail, Perceval, too,

observes a mass which is being sung behind a railing separating him from the altar. Here he watches a very old man wearing a crown sit up from a recumbent position on a bed near the altar. Naked to the waist, his body is covered by wounds, and, like the knight who is borne to the altar in the chapel ruins which Lancelot visits, the old man begs God's mercy for the pain he has suffered, but his prayers are not immediately answered. The ritual continues until he has partaken of the host when he again lies down to be covered by the priest. Curious to know how he should interpret these strange happenings, Perceval is told the story of King Mordrain who approached too close to the Grail (cf. also Sommer, i, p. 241). For this he was blinded and paralyzed much as Lancelot is when he, too, disobeys a warning and presses too near to the holy relic. Mordrain's state continues at his own request for the interminably long period of 400 years. Perceval quickly realizes the significance of this adventure and sets about immediately to learn the truth of what he has seen. Turning to one of the brothers he finds in the monastery, he asks the question: ". . . dites moi ce que je vous demanderai: car je cuït bien que vous en sachiez la verité" (83:6-7). And so, Perceval hears the history of King Mordrain whose figure he saw on the bed behind the railing--how he has lived in this pitiful state bearing his affliction and patiently awaiting the final chapters of the search for the Grail and the coming of Galahad before going to his heavenly reward.



As he sets out once more in search of adventure, the really crucial phase of Perceval's life begins. He is seized and beaten by a group of knights who seem to be motivated by the fact that he is one of King Arthur's men. Rescued by a knight in red armour, Perceval tries in vain to learn more about this Good Samaritan but finds himself with no mount to pursue him as he disappears into the distance. As circumstance would have it, Perceval meets a squire who is leading a fine steed, but unfortunately is unsuccessful in convincing him to part with it. Despondent and on the verge of despair, Perceval is later amazed to see a knight pass by, riding the very steed which he has just tried to obtain. This knight has just taken the horse from the squire by force. Promising to regain the fine charger, Perceval rides off after the knight on the squire's horse, but once again, he is reduced to a pitiful state of despair when the animal is slain beneath him. By now, he is ripe for the temptation which subsequently follows. "[Perceval] . . . a si grant duel qu'il giete son escu et s'espee a terre et oste son hiaume de sa teste, et lors recomence son duel assez plus grant que devant. Si plore et crie a haute voiz et se claime chaitif, maleureus et le plus meschaanz de toz autres chevaliers, et dit: 'Ore ai je failli a toz mes desirriers!'" (91:10-15). Exhausted from his travail, Perceval lies down and gives himself up to sleep. Suddenly, in the middle of the night, he is startled to hear a woman's

voice calling to him and asking what business he has there.

Once again deception and illusion play an important role in motivating the action of the story and moving it forward to a climax. Clearly, the vision which Perceval observes marks the beginning of events of extreme importance as the Devil, not recognized by Perceval in his highly emotional state, attempts to create a believable situation in which he will be able to seize his prey for good. "Et quant il ot ce, si est tant liez come nul plus, come cil qui ne se done garde qui ce est a qui il parole. Et il cuide bien que ce soit fame a qui il parole, mes non est, ainz est li anemis qui le bee a decevoir et a metre en tel point aue s'ame soit perdue a toz jorz mes" (91:27-31). In the guise of a woman, Satan proceeds to sow the first seeds of deceit in much the same way as he did in the Estoire. Promising him a fine horse to replace the one which he has lost, the lady succeeds in winning Perceval over by offering him that which he most desperately wants at that moment and wrings from him the promise that he will do her bidding when she calls upon him.

It is significant to note that it is not the beauty of the lady nor covetousness and greed which mislead Perceval by making him desire the steed she offers him; rather he is deceived when he sinks into the sin of despair and is therefore caught off guard as she holds out the promise of success

for his mission. Significant, too, is the total absence of obscure phrases, the meaning of which could confuse him as so often happens to characters in the Estoire. The rapidity of the action and his headlong rush into the river make him aware of his error almost immediately, although at the very last moment. Indeed, this occurs even before Perceval has even thought of questioning the presence of the woman who offered him the mount. Ignoring obvious initial signs of warning which are given to him: ". . . si le [cheval] resgarde et l'en prent hisdor; et neporec il est bien tant hardiz que il monte sus, come cil qui ne se prent garde de l'agait a l'anemi" (92:7-9), and again: "Mes cil l'emporte si tost qu'il l'ot mis fors de la forest en petit d'ore et esloignié plus de trois journees loign" (92:14-16).

Perceval is almost swallowed up in the dark waters of the river before he has the presence of mind to make the sign of the cross and save himself. It is not until this point in time that he suddenly becomes aware of the fact that he has been deceived. This picture of the Devil, who ". . . se fiert en l'eve ullant et criant et fesant la plus male fin dou monde. Si avint maintenant que l'eve fu esprise en plusors leus de feu et de flamme clere, si qu'il sembloit que l'eve arsisit" (92:23-26), is distinctly reminiscent of similar scenes in the Estoire (pp. 96, 104 and 105). Although Perceval's close brush with death culminates in the fire and flame of the Devil's retreat, it is not long before

he again experiences a vision. This vision, like most of the others in the Vulgate Cycle, occurs at a crucial moment in Perceval's development and marks yet another critical stage in the testing procedure he must undergo before reaching his goal.

Having been saved from certain destruction, Perceval finds himself on a rocky crag which towers above an isolated island. (The similarity with Mordrain's predicament is obvious: Sommer, vol. 1, pp. 93 ff.) Here he once again succumbs to sleep after spending much of the day gazing out to sea, trying to catch a glimpse of a passing ship on which he might find his way back to the mainland whence he has just come. In a dream, two women appear to him, one very old and mounted upon a serpent, the other young and most beautiful and riding upon a lion. Warning Perceval that he will soon have to test himself against the most dreaded champion in all the world, the younger woman suddenly disappears, leaving him with her older companion. She, in turn, addresses him, accusing him of having killed her serpent and demanding from him homage in return for the deed which he so treacherously committed. His refusal to do so is met by the threat that he still owes her an unpaid debt which she assures him he must pay: "'Je voil, fet ele, que en amende de mon serpent deviegniez mes hons.' Et il respont que ce ne feroit il pas. 'Non? fet ele. Ja le fustes vos ja; ançois que vos receussiez l'omage de vostre

seignor estiez vos a moi. Et por ce que vos fustes ainz miens que autrui ne vos claim je pas quite; ainz vos aseur que en quelque leu que je vos truisse sanz garde, que je vos prendrai come celui qui jadis fu miens'" (98:12-19).

In keeping with the usual pattern of such dreams, Perceval is somewhat puzzled about that which has happened: ". . . si se merveille mot que il sont devenu" (98:31-2), until suddenly, over the horizon, there appears a ship which approaches him at great speed. The ship, draped entirely in white, is manned by a single figure dressed in the robes of a priest. His message is crystal clear both to the reader and to the central figure of this episode. God is now in the process of putting Perceval to the test: "Mes il vos i a ore mis en esprouve et en essai por savoir et por conoistre se vos estes ses feelx serjans et ses loiax chevaliers ausi come l'ordre de chevalerie le requiert" (99:31-100:1). The way in which he responds will determine whether or not he is fit for the tasks which God has in mind for him. The process is quite reminiscent of scenes in the Estoire, but again it must be said that, in spite of the fact that Perceval is being put to the test in preparation for his role as a knight of the Grail, there is never really any doubt that he is in danger of losing sight of that goal. The end result of all of these actions is always clearly before him, his faith in God unshaken.

The man shows remarkable insight into Perceval's own thoughts and person and is clearly a manifestation of the heavenly powers. Following the pattern of development which we have noted in the Estoire, Perceval does not fully understand his dream and must seek out someone who can interpret it for him. The man on the ship is more than willing to undertake this task for him. He explains to Perceval that the lady on the lion represents the New Testament and the New Law; the dreaded champion he must fight is the Devil, himself. The lady astride the serpent is the Old Law; her serpent symbolizes misunderstood and misinterpreted scriptures, hypocrisy, mortal sin--in short, the Enemy. Her references to the slain serpent are to the beast on which she is mounted, not the one he killed, while the promise he allegedly made to serve her, and later renounced, alludes to Perceval's rejection of Satan the moment he accepted Jesus Christ as his Saviour. Having thus explained his vision to him, the man warns Perceval that the impending struggle between himself and the dreaded champion will be a struggle for all eternity. He then takes his leave of him and disappears.

Some time later, the first stages of the struggle are announced by yet another vision in the form of a ship draped in black and driven by a whirlwind. It carries but one lone occupant,--a magnificently beautiful woman,--who addresses Perceval. She immediately begins the treacherous task for

which she has come--to tempt Perceval into damnation by luring him into sin. Once again, she plays upon his only obvious weakness, for she is aware that he longs more than anything else to see the Good Knight, Galahad. Thus she has little difficulty extracting from him a promise that he will do her bidding when she calls upon him. Clearly, the beautiful woman is a manifestation of the Evil One. She sets out deliberately to deceive Perceval by relating to him the details of an encounter she claims to have had with the Good Knight, so that Perceval, again in a moment of weakness, succumbs to her words: ". . . ge vieng de la Forest Gaste, ou je ai veue la plus merveilleuse aventure del monde dou Bon Chevalier.' -- 'Ha! damoisele, fet il, dites moi dou Bon Chevalier, par la foi que vos devez a la riens ou monde que vos plus amex!'" (105:28-32). He does not recognize her affinity with the Devil in the fact that: ". . . quant cele ot qu'il li fet mencion de l'Evangile, si ne respont pas a cele parole, ainz le met en autre matiere . . ." (105:23-4). She leads him even further astray by telling him that the man who came to him and expounded upon the nature of his dreams was nothing but a sorcerer come to deceive him: "Ce est uns enchanterres, uns mouteploierres de paroles que fet adés d'une parole cent, et ne dira ja voir qu'il puisse" (107:1-3). Thus, Perceval believes her lies because his condition is ripe for him to do so and he becomes even more tightly ensnared when, touched by her tale

of disinheritance, he indicates that he is prepared to succour her whenever she should ask in accordance with his oath first taken as a knight of the Round Table.

Having slept for a time, Perceval awakens to see a glorious feast, lacking in neither food nor drink, and gazes upon the damsel, who appears infinitely more beautiful to him than before. Unaware that this is little more than an illusion created by the lady to capture his soul, he is extremely vulnerable, so that when she plays on his mortal weakness, she is able to tempt him to the point where he is prepared to be hers forever in return for the pleasures of the flesh. Again he fails to recognize signs of danger: "Et il resgarde que len la cuevre de tele plenté de mes que ce n'est se merveilles non . . . et il trouve que ce est vins, li plus bons et li plus forz dont il onques beust: si se merveille trop dont il puet estre venuz" (109:3-7). As fate would have it, however, Perceval catches sight of a red cross--the frequent leitmotif in the Estoire--on the hilt of his sword at the very last moment. In its form is true reality, free of all deception and it destroys the illusion before him. Ironically, the damsel accuses Perceval of betrayal: "'Perceval, traïe m'avez!'" (110:18) as she disappears in a sea of flame--her deceit uncovered through the power of God.



Once again the ship draped in white and bearing the man in the priestly robes appears and dispels all doubt about his own nature and that of the beautiful lady. By now, Perceval believes that she has been sent by Satan ". . . por moi honir et decevoir . . ." (112:19), but his doubts concerning her linger on until he is told that she was the Devil himself whose very strength is guile: ". . . et tant la [moillier Adam] gueta et engigna qu'il l'ot esprise de pechié mortel . . ." (113:15-16). These weapons she used on Perceval as well: "Quant ele ot fait païs a toi par ses fauses paroles et par ses decevemens . . ." (113:29-30). Perceval is further told the significance of the tent (the world) in which he was about to lie with the lady as well as the meaning of the heat of the sun (Christ) and the coolness of the evening (death in mortal sin). Of none of this has he been even remotely aware. Ultimately, at the climax of the adventure, Perceval is borne away from the island, his temptations behind him: "Perceval, tu as vaincu et es gariz" (115:16). He is now ready for the ultimate reality--the vision of the Holy Grail--for he has seen through the illusions created by the Devil to deceive him.

Let us examine now the adventures of Bohort who, like Perceval, must undergo a period of trial. After Bohort has taken his leave of his companions, he spends several hours with a hermit whose prediction augurs well for the future of his quest. The old man implies that Bohort will succeed

when, as a result of a boon granted to the hermit, the latter asks Bohort to refrain from partaking of anything but bread and water until he sits at the table of the Holy Grail. "'Et savez vos que vos m'avez otroié? Que vos ne repestrez le cors d'autre viande jusqu'a tant que vos seroiz a la table del Saint Graal.' --Et que savez vos, fet Boort, si je i seré?'" -- 'Je le sai bien fet il, que vos i seroiz, vos tierz de compaignons de la Table Reonde'" (166:4-9).

Shortly after leaving the hermit, Bohort has an experience reminiscent of the ancient tale of the pelican which sacrifices itself for its young. This experience seems to be like a dream, but the good knight is quite awake, for it is still early afternoon. He sees a large bird circle above his head before it finally alights on the nest which contains its young. Since the young birds are dead, the parent revives them by tearing open its breast to provide warm blood to nourish them. In so doing, it sacrifices itself for them. The pattern which has been noted on previous occasions again repeats itself for the central figure is at a loss to explain what he has seen and indeed, he is unsure whether he has observed an illusion or reality: [Boort] . . . se merveille trop que ce puet estre, car il ne set quel chose puisse avenir de ceste semblance" (168:8-10). Bohort moves on, uncertain in his mind what he has just seen.

Soon he comes to the castle of a young lady who is seeking a champion to fight on her behalf against Priadan. Accepting her request because he is convinced of her just cause, Bohort then lies down to sleep before his ordeal. As fate would have it at this crucial moment in his life, he dreams a dream in which the imagery of the birds is again taken up. He sees before him two birds: one is white and similar in size and shape to a swan; the other, much smaller, is jet black and of rare beauty. Each of the birds asks Bohort to serve him and then disappears from sight. Immediately thereafter, he experiences a second dream in which he finds himself entering a chapel-like structure where a man, seated on a throne, is flanked on his left by a rotten tree trunk and on the right by two lilies. One of these seems to be trying to rob the adjacent one of its whiteness, until the man on the throne separates them so that each may bear a tree and fruit. Bohort is reminded that, should he find someone in a similar situation, he must not try to save that which is worthless.

As one might expect, Bohort is puzzled, unable to fathom the significance of what he has seen: "Einsi li avindrent la nuit ces deus avisions qui mout le firent merveillier, car il ne pooit onques penser que ce pooit estre" (172:1-3). It is not until some time later that he, in fact, learns the truth behind his two dreams.

In the meantime, Bohort finds himself confronted by the need to make a very painful decision: either he must rescue his brother Lionel, who has been ignominiously bound to a horse and beaten, or he must rescue a lady in distress. Choosing the latter course, he carries out his mission successfully, thereby saving the lives of 500 knights who would have perished if he had not acted so honourably. When, however, Bohort returns to seek out Lionel, he is led to believe that he is dead, for a man who is allegedly a priest, shows him the body of a knight who has just been slain. Bohort immediately assumes, on the basis of appearance alone, that Lionel is dead; the body of the knight convinces him of this, for he examines it carefully. And yet, there is a clear indication that Bohort has been deceived: "Il le resgarde et conoist, ce li est avis, que ce est son frere" (178:5-6). Like Perceval before him, Bohort does not recognize certain key signs that he, too, is being deceived by the Devil in an attempt to win his soul. Bohort has already failed to note that the monk he accosts ". . . chevauchoit un cheval plus noir que meure" (177:23-4), an indication that it is no ordinary beast. Furthermore he does not realize that his brother's body is all but weightless--a sure sign that the corpse is nothing but an illusion. Thus he is able to leap into his saddle bearing it in his arms. "Et Boorz saut sus la croupe de son cheval et porte devant lui, ce li est avis, le cors de son frere" (178:24-5).

Nor is he able to find anything Christian in the chapel to which he carries his brother's remains. ". . . mes il ne voit ne eve beneoite ne croiz ne nule veraie enseigne de Jhesucrist" (178:30-1). Clearly, there is no truth ". . . nule veraie enseigne . . ." in this place--only illusion and deception. And yet, totally unaware, Bohort asks the false monk for an explanation of his dream. He, of course, clothes deceit in convincing words which Bohort accepts at face value.

According to the Devil's version of Bohort's dream, the white swan represents a maiden who loves him, but since he will not swear to be hers, the fear arises that she may die of grief. The black bird symbolizes the sin of his rejection in order to remain chaste. His motives are selfish and narrow, he is told and will lead to the death of Lancelot and the maiden as well. Bohort is further accused of being responsible for the death of his own brother when he abandoned him. Thus, in much the same way as Perceval found himself in a perilous situation because he was prepared to sacrifice everything to find the knight with the white shield, Bohort, too, is prepared to do anything for Lancelot: ". . . il n'est riens que je plus tost ne feisse que monseignor Lancelot ocirre" (180:4-5). Bohort is, then, tricked by one in whom ". . . il cuidoit si grant bonté de vie . . ." (179:30-1), who has played upon his very human loyalty to a man he loves.

The Devil's deception becomes more intricate as he seeks to entangle his victim in a world of falsehoods. Thus it is hardly surprising that he again relies on the guile of woman to bring this adventure to a successful climax and Bohort into his fold. On the surface, she, too, like so many before her, is stunningly beautiful: ". . . une damoisele si bele et avenant qu'il paroît en li avoir toute biauté terriane; et fu si richement vestue com s'ele eust a choïs esté de toutes les beles robes dou monde . . ." (180:14-17) and again, "la plus bele dame et la plus riche dou monde . . ." (180:18-19). She promises him worldly power, ". . . s'il li velt otroier s'amor, ele le fera plus riche home que onques hom de son lignage ne fu" (180:25-7).

But Bohort remains steadfast in his refusal to love the lady and thus to break his oath of chastity and forever destroy his chances to achieve the adventure of the Grail. Relying again on illusion and deceit, the episode approaches a climax as the lady and twelve of her maidens cast themselves from the highest battlements of the castle. But even this sight, although it fills Bohort with horror, for he believes what he sees before his eyes, does not sway him: ". . . si l'em prent grant pitié. Et neporquant il n'est pas conseiliez qu'il ne vueille mielz qu'eles toutes perdent lor ames que il seuls perdist la soe" (181:30-2). Instinctively making the sign of the cross, Bohort suddenly recognizes the false illusion which the Devil has created to destroy him.

Everything disappears: the tower, the maidens and the lady. The truth of the entire episode now becomes crystal clear to Bohort who further realizes that ". . . ce ait esté fantosme que il ait veu" (182:19), and that a monstrous hoax has been perpetrated to deceive him concerning his brother Lionel, who is probably also still alive.

However, Bohort is not yet certain. An element of doubt still remains to cause him concern until the abbot of a monastery toward which he makes his way reveals to him the truth of this adventure. Only at this point in time is Bohort prepared to hear what he has to say and to understand, for he has proved his mettle by successfully withstanding the temptation offered him by the Devil. The explanation is lengthy and involves not only his most recent experiences, but, in fact, everything that has happened to him since he first dreamt of the bird which sacrificed itself for its young. Now there can be no mistake about the interpretation. Bohort learns that the vision of the bird symbolizes Christ who gave his blood for mankind. The dead tree of the second dream represents poverty and want in the world, whereas the lady whom he defended against her sister is none other than the Holy Church which he was unwittingly defending by his actions. In view of the fact that the old man wearing the garb of a cleric deceived Bohort, it comes as no surprise to learn that he was, in fact, the Devil who appeared to him in a dream: ". . . en semblance d'ome de

religion . . ." (186:5) and who told him that his brother was dead. Thus he hoped to lead him astray. Finally the abbot shares with Bohort information that is less pleasant, for he informs him that the rotten stem of his vision is his own brother Lionel and that his actions in saving the damsel rather than him were quite justified. They are conclusive proof of his desire to serve Christ.

There remains only the final encounter with Lionel which leads to the death of the old hermit and of Calogrenant who try to make Lionel realize that he has been deceived by the Devil to act in such a way against his noble brother. But it is all to no avail, for ". . . li anemis avoit eschaufé jusqu'a volonté d'ocirre son frere" (189:30). Finally, God must intervene on Bohort's behalf and separate his brother from him. This is the final proof of the fact that Bohort has found favour with God by withstanding the trials and temptations which have been placed in his way to prepare him for the final adventure of the Grail.

Thus, both Perceval and Bohort are tempted and deceived as they, like Mordrain and Nascien before them, are put to the test in order to determine their worthiness to be elevated to serve with Galahad as Knights of the Holy Grail. Lancelot, however, once the flower of knighthood and the most excellent knight on the face of the earth, finds his role downgraded as a result of his life of sin. His adventures in the Queste



del Saint Graal are destined to determine not whether he will ultimately experience the adventure of the Grail, but on the contrary, whether in fact he will be successful in wresting his very soul from the Devil.

The details of the Lancelot episodes in Queste reveal once again certain motifs already examined in the Estoire in connection with reality and illusion. Pursuing Galahad, the knight with the white shield, in an effort to learn his identity, Lancelot takes leave of Perceval, his companion, and resolves to set out alone through the darkest night, leaving his path to chance. Coming to a cross of stone at a junction in the road, Lancelot is unable to discern the inscription carved into it because the night is so dark. Making his way to an ancient chapel, he is struck by the strange beauty of a rich altar brilliantly illuminated by candles. Unable to reach its immediate vicinity, Lancelot returns to his horse and leads it back to the cross he has just passed and then lies down to a restless sleep. Here, as in the Perceval and Bohort episodes, something significant is about to be revealed to him. Shortly thereafter, in a strange state somewhere between dreaming and waking: ". . . come cil qui ert en tel point que il ne dormoit bien ne ne veilloit bien, ainz someilloit" (58:19-21), Lancelot observes the arrival of a knight in a litter. Praying to God that He send the Holy Grail to heal him, the knight is

thereupon visited by one of the silver candlesticks which Lancelot has just seen before the altar of the chapel. It approaches him as though in a vision, floating through the air and accompanied by the Grail itself. Immediately, the knight is healed of his affliction by the Holy Grail and gives thanks to God. Meanwhile, Lancelot finds himself quite unable to move even though he would dearly have loved to reach out to the Grail. Ironically, the knight who has been healed mistakenly assumes that Lancelot has slept through the miracle of the appearance of the Grail and so, taking possession of Lancelot's horse and arms, vows to accomplish with them what Lancelot himself has sworn to do: ". . . li chevaliers . . . jure que . . . il ne finera ja mes d'errer devant que il savra coment ce est que li Sainz Graaux s'apert en tanz leux ou roiaume de Logres, et par qui il fu aportez en Engleterre et por quel besoign, se aucuns autres n'en set ainz de lui veraies noveles" (60:24-30).

After the departure of the knight, Lancelot finds himself in a situation in which he is unable to distinguish clearly between waking and sleeping--between his conscious and his sub-conscious mind: "Si se porpense se ce qu'il a veu a esté songes ou veritez, car il ne set s'il a veu le Saint Graal ou se il l'a songié" (61:8-10). Although he is quite aware of the details of the vision which he has had, it is not until he returns to seek out his horse and his arms that he realizes that he has not experienced merely a dream. What

he has seen has not been an illusion but reality and this fact is further emphasized by a voice which accuses him: "Lancelot, plus durs que pierre, plus amers que fuz, plus nuz et plus despris que figuiers, coment fus tu si hardiz que tu ou leu ou li Sainz Graalx reperast csas entrer. Va t'en de ci . . ." (61:16-19). Finally, although stung to the very marrow of his bones by the unknown voice, Lancelot is certain "qu'il a veu verité" (61:30). Even so, the enigmatic phrases that he is "harder than stone, more bitter than wood and more barren than the fig tree" will continue to perplex him until their secret is unlocked by the hermit he visits. Thus, in a situation which cuts across the clearly defined limits between dream and reality, a basic truth concerning himself is revealed to Lancelot. Motivated to confess his sins with the Queen to a hermit, Lancelot subsequently undergoes a radical change of heart, promising "come loiaux chevaliers" never to sin again with the Queen or any other woman, nor to displease God in any other way. Thus the vision of the Grail marks a turning point in Lancelot's life, convincing him of the need for repentance and laying bare the deceitful illusions which the Devil has created to destroy him: ". . . sai je bien que je en serai jugiez come li mauvés serjanz qui le besant repost en terre. Car j'ai servi toute ma vie son anemi et l'ai guerroié par mon pechié . . . Li deables m'a mostree la douçor et le miel; mes il ne me mostra mie la peine pardurable ou cil sera mis qui en cele voie demore" (64:32-65:5).

The period of trial which Lancelot undergoes differs somewhat from the tests to which Mordrain, Nascien, Perceval and Bohort are put insofar as Lancelot is not repeatedly tempted by illusions of the Evil One masquerading as a beautiful woman to lure him away from the Kingdom of God to his damnation. Such illusions are unnecessary, for Lancelot's sins with the beautiful Guinevere are quickly acknowledged. Consequently the illusion of the Estoire and parts of the Queste become the reality of Lancelot's situation and he soon learns that he is already in league with the Devil. Unless he repents, he is told, there can be no hope for his salvation. Thus the distinction between Mordrain, Nascien, Perceval and Bohort on the one hand, and Lancelot on the other, is quite clear: the former accept the faith and are tested to determine their worthiness to enter the Kingdom of Heaven or to become Knights of the Grail; Lancelot's trials take the form of a slow return to grace after a fall from favour. There is no question of trying to shake his faith by deception. He has already succumbed and must gradually find his way back to God, albeit at great cost to himself, for by now he has relinquished any chances he may have had to attain the heights which Bohort and Perceval ultimately reach.

But there still remains unclarified one aspect of the vision which the wretched Lancelot has not yet fathomed and which only the hermit can elucidate: he has yet to learn the real

significance of the stone, the wood and the fig to which he was compared. What is the true nature of the appearances he has seen? The hermit reveals to him how he has squandered God's gifts of grace, beauty and courage by serving the Devil and has thus proved himself harder than the stone: ". . . et plus pechierres que nus autres pechierres" (69:7-8). Similarly, he expounds to him the nature of his bitterness ". . . la ou si grant durtez est herbergiee ne puet nule douçors repairier, ne nos ne devons pas cuidier qu'il i remaigne riens fors amertume . . ." (69:24-26), and why he is as barren as the fig tree. "Mes quant li Sainz Graax vint la ou tu estoies, il te trova si desgarni qu'il ne trova en toi ne bone pensee ne bone volenté, mes vilain et ort et conchiez de luxure te trova il, et tout desgarni de fueilles et de flors, ce est a dire de toutes bones oevres . . ." (70:18-22). At the hermit's words, Lancelot's grief seems boundless and culminates in a vow to shun the love of the Queen forever.

In this instance the vision of reality consists of an insight into the very depths of his own soul, but it is only the first step--the turning point--which motivates Lancelot to turn his thoughts to higher things and to begin the long and arduous climb back to grace. If he is to succeed, Lancelot is told: "Car bien sachiez que en ceste Queste ne vos puet vostre chevalerie riens valoir, se li Sainz Esperiz ne vos fet la voie en toutes les aventures que vos troverez"

(116:5-7), he must renounce his mortal sins and remove his thoughts from worldly things. Indeed, as we shall see, it is this which ultimately sets Lancelot apart from the three Grail knights: Galahad, Perceval and Bohort.

At this point it is no longer a question of deception by the illusions of the world such as were seen by Mordrain and Nascien nor those of Bohort and Perceval; the illusion has clearly assumed a readily identifiable form and represents the next logical step if once an individual yields to the temptations of all that is worldly. Lancelot must, then, prepare himself for a long period of trial and purification to test his vow. At the same time, Lancelot's dilemma serves to bring into relief the trials of Bohort, Perceval and Galahad, who would also fail if they were to lose the struggle with the Devil and yield to his temptations. "Et neporec, tot soit il ore veritez que cil chevaliers ait en soi plus proesce et hardement que autres n'ait, sachiez de voir que s'il se menoit jusqu'a pechié mortel--dont Nostre Sires le gart par sa pitié--il ne feroit en ceste Queste nes que uns autres simples chevaliers" (116:20-5). And so, Lancelot sets out from the hermit clad only in a hair shirt and prepared for the trials which will follow.

Shortly after his departure from the hermit, Lancelot lies down on a stone before a cross and falls asleep. In a dream, a man surrounded by stars and wearing a golden crown

appears before him, attended by two knights and seven kings. Kneeling before the cross, they pray that each be given his just desert. A man descends from the clouds, and accompanied by a throng of angels, blesses them and receives them. The elder of the two knights, however, he rejects, although he transforms the younger one into a winged lion which ascends into the heavens. Puzzled by his dream, Lancelot reflects upon its apparent meaning until finally it is interpreted for him by a pious old hermit. He explains that the seven kings are Lancelot's godly ancestors, while the two knights are Lancelot, himself, the elder and his son, Galahad, the younger. Because Galahad will become the master of the Round Table and enter the Kingdom of Heaven much as Christ did, Lancelot falsely assumes that his own salvation is guaranteed, but the hermit quickly dispels this illusion: "Des pechiez mortieus porte li peres son fes et li filz le suen; ne li filz ne partira ja as iniquitez au pere, ne li peres ne partira ja as iniquitez au filz; mes chascuns selonc ce qu'il avra deservi recevra loier" (138:29-32). He makes it clear to Lancelot that he must bear the responsibility for his own soul and must, therefore, continue his period of trial on his own, trying with the help of God to return to his former state of grace. Here again, there exists the danger that Lancelot might misinterpret his dream, but this misinterpretation does not arise out of an obviously deceptive situation created by the Devil; it finds its source in Lancelot, himself.

Once again Lancelot is visited by a dream, the meaning of which remains obscure to him, but clearly, there is a message contained in the words of the man who descends from Heaven and admonishes him for his lack of faith. Lancelot is in a quandary, not knowing how to interpret what has been said to him, nor, indeed, to know whether or not to believe what he has seen. Discovering a recluse nearby, he finds that she is able to interpret not only the dream, but also the symbolic meaning of a tournament between the white knights of Eliezer and the black knights of Argustes in which he had earlier taken part and been captured. Until now, Lancelot has been blissfully unaware that the tournament has even nurtured a hidden truth. These knights represent the sinners and the chaste and, of course, in keeping with his life of sin, Lancelot sided with the former. His capture brought him to the realization of the error of his ways, but this was not to last and he again fell into sin. For this, he was again admonished in his dream.

The final series of adventures involving Lancelot is set into motion by a divine voice which speaks to Lancelot as he sleeps and orders him to go to the sea where he is to enter a ship he will find in the harbour. At this point it becomes clear that what Lancelot is about to experience is a manifestation of the Kingdom of Heaven and that he has indeed taken another step along the road to salvation, for the ship which he enters is most unusual: "Et si tost come



il i est, si li est avis qu'il sente toutes les bones odors dou monde et que il soit raempliz de toutes les bones viandes que onques goustast hom terriens" (247:1-4). The discovery of the body of the sister of Perceval, the perfect virgin whose place in Heaven is assured, takes him one step further up the ladder toward salvation. Finding a letter beneath her head, he reads: "'Ceste damoisele fu suer Perceval le Galois, et fut toz jorz virge en volenté et en oevre. Ce est cele qui chanja les renges de l'Espee as estranges renges que Galaad, filz Lancelot del Lac, porte orendroit.' Après troeve ou brief toute sa vie et la maniere de sa mort, et coment li troi compaignon, Galaad et Boort et Perceval, l'ensevelirent einsi come ele est et la mistrent en la nef par le comandement de la voiz divine" (247:23-30). The state of mind in which he finds himself underlines this fact: "Toute la nuit dormi Lancelot si aeise qu'il ne li fu pas avis qu'il fust tiex com il souloit, mes changiez" (247:13-14).

Finally, Lancelot is granted his two most fervent wishes: to spend a period of time with his son Galahad and to gaze upon the Holy Grail. In this latter adventure, he again proves himself to be less than equal to the sight which he sees. Mistaking the ability of the priest who is bearing the Grail to carry it aloft, Lancelot disobeys a previous warning to refrain from entering holy ground by rushing to

his assistance. Even though he prays for Christ's forgiveness, as he does so, the illusion which motivates Lancelot deceives him and for this he is punished by a fiery wind which strikes him down helpless, leaving him apparently dead for twenty-four days. Upon recovery of his senses, he finally realizes the ultimate truth concerning his transgressions and short-comings, but at the same time, he is made aware of the infinite grace of the Kingdom of Heaven:

"Je ai, fet il, veu si granz merveilles et si granz be-  
neurtez que ma langue nel vos porroit mie descouvrir, ne  
mes cuers meismes nel porroit mie penser, com grant chose  
ce est. Car ce n'a mie esté chose terriane, mes esperitel.  
Et se mes granz pechiez et ma grant maleurtez ne fust,  
j'eusse encor plus veu, se ne fust que je perdi la veue de  
mes euz et le pooir dou cors, por la grant desloiauté que  
Diex avoit veue en moi" (258:6-13). And again, "Et tant  
qu'il s'apensa qu'il ot ou terme de vint et quatre anz  
servi a l'anemi, por quoi Nostre Sires le mist en tel  
penitance qu'il ot perdu par vint et quatre jorz le pooir  
dou cors et des membres" (258:21-4). Failing to attain his  
final goal, Lancelot returns at last to the court of King  
Arthur.

In summary, Lancelot's quest has been marked by several  
dreams and visions, each of which reveals to him the true  
nature of his own soul and acts as a warning to him to re-  
turn to the narrow road to salvation. But each one also

serves to return him just a little closer to a state of grace. Unlike the dreams of Mordrain and Nascien in the Estoire or those of Perceval and Bohort in the Queste, Lancelot is not tempted by manifestations of the Devil in the guise of woman in order to lure him into destruction; his own behaviour has already marked him as an ally of Satan and precludes his attaining the Holy Grail. The best he can ever hope for is salvation for his soul.

Although he remains a peripheral figure in the Queste del Saint Graal, Gauvain is also put to the test and, unlike Lancelot, who recognizes the error of his ways and sets out on the long and arduous road back to grace, Gauvain fails to interpret correctly the obvious warnings which are given to him. As Pauphilet indicates in the introduction to his edition of the Queste del Saint Graal, Gauvain represents ". . . la chevalerie courtoise jugée selon l'esprit cistercien" (Queste del Saint Graal, p. xi).

In search of Galahad, Gauvain, Yvain and Gaheriet encounter the same seven brothers Galahad has earlier met at the Castle of Maidens.<sup>1</sup> They challenge them and slay them all. Having done so, they turn away to a road on the right and instead of coming to Galahad, make their separate ways away from him.

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<sup>1</sup> Galahad, having proved his superiority over these knights, clearly shows that he is more than mortal, for ". . . il ne cuident mie que il sont hons terriens . . ." (48:14-15) and he does not pursue them as they flee from him. When these same knights are encountered by Gauvain, however, he and his companions slay them all. For this Gauvain is soon to be chastized by the hermit.

Gauvain, arriving at a hermitage, is asked to confess, for it has been some four years since he has done so, but instead, he requests clarification of a cryptic remark made to him two days before. Gauvain wishes to know why he has been called "serjanz mauvés et desloiax" and is told the truth: how great a sinner he has been, and how his actions in killing the seven brothers were unjustified. Had he not been blinded by his own sins, he would have seen the right way, he is told. Totally unaware, therefore, that the adventure of the Castle of Maidens had any deeper significance, Gauvain is enlightened concerning it. The castle is Hell, the maidens whom Galahad, acting as an agent of Christ, saved from the seven brothers (the seven deadly sins) are righteous souls. But Gauvain chooses to ignore the admonishments of the hermit, i.e., he elects to close his eyes to the reality of the situation and to continue in his world of illusions: "Et il dist que de penitance fere ne porroit il la peine soffrir. Et li preudome le let a tant, que plus ne li dit, car il voit bien que ses amonestemenz seroit peine perdue" (55:23-25). Gauvain, then, now finds himself in precisely the same position as Lancelot, but unwilling to acknowledge his transgressions does not even make the effort Lancelot makes to put aside his world of false hopes and appearances by repenting. At this point there can be little hope for his soul. Later, in the Mort Artu, he is redeemed because of his charity.

In another series of events both Gauvain and Hector experience dreams. In his unusual dream, Gauvain sees a herd of 150 bulls, all of which are spotted except three. These are pure white. Setting out to find greener pastures, some never return, while those which do come back are emaciated shadows of their former selves. Of the white bulls, only one returns. Like Gauvain, Hector, too, has a puzzling dream in which he sees himself and Lancelot enter upon a fruitless quest during which both are disgraced. Gauvain and Hector are quite disturbed by this, for neither is able to fathom the truths they have seen. Still uncertain about the mysteries of these dreams and before they can discover their significance, they see before them the vision of a hand and a forearm clothed in red samite (150:30-151:7). Over the arm hung a bridle while the hand held a lighted candle. Suddenly a voice challenges them and accuses them both of lacking in those three things which they have just seen. Further confused, they resolve to ask a nearby hermit for his help in clarifying their dilemma, but as they make their way to his dwelling, Gauvain slays Yvain the Bastard whom he fails to recognize. The hermit, Nascien, is quite able to help them, interpreting first Gauvain's and then Hector's dream. He tells the former that the bulls at the rack represent the knights of the Round Table, all of them sinners except for the three Grail knights (the white animals) Galahad, Perceval and Bohort. The pasture they

seek is the Grail, the quest of which will bring grief to many and result in the ascension of Galahad and Perceval to Heaven. Nascien, the hermit, is prepared to say no more to Gauvain. As far as Hector's dream is concerned Nascien tells him that it portrays both him and Lancelot riding out in vain presumption to seek the Grail. Both come to grief. Lancelot, repentant, returns to Camelot but Hector never leaves the sinful pride which marks his behaviour.

The vision of the arm and the hand common to both Gauvain and Hector is also interpreted: the hand represents charity, the velvet garb of the arm the grace of the Holy Spirit; the bridle portrays abstinence. Thus having been told of their short-comings, both Gauvain and Hector refuse to heed the hermit's warning and ride away. Since neither of the two is prepared to mend his ways, the author makes it clear that there will be serious consequences for both of them in the future, for they are going the way of the Devil. Rejecting truth for the illusion of the world and its pleasures, they choose incorrectly and must suffer. Unlike Lancelot with whom they are, of course, to be compared, they make no effort to repent. They are, however, later redeemed in the Mort Artu.

One other minor character whose actions are determined by a confusion between appearances and reality is Melias. Ignoring the truth of the inscription on the cross at the

parting of the way, he chooses falsely because the Devil has penetrated the weakness which is his pride and deceived his better judgement: "'Quant tu te fus partiz de Galaad, li anemis, qui t'avoit trové foible, se mist avoec toi et pensa que poi avoit fet encor s'il ne te fesoit chaoir en un autre pechié, si que de pechié en pechié te meist en enfer'"

(45:26-9). Failing to recognize the validity of the warning directed toward the left-hand path, and unclear in his mind what it really meant, Melias left himself vulnerable to the wiles of the Evil one. Thereupon, the Devil created the illusion of the great feast and the golden crown which Melias came to covet. Had it not been for Galahad and the sign of the cross, he would have suffered a fate far worse than the serious wound which laid him low. All of this is expounded to Melias once he has been saved by Galahad and brought to the monastery.

One final episode involving the three knights of the Grail, Galahad, Perceval and Bohort and their sighting of the white stag escorted by four lions is worthy of note, for, as a vision, it represents the miracle of Christ. Not knowing the true significance of what they have witnessed, the three set out to follow the stag and its strange companions in order to learn the truth about it: ". . . ce est une chose dont je [Perceval] ne serai ja mes granment aeise devant que je en sache la verité" (234:18-20). Making their way to a hermitage, they are amazed to learn the truth which

they are seeking, for there, they behold the transformation of the stag into human form in the shape of a man seated on an altar. About him, the lions assume the body of a man, an eagle, a lion-like animal and a calf. They bear him aloft into the air and through a window without doing any damage whatsoever to the glass. At this point the hermit is able to interpret the meaning of this miracle for them, explaining that the stag is Christ; the lions his four evangelists and he assures them: ". . . que onques mes chevaliers n'en pot savoir la verité ne que ce puet estre" (236:14-15). With this vision it becomes clear that the preparations for the final contact with the Holy Grail are all but complete.

In summary, then, an analysis of the role of illusion and reality in the Queste del Saint Graal discloses little that has not already been encountered in the Estoire. In each instance, dreams and visions which contain most of the material to be discussed in this work, occur at crucial moments in the life of the characters involved. Two of them, Perceval and Bohort, are tested in a manner similar to the trials of Mordrain and Nascien with the purpose of proving them worthy of their calling. Lancelot is forced into situations in which he must distinguish between truth and the illusion of the world about him, not to prove that he is fit for a higher role, but to save his soul from Hell. He represents the individual who has been tried and found unequal to the task before him and who must now seek



salvation through repentance. Finally, Gauvain, like Lancelot also unworthy of a place before the Holy Grail, succumbs to the false illusions of the Devil, but unlike Lancelot, he makes no attempt to redeem himself.

### CHAPTER III

#### MERLIN (Sommer, vol. ii)

The conflict between appearances and reality in the Vulgate Cycle reveals a pronounced difference in technique from that which we have examined in either the Estoire or the Queste, and even though the obvious struggle for the souls of men in the opening scene of the Merlin might at first glance appear to suggest a point of contact with similar themes in the Estoire and the Queste, the religious overtones of that initial scene remain essentially isolated. While these overtones touch on the problem of the eternal battle between good and evil, the principal function of this scene is directed more specifically toward an explanation of Merlin's special powers bequeathed to him by the strange union between his mother and a devil. There is virtually no religious or didactic message in the Merlin,--at least not of any prominence. Furthermore, the confusion which invariably arose out of the many visions and dreams of both the Estoire and the Queste and led to the necessity of a choice between good and evil, is non-existent.

In general, the semblance of reality, the illusion which masks the truth of a situation and leads to confusion, is

confined primarily to the use of disguises and these, in turn, with few exceptions, are associated for the most part with Merlin himself. Their function, as we shall discover, would seem to be directed in the first instance toward a structural role in which failure on the part of a particular character to penetrate the disguise confronting him inevitably leads to complications within the plot itself and stimulates the action of that plot further toward completion. In addition to this, out of Merlin's purposeful deception of those whom he would prefer to avoid, and the disclosure of his identity only to the chosen few whom he has selected to protect (Uter, Pandragon, Arthur), there arises a consistent character trait (Merlin's essentially positive role in society) which imparts a logical unity to the entire text despite the fact that, to use Micha's words, the ". . . Vulgate Merlin, in fact, consists of two parts: the redaction of Robert's [Robert de Boron] poem and a sequel" (A.L.M.A., p. 319). Let us examine these two basic structural aspects of the text as they are related to the conflict between illusion and reality. Since the two sections maintain a consistent portrait of Merlin, we may consider them together.

Merlin's mother was a virtuous maiden who repeatedly resisted the efforts of the Devil to beguile and destroy her and her two sisters and who managed to lead a good life in keeping with God's will, so that ". . . onques diables

engignier ne la pot . . ." (8:30-1). In spite of this, Merlin's very conception is shrouded in the shadow of deception and intrigue--in the confusion of a moment of weakness. Wishing to engender a man whom he will have in his power to do his will and obey his every command, the devil sets his sights on the maiden and, at the most propitious moment, when the lady is distressed and in a state of depression, he carries out his intentions to impregnate her without her knowledge and thus bring about the birth of the man he has in mind. "Icis diables avoit pooir de concevoir & de gisir o feme. Lors fu tous aparellies & iut o lui en son dormant carnelment si conchut" (9:16-17). As soon as she realizes that she is carrying a child, she commences to despair of her salvation, until, having protested her innocence to a holy man, she succeeds in making him believe her story, for at first, he was not at all inclined to do so. Her confession and her protestations of innocence arouse his compassion for her and he agrees to have her committed to a tower until her child is born. Here, she will be safe until a decision concerning her fate and that of her child can be made in the courts. Some months later, as she stands before the judge insisting that she has done no wrong, Merlin, her young child who is with her, suddenly declares his mother's innocence. To the astonishment of those present, he further reveals that a devil has sired him: "Ie uoel que tu saces & croies que

ie sui fils a . j . anemi qui engigna ma mère . . ."  
(17:25-6).

As a result of the unusual circumstances of his birth, Merlin is blessed with the extraordinary power not only to know the past but also to foretell the future. It is this latter ability which he repeatedly employs in the service of the powers of good, for with it, he is able to reveal the truth. Even though his father was a devil, bent on creating a man whose life he could command, Merlin proves himself to be aligned with the positive forces of life, primarily because his mother's "boine vie" proves to be stronger than the negative pull of her paternal inheritance.<sup>1</sup> The proof of this statement is clearly indicated during the questioning of his mother concerning his birth. In her defense, Merlin makes use of his power to uncover a truth which has long remained hidden; namely, that ironically a priest was the father of the very judge who is interrogating her. "Quant la dame [the mother of the judge] lentent si sot bien que quanques il auoit dit fu voirs si sassist & fu moult destroite si sot bien que voir li couenroit dire"

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<sup>1</sup>In another context, Alexandre Micha alludes to this same characteristic of Merlin's goodness when he comments on his relationship to Uter and Pandragon, but he fails to develop the thought more explicitly. "The innocence of Merlin's mother, her saintly life, and the precautions she takes to convert her offspring into an agent not of hell but of heaven, all are emphasized in order to clarify Merlin's benevolent role" (A.L.M.A., pp. 320-21).

(17:15-16). Thus, in defending the innocence of his mother, the child, Merlin, establishes a pattern which has a two-fold importance for future adventures. In the first instance, his words and deeds will always be directed toward the innermost truth of any given situation. Secondly, these actions will invariably be motivated by positive rather than by negative forces--by the powers for good, the powers of Heaven. Early in the text, then, Merlin's power to master both past and future is clearly proved and he, himself, in spite of the negative aspects of his birth, continues to react in a positive way. Indeed, the author of the Vulgate Merlin makes it adequately clear that such behaviour is perhaps less "in spite of" his birth than "because" of it, for its very nature, its duality, so to speak, yields to him precisely that power which he then employs for good. While the two contradictory aspects of his birth and their interaction upon him are repeatedly and consistently revealed, frequent allusions to Merlin's enviable powers serve to underline the key role he has to play and stress his importance in stripping away illusion to reveal the essential truth of a matter: ". . . ie sai les choses que a uenir sont & ce poes vous apercevoir par ce que ie vous dirai" (17:32-33) and ". . . ensi com tu ois dire que iestoie conceus del diable . ensi mois tu dire que nostre sires mauoit doune sens et memoire de sauoir les choses qui estoient a uenir . . . Et bien sacies que quant nostre sires uolt que ie seusse ces choses que diable mont perdu

mai iou nai pas perdu lor engin ne lor art" (18:29-33),  
 and again: "sire vos deues bien croire & sauoir que ie sai  
 les coses faites & alees & dites . si voeil bien que vous  
 sacies que cil sens me vint danemi . sire & nostre sires qui  
 est poissans seur toutes choses il ma doune sens et sauoir  
 de connoistre & sauoir des coses qui sont a uenir" (53:32-35).

At a point early in the text when Merlin has won the confidence of Uter and his brother Pandragon and assured them of success in their conflict with the Saxons, one of the barons decides to put Merlin's ability to foretell the future to a real test and so demands to know precisely how he will die. In reply to him, Merlin, who is naturally quite aware he is being tested, confuses the baron with three answers which, on the surface at least, seem to be mutually exclusive.

First, Merlin informs him that he will break his neck:

". . . si sacies bien que le iour que vous morres vous  
 chares dun cheual & briseres le col & ensi partires celui  
 ior de uo uie" (45:36-7). Sometime later, feigning illness to deceive Merlin, the same baron again asks him how he will leave this life; to this Merlin replies that he will hang himself: "cel ior fait merlins que tu moras  
 seras tu troue pendu & penderas la ou tu moras" (46:14-15).

A third attempt, this time arising out of a situation to trick Merlin, sees the baron in an abbey where he is told he will drown himself. Subsequently, Merlin reveals that he has seen through his ruse (indeed, the ability to do so

is merely one other aspect of his supernatural powers), and even though he admits that he is predicting three different ways in which the baron will die, Merlin is prepared to defend himself and to prove his credibility; "Sil ne muert ensi fait merlins dont ne me crees iamais de chose que ie vous die . Ie sai bien sa mort & la uostre ausi" (46:41-2). Later, the prophecy is, in fact, found to be accurate, for the baron, riding across a bridge is thrown from his horse and breaks his neck. At the same time, as he hangs suspended from the reins of his horse, his head and shoulders are submerged in the water below. Witnesses to the incident exclaim: ". . . quant cil loirent si sen esmeruelloient moult & dient uoirement dist voir merlins qui dist que cis hons briserait le col & penderoit & noieroit . & moult est fols qui ne croit merlin de quanquil dist que il nous samble que toutes ses paroles sont voires" (47:34-7).

This episode in the adventures of Merlin is, however, one of the very few and certainly the last, occasion on which Merlin reveals the truth in such an open manner for, from this point on, he conceals the meaning of his words in ambiguous terms. In other words the truth--reality--is usually masked by an illusion created purposely by Merlin to confuse those toward whom his prophecy is directed. They, in turn, must attempt to penetrate the ambiguity of this Delphic revelation if they would know the truth. Although his words may be obscure they will invariably reveal



that truth at some future point in time.

By this time, however, there are few who doubt Merlin's ability and thus he really need not continue to prove himself, for his reputation and his credibility have already been established not only with the reader but also with those to whom he displays his remarkable talents. The fact that he possesses such talents can no longer be denied; that he will use them for good rather than evil is assured.

After the episode in which he foretells the bizarre three-fold death of the baron, Merlin's prophecies undergo a fundamental change in technique--a technique now marked by ambiguous words and phrases originating in a desire on Merlin's part to tell only what he feels should be disclosed at any given moment and to withhold information from those about him for reasons known only to himself. Thus, when he informs Uter and Pandragon of the impending death of one of them, he does so in the first instance because he wishes ". . . que vous soies ambedoi preudomme . . ." (50:14) and not simply because he is determined to conceal the reality of the situation in half-truths. Since he does possess this unique ability to foresee the future, Merlin is able to understand fully the consequences of any actions he might take. Invariably, he takes seriously the tremendous responsibility which this implies and with honourable intentions, he directs his motives toward positive goals.

Consequently actions which at a given moment may seem to be open to challenge or to question by those whose ability is inferior to his own, prove, without exception, to be aligned with the powers for good.

In his prediction of the impending death of Pandragon and the survival of his brother Uter in their battle with the Saxons at Salisbury, Merlin makes reference to a red dragon: ". . . vous uerres aler . j . dragon en lair uermeil & courra entre chiel & terre. & quant tu auras ueu lenseigne de ton non si te pues combatre seurement car tes gens auront la uictoire" (51:5-7). The precise nature of the beast is not immediately and positively known until, at a later hour, Merlin reveals its significance and proves, incidentally, his worth to the young king: ". . . & dist que li dragons estoit venus senefier la mort pandragon & le saluement vter & que il fu mesauenu al roy por la mort de lui & por la senefiance de la bataille . Et por le moustre del dragon fu puis a tous iors mais apeles vterpandragons. & ensi si fist apeler des lor en avant . & ensi sorent que li commandement auoient este boin que merlins avoit enseignie & conseillie as . ii . freres" (52:13-19).

Indeed, Merlin once again draws attention to his value to the king and further reveals his genuine affection for him and his people by giving to them concrete proof of his super-natural powers. Having sent to Ireland for huge

stones for the grave of Pandragon, Merlin proves to be the only one who can move them; this he does with his magic, bringing them to Salisbury unseen by anyone. Merlin insists that these same stones be erected upright, knowing full well that no one will be able to carry out his orders. It is not surprising then that Uter (who by now has assumed his brother's name as well as his own and calls himself Uterpandragon), already astounded by Merlin's feat in bringing the stones, protests that there is no way he and his people can ever hope to accomplish what Merlin has demanded of them: "Ensi fist merlins les pieres drechier qui encore sont el cymentiere de salebieres & seront tant comme li mondes durera . & ensi remest cele oeure . & merlins sen vint au roy uterpandragon si le serui moult & ama . si auoit lonc tans passe quil sauoit bien ou il auoit mise samor & quil le kerroit de ce quil diroit" (53:12-16). When Merlin ultimately performs this task for them, the bond between him and the king is permanently established.

Further proof of Merlin's power and the accuracy of his predictions (if indeed by this time this still needs to be proved), is revealed to Uterpandragon as the "plus haus consaus" which Merlin possesses. Drawing obvious parallels between the table made at God's request by Joseph of Arimathea as a resting place for the Holy Vessel and Christ's table at which He partook of the Last Supper, Merlin likewise bids Uterpandragon construct a table in Wales--the

famous Round Table around which Arthur and his knights will one day be seated. Once again Merlin withholds certain vital details from the court. In this instance, a single vacant seat which he leaves at the table must remain unoccupied by anyone until long after Uterpandragon's death, for: ". . . cil qui lacomplira nest encore mie engendres" (56:5). But once again, Merlin's wisdom is doubted and once again the dubious barons decide to put him to the test. Unfortunately the results are just as disastrous for the knight who tries to occupy the vacant seat as for him who had earlier sought to learn the nature of his own death. ". . . et iestoit tant quil ot mis ses quises sor le siege & lors fondi ausi comme vne plombee de plomb et ensi fu perdus uoiant tous que nus ne sauoit quil estoit deuenus" (57:20-2). Only much later, in the Queste del Saint Graal is the truth of Merlin's words concerning the one who will ultimately occupy the seat clearly shown. In the meantime, Merlin has once again established his credibility but what is, perhaps, even more significant, in so doing he has forever and irrevocably linked his actions directly to the power of God.

Many of the prophecies which Merlin now makes are fulfilled only with the passage of time; there can be no question about the inevitability nor the accuracy of his words. He tells Arthur that Gauvain will be ". . . li plus loiaus cheualiers qui onques nasquist enuers son seignor si sera .

j . des boins cheualiers del monde & qui plus vous amera  
& vous essauchera tant comme il viura enuers tout le monde  
nis enuers son pere . & ne doutes onques que se sera cil  
par qui vous raures toute uostre terre si seront tout uostre  
homme par doutance de lui vers vous humiliant & obeisant"

(96:35-8). This proves to be true, even though, at the time, he can offer no real assurance that this will be so. Furthermore Merlin predicts the value to Arthur of all the sons of King Lot, but in particular that of Ban and Bohort, who, he insists, will come to his aid in his time of need. Arthur is also told of impending problems with his illegitimate son Mordret: "Et saci[es] que li rois loth a . v . fils de sa feme dont tu engendras lun a londres quant tu estoies escuiers . & il sont biau vallet si a non li aisnes gauains & li autres agrauains . & li tiers gerrehes . & li quars ghaheries & li plus ionnes mordre" (96:30-3). Again:

". . . dautre part en issi mordret qui fu li maines que li rois artus engendra si vous dirai comment" (128:27-8); and again: ". . . la keue qui estoit toute tortice senefie la grant traison de sa gent par qui il fu puis trais qui se reuelerent contre lui par mordret son fils quil engendra en sa seror . . ." (265:1-3). The dire predictions which run as a leitmotif through the text culminate in a warning of the terrible consequences which must necessarily follow sometime in the distant future when: ". . . li fils ochira le pere et li peres le fil & ce sera en ceste misme place

& a celui ior demoura la terre de la grant bertaigne sans signors & sans hoir" (385:29-30). All of these prognostications ultimately prove to be correct, but they do not become fact until later volumes of the Vulgate Cycle, in this case, in the Mort Artu.

Reluctant to reveal to Arthur any more than he has already told him and unwilling to explain what he has said with less ambiguity, ". . . quil li die vne partie de ces choses plus clerement" (385:32), Merlin simply leaves him with more obscure information concerning the future ". . . apres ceste iournee uendra li lions sans corone et amenra avoec li . iii . lions dont li doi seront corone . & cil troi deuoreront le maluaise lignie del roialme de logres ne plus ne men enqueres fait Merlin si alons as barons ensi comme ie vous ai dit" (385:33-36).

While it is not within the scope of this study to examine in detail the validity of all the predictions which Merlin makes, we shall allude to a few of the more important ones. Perceiving correctly the situation in which his own life is endangered by Vortiger's clerks, who until now have been unable to explain to the King why his tower is collapsing, Merlin confronts them with their treachery. Fearing for their own safety, they confess to a plot to kill Merlin to save themselves. To the King they admit their guilt: "& li rois ior demande sil dist voir . Sire font il si voirement

nous face dieux saus de nos pecies com il a uoir dit . . .  
 si te proions comme a nostre signor que tu nous laisses  
 uiure tant que nous uoions sil dira uoir de ceste tor ne  
 sele tenra par lui" (31:27-30). Merlin then reveals the  
 true nature of the problem they have been asked to solve,  
 telling the king of the two dragons and a great quantity of  
 water beneath the footings of the tower. Merlin predicts a  
 battle which he says must occur between these two dragons,  
 the red one and the white one--a battle in which the white  
 dragon will ultimately prevail over its rival and slay it.

Merlin will reveal no more than this and although the signi-  
 ficance of the great battle is not to be taken lightly, he  
 says that ". . . ie ne uous en dirai plus deuant apres la  
 bataille" (33:8). Vortiger still wishes to know how the  
 red dragon could be defeated by the white one and, promising  
 Merlin freedom from any harm to his person, he learns from  
 him the real meaning of the two beasts. Once again Merlin  
 foretells the future: Vortiger, the red dragon, must die  
 at the hands of the sons of Constans as a consequence of  
 the wrongs the former has committed. The accuracy of his pre-  
 dictions is soon proved by the death of Vortiger and Merlin's  
 reputation is further enhanced, not only because he has  
 never been proved wrong in revealing the future here or  
 elsewhere, but also because his predictions tend to work on  
 behalf of the powers of good against those of evil, the latter  
 in this instance are represented by Vortiger.

As far as his own end is concerned, Merlin is equally secretive and obscure. He reveals to Blaise that he is, in fact, aware of his own fate as well, but he purposely refuses to reveal any more to him than a few vague comments about the lion and the wolf. Merlin insists that he cannot frustrate the certainty of this prophecy even if he should want to do so. Nor does he comment any further on his revelation concerning the impending battles with the Saxons and the prowess of the leopard. "Mais ne vous chaut de moi plus enquerre car bien saures encore que ce porra estre . & vous meismes le uerres a vos iex ains que vous morres ce sacies de voir" (207:18-20). Suffice it to say at this point that Merlin has revealed aspects of the truth and that this truth is synonymous with the will of God.

Again Merlin prophesies to King Ban events which will occur sometime in the future when he indicates that the dragon will drive out the lion from Britain and then after the battle ". . . sera li grans liepars engendres qui tant sera fiers et orgueilleus par qui criesme li grans dragons des illes lontaines se traira arriere du grant lyon corone de la bloie bertaigne si que point de mal ne li fera & si en aura bien le pooir . mais en la fin le iusticera li liepars quil le fera aienoillier deuant le lyon ausi comme por merchi crier" (214:34-38). But once again he refuses to reveal anything more specific than the obscure words "celes obscures paroles" (214:41-2) which he has spoken.



The truth of these words will become known only later, but it will, we are assured, be within the lifetime of King Arthur. The oblique references to dragons, leopards, wolves, lions and, later, bears which recur throughout the text are consistent with the truth which Merlin has to reveal. Again he alludes to them after he has told Arthur that he, Merlin, must leave him, but he reveals no more than this: ". . . li lyons qui est fiex del ourse & qui engendres fu du lupart coura par le royalme de logres & cest le besoigne" (419:39-40).

We shall return to some of these predictions in another context below, but for the present, suffice it to say that each is ultimately proved to be accurate and correct by events which later unfold. Some are verified almost immediately, whereas others must await the fullness of time before their aspect of truth is made clear. In every instance the prophecies made refer to events which are of no minor consequence when they eventually do take place and thus when considered from a structural standpoint each is vitally important to the plot. They are concerned with such events as the coming of the perfect knight, Galahad, and his quest for the Holy Grail, with the vacant seat, with the alliance of Ban's kin with Arthur until the fateful day of judgement on Salisbury Plain and with the appearance of Lancelot (the leopard) whose adventures occupy the next three volumes of the Vulgate Cycle. Indeed Arthur's entire

reign is foretold from his final victory over Vortiger and the Saxons which allows the establishment of the Round Table and the choosing of the many knights who gather there, through the description of the subsequent adventures of these knights who are associated with it, to Arthur's final demise on Salisbury Plain. Finally there is a purely functional purpose which allows the author to use Merlin's many prophecies and predictions to create tension and to arouse a certain curiosity in his readers.

We are aware of the deception which accompanied the birth of Merlin: how a devil secretly seduces a virtuous maiden without her knowledge, thus engendering Merlin who then acts as a positive force within the Arthurian legends. Significantly, however, his is not the only birth which comes about as a result of such deceit. Arthur, too, is the product of a union which could only occur after a great deal of intrigue, confusion and lies. Uterpandragon falls in love with Igerne, but, unfortunately, she is forbidden fruit, for she is already the wife of the Duke of Tintagel. Revealing his passion to a councillor, Ulfen, Ulfen, in turn, informs the lady of the King's affection for her. Dismayed by this turn of events, she accuses Uterpandragon through Ulfen of treacherous and deceitful behaviour. "Et ele lieue sa main si se saine & dist diex comme li rois est traitres quil fait samblant de mon signor amer & moi & lui ueut il hounir" (60:20-22). On Ulfen's advice, Uterpandragon

sends a golden cup to Igerne from which the unsuspecting Duke ". . . qui nul mal ni pensoit" (61:1-2) drinks and he bids her drink "for the love of the King." Angry at this turn of events, Igerne tries to conceal her wrath. She chastises Ulfin accusing him once again of treason. When once the Duke becomes aware of the King's intentions toward his wife, he flees the festival at which Uterpandragon is entertaining them and the other nobles. In so doing, the Duke acts against the expressed commands of the King. He gives Uterpandragon just cause to attack his castle--but in vain. No hope for a successful siege, save for the possible assistance of Merlin, seems to remain open to the King and so, in return for a boon from Uterpandragon, Merlin promises his aid. His plan, like that of the Devil who seduced the virtuous maiden, Merlin's mother, is pure deceit. Merlin assumes the form of Bretel, the Duke's trusted servant; Uter acquires the likeness of the Duke himself, while Ulfin becomes Jordain. Clearly their intentions are less than honourable and indeed this proves to be the case when Uterpandragon lies with Igerne and Arthur is subsequently conceived without Igerne even knowing that she has lain with him and not her husband. The episode is, of course, obviously necessary for the continuance of the plot so that the structural significance of the event, like that of Merlin's several predictions of the future, is really quite unmistakable, since this episode provides the

essential link between Merlin, Uterpandragon and Arthur--a link which is even more closely forged through the repetition of the mystery of the precise date on which Igerne will be delivered.

However, on the surface of things, there would seem to be a discrepancy in Merlin's behaviour when he relies on deception, using Uterpandragon as the means to an end (the seduction of another man's wife and the subsequent birth of a child) the achievement of which, at least initially, would appear questionable at best. How could an individual, evidently working for the powers of good, justify actions such as these? By demanding a boon (in itself a sort of deception), the nature of which is unknown to the King and quite beyond even his wildest imagination, Merlin manages to achieve his own clearly stated ends: "Ie voeil que vous sachies que vous aues engendre . j . oir male en ygerne & ce est chou que tu mas doune que tu ne le dois pas auoir & tel pooir comme tu y auras tu le me dounas" (68:17-19).

For this reason there can be little doubt concerning these intentions and the goal toward which he has directed his deceit. Clearly Merlin has been portrayed as a power for good to this point; he has even been linked, however tenuously, through the commissioning of the Round Table to a similar commission ordered by Christ of Joseph of Arimathea. Thus there can be no question concerning the positive nature of his motives, and if he is to be portrayed

consistently, we must assume that the end he achieves (i.e., the birth of Arthur) justifies the means to that end. Nor is Uterpandragon in any way criticised for his part in the deception of Igerne, for even on his death-bed, Merlin refers to him as ". . . li roi que vous tant amies" (79:10). He is buried with much ceremony and amidst many tears. But the real justification of Merlin's actions is not revealed until some time after the death of Uterpandragon. Merlin, who by now commands the respect of the people, informs them that they must wait until Christmas to select a new king and that at that time Christ will guide them in their choice: ". . . & bien sachiez se vous ensi le faites que vous uerres senefianche de lelexion ihesu crist" (80:19-20). That Arthur is ultimately chosen after he has withdrawn the sword from the stone in front of the cathedral and that even the archbishop of that cathedral approves of their choice in accordance with the miracle they have witnessed is further proof of the positive goal toward which Merlin guided Uterpandragon in that decisive moment of deceit.

Ironically, the link between Arthur and Merlin is forged not only as a result of the active intervention of the latter in the birth of the King, but also by the fact that both are conceived in deception. Later, unaware that Lot's wife is his own sister, Arthur lies with her in the absence of her husband and Mordret is conceived. Believing him to be her husband who has, in the meantime, quietly slipped

away without her knowledge to confer with his barons, she suspects nothing when Arthur approaches her. ". . . la dame sesueilla & se tourna deuers lui comme feme endormie si quida uraiement que ce fust ses sires si lenbracha" (129:16-17). It is, of course, Mordret who, as Merlin predicts during the battle before Trebes, will one day betray his own father and contribute to the destruction of the Kingdom of Logres. Significantly, in the symbol of the dragon, the dire consequences leading to this disaster are foretold. Again Arthur is warned by Merlin of the inevitability of the events which he predicts when two opposing armies will confront each other on the Salisbury Plain and father and son, Arthur and Mordret, will kill one another. From a structural point of view then, the significance of the conception of Mordret can hardly be underestimated, for it is the catalyst which sets in motion the ultimate tragedy of the Vulgate Cycle. We shall examine the details of these events in the chapter which deals with the Mort Artu.

Merlin's weakest moments are clearly those which are experienced in the company of Viviane for whom he is prepared to do virtually anything if only he can win her over to be his love. He first meets her when, in the disguise of a very handsome valet, he comes upon her, a twelve-year-old, at a fountain. "Et quant merlins la uit si laremira moult anchois quil dist mot . si dist que moult seroit fols se il sendormoit en son pechie quil en perdist son sens & son

savoir por avoir le deduit dune damoisele & lui honir & dieu perdre" (209:38-41). All of this is, however, in accordance with a prediction made to her mother sometime before the birth of Viviane. Unconcerned with the fact that he is about to become the central figure in a story of deceit which will culminate in his own eternal imprisonment, Merlin begins to reveal his secrets to Viviane. Her motives are not as noble as his own and when she promises him her love if he will teach her the arts which he commands, he is prepared to believe her, even though she, as a woman, will deceive him. Indeed, although Merlin, master of disguise and deception himself, seems unable to perceive the dire consequences of his actions, Blaise expresses a fear that no good can come of Merlin's infatuation. ". . . si en pesa moult a blaise car paor ot quele ne le decheust . . ."

(256:22). Clearly, Viviane is about to pervert Merlin's powers for good by using the knowledge he imparts to her for evil ends. Finally prying from him the concession that he would teach her how to make a man fall asleep, ostensibly so that she could be alone with Merlin without interference from her father, Viviane then uses her newly-learned powers to prevent Merlin or anyone else from lying with her: ". . . & por cou dist on que li feme a . j . art plus qui li diables" (280:37). Gradually she acquires all the knowledge he possesses, until finally she is able to control him completely by her magic powers. Since Merlin

has not wished to heed the warnings Blaise has given him even though he is quite aware of her intentions to detain him, he acquiesces to what turns out to be her final request: to teach her ". . . comment iou porroie . j . homme enserrer sans tour & sans mur & sans fer par enchantement" (451:38-39). From this spell, Merlin can never escape, for in spite of his wisdom he acted foolishly: "Et iou fui si fols que iaim plus autrui que moi" (461:37). But even though Merlin is no longer able to exercise a direct influence on events through personal contact, he is never really forgotten, for the prophecies which he has made still remain to be fulfilled in later volumes of the Vulgate Cycle.

One of the methods of direct contact which Merlin uses to good advantage is the disguise. Possessing the power to change his shape at will into that of an old man, an ugly man, a handsome man, a beggar or even a stag, Merlin assumes many shapes and forms throughout the work. His reasons for doing so are quite clearly linked with his desire to speak only in obscure terms. Only to those who seek him out will he reveal himself and even then, only on his own terms. Disguised as a beggar, he makes this point when the baron sends a messenger to seek him out: ". . . & il [Merlin as the beggar] respont ie lai [Merlin] ueu . . . mais vous ne le troueres mie sil ne veut" (37:5-7). And again: "Mais ales vous ent en aucune de uos uilles près deci et il venra



a vous quant il saura que vous latendes" (38:16-18).

The reason for Merlin's disguises and the motivation behind them are definitely not unclear, for even though they are destined to deceive for at least a period of time, they are inevitably designed to reach out for the truth and reveal it--a purpose which is consistent with Merlin's role as a power for good against the forces of evil. When he saves Uter from certain death: ". . . ie prins semblance uielle & chaitiue & parlai a lui a conseil . si li dis bien sil ne se gardast moult bien cele nuit que il li couenroit morir" (40:21-3), his motives cannot be doubted: ". . . vous mauas ia tant fait & tant dit se ce est uoir que vous mauas monstre que mes freres a salue se vie par vous & que ie ne vous doi iamais mescroire ne douter" (40:31-33). His credibility established, Merlin's words as well as his deeds are recognized as a positive force in the kingdom. He insists on openness and the truth in his dealings with the King. "Mais gardes si chier com vous aues mamor que vous ne le dites a autrui car se ie uous trouoie a vne menchoigne ie ne vous kerroie mie vne autre fois & vous i auries plus grant damage que iou nauroie" (40:39-42).

Even Merlin's somewhat light-hearted jest before Uter and Pandragon in which he appears to them in several shapes ". . . por aus metre en ioie & en bele risee . . ." (41,33), has a similar function, for in spite of their confusion arising out of his disguises (they believe he has deceived

them), he ultimately reveals to them that even though he cannot remain with them, he will reappear to assist them whenever he is needed. That assistance will, to be sure, be directly connected to the revelation of truth and the destruction of illusion for the purpose of good. To Arthur, too, Merlin indicates that he will appear in many forms in order to help him in his time of need. "Mais tu uerras men cors maintes fois en autre samblance que tu nel uois ore car ie ne voeil mie que toute la gent me connoissent a toutes les fois que ie parlerai a toi" (97:27-29).

While Merlin's disguises tend to be a means of exposing evil and promoting the truth, there is another essential function--again a structural one--which they seem to fulfill. Merlin's appearances are timed in such a way that his presence usually advances the plot by stimulating it to take a new direction. By acting as the catalyst in a turning-point Merlin's presence adds new dimension to the plot itself.

Gauvain, one of the sons of Lot and the nephew of King Arthur, meets Merlin in three different guises on three successive occasions. The latter's presence as an old man, loudly bemoaning the fate of several young squires in Camelot, piques Gauvain's interest and curiosity so that he immediately becomes involved in the situation. This involvement leads directly to a turning-point in the story for Gauvain promises the old man (Merlin) his assistance

and subsequently learns from him that he must aid Sagremor against the Saxons. Thus Gauvain makes the acquaintance of Sagremor. Once again Merlin assumes a new form, this time that of an armed knight, and twice he advises Gauvain to retreat to Camelot before the forces of the Saxons. Recognizing the validity of his warning, Gauvain and Sagremor head for Camelot with their people and soon reach the safety of the city. By now, the lives of Gauvain and Sagremor are closely intertwined with one another. Later, as a direct result of the intervention of Merlin who accuses Guerrehes, Agravain and Gaheriet of cowardice, the adventures of these three are brought together with those of Gauvain and Sagremor, for the former find themselves compelled to seek Merlin out until they have found him. For a time, having found Merlin's horse, its saddle covered in blood, they fear he has been slain and together they search the countryside for his body, but they find nothing, for Merlin has already assumed yet another form--that of a young boy.

The purpose for this disguise is quite clear: Merlin continues to direct the course of the battle in his own purposeful but secretive way, guiding events until the ultimate outcome for which he is striving has been attained. Consequently when Merlin assumes the shape of a boy and delivers a letter to Gauvain, leading him to believe it is from Yvain le Grand, he does so because he is aware of the fact that he and Yvain l'Avoutre are in dire need of assistance

and that he, Merlin, is the only one who can provide it by alerting Gauvain to come to succour them. Once again Merlin acts as a catalyst, bringing various characters together for further development of the action. Even though the letter Gauvain receives is later revealed not to have been sent by Yvain le Grand, Merlin's purpose in using this small bit of deception is obviously justified. Not only does the adventure complicate the plot and add interest to the story, it also further emphasizes Merlin's commitment to the forces of good against those of the evil Saxons: ". . . Certes ie [Yvain] ne vous enuoiai onques letre iour de ma vie ne ie ne sauoie de vous nules noueles quant diex nostre sires vous i enuoia en tel point comme vous me veistes . car tout y fuissimes ochis ou prins & retenus se si tost ne fuissies venus" (198:6-9). Each appearance of Merlin in disguise advances the plot and increases the interest of the reader in it by providing those who are on the side of good with invaluable advice which they would otherwise not possess; thus Merlin actively directs the affairs of the kingdom. That he does so is clearly indicative of the fact that he loves the people of Uterpandragon, and later of Arthur, and that he is working on their behalf. Because of Merlin's obvious alliance with God and the forces for good, it is an incontestable fact that God, too, is on their side.

Similarly when Gauvain's mother is taken prisoner by the Saxons, it is another disguise of Merlin which, as it seems

on the surface of things, fortuitously leads Gauvain to her. Out of the incident describing her rescue comes a further critical moment in the narration, for Gauvain and his brothers come to a decision not to take her back to King Lot, her husband, until he has sworn to give up the conflict which he has carried on against Arthur. Thus Merlin's intervention leads to an ultimate union between the two former enemies in accordance with God's greater plan for the Kingdom of Logres. It must be clearly understood at this point that Merlin himself acts as an instrument of God, for no matter how powerful and influential Merlin may be, he is never able to act outside the will of God: ". . . mais iou feroie pecie se iou destournoie ce que nostre sires ma doune tant de sens & de discretion comme iai por aidier acomplir les auentures del saint graal . . ." (207:15-17).

One other interesting disguise which Merlin uses to his advantage arises out of the episode involving the Emperor Julius Caesar who, like so many others in the Vulgate Cycle has a dream which he cannot interpret. In it, he observes before his palace a large sow clothed in silk and wearing a golden crown on its head. The animal seems familiar to him but he cannot place it exactly. As he watches, twelve wolves appear and approach the sow. The Emperor, perplexed by what he has seen, ponders what the dream could possibly mean. At this point, Merlin, in the guise of a stag which is being pursued through the streets of Rome, makes his way

into the palace where he prophetically explains to Caesar that only a wild man can explain his dream. In vain, Caesar's knights search for either the stag or the wild man. In the meantime, the deception of disguise deepens as the Emperor's squire, a beautiful girl, Avenable, who is dressed as the boy, Grisandoles, leaves the palace and retreats to the woods where she prays for guidance. Significantly Merlin, as the stag, happens upon her--not merely by chance--and tells her how to find the wild man who is, of course, Merlin himself. As a result of this advice, Grisandoles is able to capture Merlin, put him in chains and ultimately deliver him to the Emperor. Before she can do this however the wild man inexplicably laughs boisterously first at Grisandoles, then at poor people before an abbey and finally in a chapel where a squire thrice strikes his master as he listens to mass.

The laughter which is so important to this particular sequence of events must be seen in the same light as the obscure phrases which Merlin is wont to utter in his predictions. Thus the laughter conceals a truth as yet unknown to Grisandoles but one which will soon be revealed to those concerned. After the wild man has been delivered to Caesar, he is compelled to interpret the dream of the sow and the wolves which has so perplexed the Emperor. Explaining that the sow is Caesar's wife and that the twelve wolves are the young men disguised as maidens with whom the

Empress spends her time when Caesar is away, Merlin arouses the Emperor's anger and he subsequently has all of them put to death. In this way, Merlin once again succeeds in dispelling illusion in order to reveal a truth which has been camouflaged by deceit and which, not uncharacteristically for the Vulgate Cycle, originates with a woman. "Car par feme sont maint preudomme houni & deceu et mainte ville arse et destruite & mainte terre essilie" (289:26-27). However the accusation levelled against the wife of the Emperor would seem to hold true for her alone in this particular instance and not for women in general. She was clearly an evil woman whose husband, the Emperor, was far superior to her. Caesar's later marriage to the good woman, Avenable, is a blessed event and they live happily ever after.

The scenes which are immediately linked to Merlin, the wild man, contain a number of revelations and interpretations which must be considered in order to explain certain prior events. The laughter of the wild man, for instance, is quite significant insofar as it represents an insight through illusion into the truth of the situation which Merlin perceives. He recognizes, for example, Grisandoles' (i.e., Avenable's) true nature and her real worth, even though the Emperor is unable to recognize either her physical disguise or her real inner value to him. With his first outburst of laughter then, Merlin was clearly saying that

" . . . Grisandoles est la plus bele feme & la plus boine de

tout vostre terre & sest pucele" (289:16-17). In the abbey, Merlin laughed because the beggars had no idea a treasure lay hidden beneath their feet. His third outburst of laughter indicates that he is quite aware of the worthlessness of the Empress and has seen through her. In each instance, Merlin is in possession of a truth which is concealed from the others about him.

Similarly, the three involuntary blows which the squire delivered to his knight as the latter listened to mass are also significant, for they, too, are indicative of hidden truths which Merlin reveals only sometime later. These truths, however, arising in connection with the events involving Merlin, the wild man, reveal somewhat more universal truths and serve an essentially didactic purpose. The first blow ". . . senefie que par lauoir deuient li homs orgueilleus . . ." (290:11-12); the succeeding one ". . . senefie le riche vserier ki se baigne en son tresor . . ." (290:17-18), while the last ". . . senefie les faus pledeors ki uendent & enpruntent lor uoisins . . ." (290:24-25). This, he insists, run counter to the will of God: "Mais diex li tous poissans ki tout seit & tout voit le uaut ensi por prendre exsample kil ne uoloit pas ke li homs fust enorguellis por auoir" (290:29-31).

Although letters then appear over the doorway indicating that the wild man and the stag are Merlin in two different disguises, no further explanation is offered concerning the



stag, and Caesar and his knights are left wondering what all of this really means.

Another one of Merlin's many disguises involves his appearance as a young knight before Ban and the gorgeous daughter of Agravadain whose beauty and charm have captivated him. Merlin, of course, is committed to love Viviane, and so, in a gesture which borders on wish-fulfillment he conjures up a spell to bring her and King Ban together in love: ". . . puis que iou ne le puis auoir iou le ferai auoir au roy ban . puis fist . j . coniurement tout simplement & tantost comme il lot fait li rois bans & la fille agravadain amoient lun lautre moult durement" (404:4-6). Later, he goes a step further, and by means of further spells, causes the daughter of Agravadain to lie with Ban and to conceive a child, Hector, who is destined to become one of the most famous knights of the Round Table. Once again, by his actions and his intervention in the affairs of mere mortals, Merlin further urges the action of the story forward. Acting as a power for good, he brings about the birth of an important figure whose role at the Round Table is quite significant.

As one might expect from earlier discussion on the nature of dreams in the Estoire another aspect of the interrelation between truth and illusion is to be found in the dreams which the Merlin contains. These tend, however, to play a somewhat more minor role when they are compared with

those in either the Estoire or the Queste. In general, they tend to serve a very simple and basic function: to reveal in advance the nature of certain events which would otherwise go unnoticed by the characters involved until the occurrence of the event itself. Inevitably the interpretation of the dream in Merlin discloses the truth of the situation, and once the symbolism of the dream has been understood, there is little room for error.

We have already alluded to the vision of truth which was revealed to the Emperor Julius Caesar to disclose the treachery and deceit of his wife, but there are other such occurrences which deserve some consideration. The first of these relates the details of a dream in which King Lot is buffeted by high winds, the gusts of which howl about the houses of the village as well as the tower of the cathedral. These natural forces are then followed by thunder, earthquakes and floodwaters which wreak havoc among men as well as their dwellings: ". . . & ensi comme il dormoient si auint que li rois loth feri en . j . soigne moult fort & moult espoentable . Car il li estoit auis quil ueoit vn uent leuer si grant & si fort quil abatoit tous lor maisons & le clochier del monstier . Et apres vint . j . tounoires & . j . espars si grans que tous li mondes trambloit de paor" (113:28-32). The dream is interpreted by his companions as a forewarning of a great battle which must take place--a battle which, in fact, does occur to the distress

of the rebels who are routed by victorious Arthur. At this point Merlin appears to Arthur and forbids him and his knights from pursuing their adversaries any further. Shortly thereafter, Merlin again appears before Arthur, who fails to recognize him in the guise of a shabby hunter, carrying a bow with which he brings down two ducks. In response to Arthur's request to purchase the birds, the fellow offers them to him for nothing and tells the King of Merlin's impending visit. At this point it seems Arthur is less observant than either Bretel or Ulfin, both of whom recognize Merlin immediately. When he finally does become aware, Arthur realizes Merlin's great love for him. ". . . or sai iou bien que vous mames . . ." (124:5).

Queen Helaine, too, has an unusual dream in which she observes two hosts of beasts led by two lions, one of which wears a crown and leads with him eighteen smaller lions and four hundred bulls. The other of the two larger beasts is accompanied by thirty smaller lions. In the battle which ensues between the two, the crowned lion beats a retreat before his adversary. Suddenly a leopard intervenes, aiding first the crowned and then the uncrowned lion, thus forcing the former to sue for peace (277:16-278:23).

Upon asking her husband Ban what significance the dream she has experienced could possibly have, Helaine reveals her great fear of the future. Then Ban, himself, also has a dream in which a voice tells him he may die whenever he

wishes it. Following this, he hears thunder and sees great flashes of lightning. Once again Merlin has a role to play, this time in the interpretation of the dream, for like most dreams in the Vulgate Cycle, this one too requires clarification concerning its meaning. But Merlin purposely reveals only a portion of what he knows and ". . . del tout el tot nel vous doi ie mie esclairier car nel voeil pas faire . Mais toutes uo[i]es vous en dirai iou vne partie tant comme a moi affiert" (279:35-37). Consequently, he discloses only that the crowned lion is a powerful king; his lesser companions represent eighteen kings. The four hundred bulls are all good knights with which he attempts to protect his lands. The unexpected arrival of the proud leopard represents the appearance of a proud knight, the best of his age, who will put an end to the quarrels between the two kings. After Merlin's revelation the dream is more confusing than ever before, but he will tell them no more. Clearly, the dream alludes to the coming of Lancelot in the next volume of the work, but for the present, it serves only as a foretaste of the future, as a prophecy of what is to come, linking the present to the future.

In a similar situation, Merlin again interprets a dream, but this time he remains invisible to those to whom he reveals its meaning. In this instance, he discloses the hidden truth of the dream of King Flualis (420:13-29) who imagines that he and his wife have been seized by two

two-headed monsters who carry them to the highest points of their castle. Here they are dismembered and their limbs cast to the winds. Eight smaller serpents then take possession of the limbs and tear them into even smaller pieces. Their bodies are subsequently burned and the ashes scattered to the winds. Merlin's interpretation of this is unique for he discloses what he knows about the dream only as a voice and not in his physical concrete form: "Et merlins qui estoit en tel samblance que nus ne le pooit connoistre ne ueoir parla apres ce que tout orent parle si haut que tout cil de laiens le porent oir tout clerement . . ." (420:38-41). Flualis then learns that the monsters who come to him spitting fire and flame are two Christian kings who will lay waste his lands and convert him and his wife to Christianity. Soon the prediction which Merlin has made is realized but the king and his queen are not slain by the servants but are baptized as Merlin has said. They raise a large number of children, all of whom are devout Christians and many of them become good knights. Some of them even go to serve King Arthur. Thus, here as elsewhere, the dream has the simple function of forecasting the future. Structurally, of course, it has the effect of linking the present with the future--one portion of the story with another.

One final dream--this one a dream of Arthur himself--is worth noting. While crossing the Channel, Arthur witnesses a vision which perplexes him and he seeks out Merlin to have

him interpret the meaning of the strange occurrences of the dream. As he slept, Arthur saw a great bear on a mountain and a dragon spitting fire and flame as it approached the bear. In spite of a mighty defence put up by the bear, the dragon defeated it and slew it. Merlin reveals to Arthur that the dragon is Arthur himself; the bear signifies a great giant come to these lands to instill fear in the hearts of all those who come into contact with him. But it is predicted that Arthur will win out over the giant and kill him, thus relieving the land of a scourge which is upon it. Shortly thereafter Arthur sets out to find this giant who inhabits Mont St. Michel off the coast of Brittany, and in accordance with the predictions of Merlin, he is successful in his battle with him and returns victorious to his people. As on so many occasions, the advice and the predictions by Merlin are proved to be true. Arthur realizes that he can rely on Merlin whenever he is in need of him, for he will always reveal to him the truth of a given situation. All Arthur need do is follow Merlin's advice. No matter what the problem, no matter what the situation, that advice never deceives Arthur. Whether he is foretelling the future, uttering a warning or revealing a hidden truth, Merlin, as a power for good, can be trusted implicitly.

Finally Arthur is told by Merlin that he must leave forever. "Et li rois & la roine li prient moult doucement de tost reuenir quar il lor faisoit moult grant soulas & moult grant

compaignie car moult lamoit li roys de grant amour . quar  
en maint besoing li avoit aidie . Et par lui & par son con-  
seil auoit il este rois" (450:36-40). In these lines it is  
made quite clear how dependent Arthur has been on Merlin and  
his prophecies, for without him neither he nor his queen  
would be in the position in which they now find themselves.  
Merlin has continually revealed to them the forces of good  
and succoured them in their struggles against those evil  
elements which would destroy them; indeed, this has been the  
prime function of Merlin from the very beginning.

## CHAPTER IV

### LIVRE D'ARTUS (Sommer, vol. vii)

Because the Livre d'Artus is closely connected to the Vulgate Merlin continuation and, indeed, essentially reproduces the material contained in the first one hundred and fifteen folios,<sup>1</sup> it is perhaps worth alluding briefly to this work in order to complete the total picture, even if, for the most part, the Livre d'Artus seems to stand outside

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<sup>1</sup>In his introduction to the "Inhaltsangabe der Version P des Livre d'Artus" contained in the Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur, volume XVII (1895), p. 5, E. Freymond makes the following observation: "Dieser Prosaroman zerfällt in zwei Teile, von denen der erste allen Handschriften und Incunabeln gemeinsam zu sein scheint. Auch die noch dem XIII. Jahrh. angehörende Handschrift Bibl. Nat. f. f. 337, die ich im folgenden mit P bezeichne, hat diesen ersten Teil, wenn auch mit im grossen und ganzen nicht erheblichen Änderungen und Erweiterungen. Nahezu zwei Fünftel der übrigens nicht vollständig erhaltenen, durch P repräsentierten Version sind nichts anderes als eine Überarbeitung des ersten Teils des Livre d'Artus. Die Übereinstimmung mit der Vulgata reicht in P bis zu f<sup>o</sup> 115 r<sup>o</sup>, d. h. bis zu dem Punkte, wo Lot und seine Söhne zu den Artus nicht anerkennenden Baronen gesandt werden, um dieselben zur Versöhnung mit Artus zu veranlassen; von diesem Punkte an weichen die beiden Versionen völlig von einander ab." In their consideration of the relationship between the Vulgate Merlin continuation and the Livre d'Artus, Frederick Whitehead and R. S. Loomis suggest that "... the episodes in the Livre d'Artus which are forecast in the Vulgate Merlin sequel which precedes it were invented to fulfil these anticipations, or borrowed from other sources for the same purpose. In fact, this is the explanation now generally accepted. The Livre d'Artus not only carries out these forecasts but continues the theme of Arthur's wars with the Saxons and reintroduces Merlin in characteristic roles." (A.L.M.A., p. 336).



of the detailed discussion of appearances and reality which we have undertaken to this point. In it, we do find, however, a portrait of Merlin which does not substantially differ from the one which is contained in the continuation and so, reference to it will serve to substantiate comments made concerning the Vulgate Merlin. Thus, one might logically expect that the close relationship which is established between Merlin and Arthur will be continued in the Livre d'Artus. This does, in fact, occur with no significant variation in the method in which Merlin's value to the King is revealed. Here, too, frequent use is made of the disguises which Merlin assumes, and of the illusions such as great storms which he conjures up to confound those whom he has chosen to oppose for Arthur's sake. Prophecies, too, have a role to play as does his infatuation for Niniane (the "Viviane" of the continuation).

On repeated occasions the author makes it quite obvious to the reader that the relationship between Merlin and Arthur is unique; that the former has taken the King into his care and intends to do all he can, using his supernatural powers, to assure Arthur's success in every way and his as well as his followers' continued well-being. Before the city of Clarence, for example, Arthur relies on the advice of Merlin to take the city successfully: "& Merlins uint au roi si li dist quil ne sesmaiaist mie . car la cite auroit il quant luj plairoit . mais que il li donast un don . & li rois dist

quel . & il dist que il le don ne li nomeroit deuant quil li auroit done . & li rois li otroie . . ." (23:48-9). In order to bring about the promise he has made to the King in return for the granting of a boon, Merlin conjures up a great storm of dust, creating havoc among the defenders: "& Merlins comence son art & ne lot mie bien parforni . quant les portes ourirent a une bruiee . & leua uns telx estorbeillons a lentree de la uile que par un petit que cil de la uile ne furent tuit auugle . & Merlins entre enz & li compaignon de la Table Roonde" (24:4-6). When King Urien, unknown to Arthur, abducts Guinevere, Merlin, disguised as a beggar and with Arthur's best interests at heart, informs him of her plight and Arthur is able to free her from Urien. And again, as Arthur is besieging the Doloreuse Garde, the arrival of his nephew Gauvain is greeted with such ecstatic joy after his absence, that the King carelessly neglects to post the necessary guards in the excitement: ". . . on len fist a messire Gauvain la gregnor ioie qui onques mais fust faite por un sol home sausinc non . & li rois & la reine en parfurent lie sor toz les autres & li compaignon de la Table Roonde & entendirent tant a la ioie de luj mener que il en obluerent a metre le gait enuiron lost . & ce fu la chose par quoi il durent estre trop malbailli se ne fust Merlins qui les deliura einsi . . ." (120:48-121:3), and could well have found himself in dire straits had it not been for Merlin's intervention on his behalf. Indeed, initially, Arthur did not ask for Merlin's assistance, nor did he even

know that Merlin was watching over his interests. This becomes clear to him only some time later. Visited by dreams sent by Merlin, both Arthur and Gauvain awaken and are uneasy: ". . . & quant il [Gauvain] sesueilla si fu si durement esfreez quil se leua de son lit & se seigna & uint a Elyezer & demanda ses armes & se comenca a armer . . . li rois Artus sesueille toz esfreez & regarde enuiron luj & uoit son neuueu qui sarmoit . & il lapele & li conte sauision de chief en chief . & messires Gauvain li conta la soe" (121:24-8). Merlin's voice cries out the alarm to them and they are able to preserve their position and carry the day.

Perhaps one of the most significant of Merlin's disguises (although this one is only peripherally connected to Arthur's welfare) is his appearance as the hideous herdsman: ". . . & se mist en guise de pastor une grant macue en sa main afublez dunes granz piaus dont li pels estoit plus lons que li espanz de la plus grosse main que len sache . . ." (124:29-31). This calls to mind a similar ugly herdsman in Chrétien's Yvain from which this description has most likely been adapted. He, too, stimulates Kalogrenant to undertake the adventure associated with the fountain of Broceliande. According to the author of the Merlin, the reason for this particular scene is quite obvious: ". . . li uint a corage que il alast deduire en la forest de Breceiliande & feroit tel chose dont il seroit a toz iors mais parle . . . & lors se tresfigura en autre semblance tel que onques mais nus

hom autele ne uit nen oi parler mes a nul ior" (124:26-9), but as the story unfolds, it becomes evident that there is more to Merlin's actions than this. By stimulating Kalogrenant to attempt the adventure at the fountain of Broceliande, he hopes to frustrate the relationship between his beloved Niniane, who was unfaithful to him, and her lover Brandus. Understandably, Merlin was jealous of the arrangement Niniane had set up for herself and sought to put an end to it. As in the Merlin continuation, however, he cannot overcome his infatuation for her. Kalogrenant's actions do move the plot forward as his relation of the adventure which he undertakes motivates others of the Round Table to try their luck as well and also lead directly into the adventure of the "laide semblance."

The scenes describing the "laide semblance" are also of some importance to our discussion. Threatened by the storms and rising flood-waters associated with it, Arthur consults his clerks and wise men in order to learn what must be done to alleviate the situation, but none, with the exception of Helyes, is able to give Arthur the information which he seeks. Helyes, however, makes it obvious that Arthur must rely once again on the talents of Merlin if they are to see the problem through to a successful conclusion: ". . . uos di ge bien que uos ne trouerroiz home qui uos en puisse deliurer se [ce] nest Merlin . . ." (158:50). Gauvain recognizes Merlin's value to them when he praises him for

bringing them through the adventure safely: ". . . ge ne sai que ge uos die fors que tant que molt a este ce pais en auenture & nos auec . & en peril de mort . & se Merlins ne fust tant preudom & de si bone foi com il nos a este ge deisse que li uns deables enportast lautre en enfer ou li autre malfe habitent" (161:16-19). From these and other episodes, it becomes adequately clear that Merlin has committed himself to those positive forces, which, at this point, Arthur himself represents.

Merlin's role in the Livre d'Artus is again not unlike the one which he plays in the Vulgate Merlin continuation in yet another aspect: his ability to prophesy the future. Once again, he is able to see into the distant times to come and to predict what will happen at a time when he, himself, may or may not be present to witness the events about which he speaks. Thus he warns the young Galehaut, for example, that he will never achieve his goal of conquering thirty kings, including Arthur and the Kingdom of Logres. Appearing to him in the guise of an old hermit, Merlin foretells the coming of the leopard (Lancelot del Lac) who will effectively prevent Galehaut from fulfilling the plans he has made. He reveals an intimate knowledge of Galehaut's innermost soul and when his words are put to the test by the young knight, Merlin causes great storms to arise to prove that the words he has spoken are indeed the truth. Thus Merlin forecasts the coming of Galehaut and his conflict

with Arthur, his encounters with Lancelot and their ultimate devotion for one another which lasts until their dying days.

Merlin has thus made frequent use of both disguise and prophecy in the Livre d'Artus, just as he did in the Vulgate Merlin. His purpose is essentially the same; namely, the protection of Arthur, in whose cause he has clearly identified those positive forces to which he, himself, is unalterably committed. One other aspect of the Livre d'Artus which touches on material to which we shall allude frequently in the Lancelot Proper involves the quest and characters incognito as structural devices of some significance. In this text, however, there is little of the intricacy which, as we shall see, characterizes the quests of the Lancelot, linking the myriad adventures into a coherent whole and constantly giving rise to new episodes as a result of misunderstanding, deception or mistaken identity. Unfortunately, the skill with which this is done in the Lancelot Proper (and to some extent in the Queste) is essentially lacking in the Livre d'Artus.

While it is true that Gauvain, in particular, and, on occasion even Arthur, wish to conceal their identity from those with whom they come into contact, their actions do not give rise to any particularly far-reaching crises or turning points in the development of the plot as they do in the Lancelot Proper. Thus, when Gauvain, disguised as

Daguenet le Coart, sets out to aid Lore de Branlant, he chooses to conceal his identity for no other reason than to avoid detection. Neither Floree, whom he rescues from the Saxons en route nor Lore is told who he is at first and it is some time later, when he lies with Floree and she conceives a son that he finally discloses his name to her. In the meantime, however, Floree has revealed to him her own passion which arises out of the noble deeds which she has heard he has done: ". . . & [ie] pense molt mainte foiee que ge uolsisse molt que il [Gauvain] mamast tant que il meust esposee . & ce fu la pensee que ge oi onques a chevalier . si fis folie car messires Gauvain est riches & orgueilleus por la proesce dom il a tant . quar il ne baeroit a tel pucele amer come ge sui que trop li sui fors main & loing de sa contree & il a entre ci & la dassez plus beles que ge ne suj . si sai bien que ge ai fait folie du pense que ge oi . que il [ne] me daigneroit mie amer"

(86:20-5), as well as the passion of Guinganbresil's sister for him. He learns, too, of the suffering she has had to endure at her brother's hands because of this. She, too, conceives a son when he returns to her, this time in his true form and ostensibly on the recommendation of Daguenet le Coart (i.e., Gauvain).

But none of these intrigues leads to any particular crisis or turning point, nor do they urge the story forward to any real extent--they are simply adventures in which Gauvain,

as a knight in disguise, takes part. Perhaps the only structural motivation of any consequence is that which causes an infuriated Guingambresil to swear revenge on Daguenet and to try to learn his identity. Even this, however, remains shallow in comparison with similar situations which we shall examine in the following chapters.

In the Livre d'Artus the quest has a role to play as it does in both the Queste and the Lancelot Proper, but it remains a pale shadow of those which we shall encounter in these two works. Essentially, the quest in this text involves the disappearance of Arthur, Gauvain and Sagremor who, while hunting, take three separate paths when they reach a cross-roads in the forest. When they fail to return, the knights of the Round Table set out to find them. Thus, the quest provides a framework upon which to hang the various adventures of the three companions and those who are seeking them, but in this instance, there is no question of the search originating in deceit, mistaken identity or misunderstanding as it invariably does in the Lancelot Proper. The three knights approach the crossing and are clearly able to read the warning on the sign posted there: ". . . si regardent les letres qui estoient el braz de la croiz & lisent . & quant il les orent leues si dist li rois a ses compaignons . & il sauoient tuit letres assez . que endroit de lui ne se mouroit il ia ainz iroit quel que part que ses cheuals le porteroit & quil ne retorneroit mes tant quil



auroit ueu ce iaint & autre questeacheuee se plus en i  
 auoit . . . par foi fait Sagremors prenez auant & nos apres  
 . . . " (165:1-7). They embark on their adventures quite  
 aware of the possible consequences in each instance. At  
 this point the structural significance of this event, i.e.,  
 its use as a framework for succeeding adventures, is clearly  
 expressed by the author himself: "einsi se departirent li  
 compaignon & entrèrent en lor queste non mie troi ensemble  
 ne quatre mais chascuns par soi se il nauenoit chose que il  
 sentretrouassent einsi com auenture les demenoit par maintes  
 diuerses contrees . & li contes deuisera les auentures de  
 chascun lune apres lautre & mot a mot car chascuns a son  
 conte trestout par soi trestout entier . . . " (165:35-9).  
 To be sure, the quest of Gauvain for Arthur is somewhat  
 complicated by the fact that Gauvain is, himself, the ob-  
 ject of a similar search at the same time, but once again,  
 the associated adventures remain inconsequential.

On the whole, with the exception of the relationship to  
 Merlin himself which we have outlined above, there is  
 really very little effective use of appearances and reality  
 for any structural purposes in the Livre d'Artus.

## CHAPTER V

### LANCELOT PROPER: Part i

(Sommer, vol. iii, pp. 3-430)

In the preceding chapters we have indicated that, if there exists confusion between reality and illusion in the Estoire del Saint Graal, that confusion usually arises out of the essential difference between God, the only true reality, and His eternal adversary, the Devil, who constantly uses deception to try to pervert the positive aspects of His world. Out of the conflict between the two, there emerges an acute problem for the individual who must make the difficult and critical choice between two apparently similar points of view, for the ultimate decision which he makes can mean the difference between salvation and damnation. In short, the Estoire, didactic as it is, contains a religious message. In the Queste del Saint Graal, the situation is not materially different. Here, as in the Estoire, it is a question of judgement which must be exercised by an individual in determining what is real and what is illusory. However, one new element--that of the central character, Galahad, moving about the countryside incognito in order to achieve a particular goal--complicates the situation. This particular device of a figure whose identity is unknown is also

evident in the Merlin, where for most of the text Merlin appears in a variety of forms ranging from that of an old man to that of a stag, as he works toward positive goals usually obvious only to himself.

By now, the dreams and visions of both the Estoire and the Queste have a very minor role to play and, indeed, in the Merlin, their function is primarily to predict what will come about sometime in the future. There is never any doubt that the prediction will not come to pass.

The confusion between reality and illusion in the Livre de Lancelot del Lac is, to some extent, not unlike that which we have considered in the Queste and in the Merlin, for here too, the author relies for his effect upon similar literary devices: disguise, as well as the confusion which arises out of the desire of a character to travel incognito. Add to this the ruse, deception and the boon ("don") which are employed in a structural capacity on countless occasions in the Lancelot Proper, and one has the essential foundations on which the plot has been constructed.

The author of the Lancelot Proper has composed his story by weaving together in a manner which ". . . impresses by its consistency and solidity" (Jean Frappier, The Vulgate Cycle, contained in A.L.M.A., p. 295) a great number of individual adventures of varying degrees of importance. To this end, the technique of "entrelacement" outlined by Lot in his

Etude (pp. 17-28) and called to mind again by Frappier in A.L.M.A. (p. 295), plays an undeniably central role in linking the diverse parts of his lengthy tale together. But this alone would not suffice to weld the innumerable components together effectively without the equally important, yet more subtle, structural devices which are clearly designed to confuse and to mislead the various characters involved in the adventures being related. It becomes impossible for them to distinguish between illusion and reality. Significantly, the confusion which arises in such situations invariably does so at very critical moments in the development of the plot, thereby giving it new impetus and setting it off in a new direction which would otherwise be inconceivable. Thus, instead of bringing a particular series of events to a close, the author is frequently able to expand them in a characteristically mediaeval way by employing the new direction to unfold an entirely new chain of events. The result is a cohesive whole and not at all the work which Bruce considers to be ". . . unquestionably one of the most rambling productions of European literature" (J. D. Bruce, The Evolution of the Arthurian Romance from the Beginnings to 1300 quoted in A.L.M.A., p. 299). It remains for us to show in some detail how this conscious use of a technique which consistently confuses illusion and reality at critical points in the story serves this essential structural function.

The broad divisions of the text are as follows: the initial pages provide the background for subsequent episodes, explaining how the Lady of the Lake counters the deception of Claudas whose intrigues were designed to deprive Ban and Bohort of their possessions with deception of her own in order to take possession first of Lancelot, the son of King Ban, and then of his cousins, Lionel and Bohort, the sons of King Bohort, and how she reared them in their parents' stead to prepare them for the adventures which were to follow.

The subsequent series of events is motivated by the quest of the young knight, Lancelot of the Lake, as he seeks to discover his own identity and culminates in the scene in which he finds his name written on the metal plaque in the Dolorouse Garde (iii). In the meantime, Gauvain has set out to discover who the unknown knight, conqueror of the Doloreuse Garde, really is, and thus we have the ironic situation in which Lancelot's adventures lead him to discover his own background, of which he is ignorant, while Gauvain rides out in quest of Lancelot to learn from him precisely that information which Lancelot does not yet possess. A third major portion of the text deals with the attempts by the Lady of Malohaut to discover the identity of Lancelot, the red knight, now her prisoner (vi). This section culminates in the battle between Arthur and Galehaut in which Lancelot,

<sup>1</sup>The numbers in the margin indicate the pages of Sommer's work on which will be found the episodes referred to in this essay; the small Roman numerals give the page of the chart in the appendix which is pertinent to the discussion.

now wearing the black arms of the Lady of Malohaut, distinguishes himself above all others and becomes the object of a renewed search, this time by three different interests: Galehaut, Arthur through Gauvain, and the Lady of Malohaut. All seek to learn Lancelot's identity and to win him over. Galehaut, initially successful, ultimately becomes involved in Lancelot's suit for the love of the Queen, whereas Gauvain's search leads him into his own series of adventures, in particular, into one in which he defends the honour of the Lady of Roestoc and, as Lancelot did before him with the Lady of Malohaut, he then disappears without her even knowing his name. Thus Gauvain, himself on the trail of Lancelot, becomes the object of a secondary quest, this time by Hector (viii), who acts on behalf of the Lady of Malohaut. His search culminates when he meets Gauvain unexpectedly at le Pont Norgalois (x). Both then set out together to find Lancelot, who by now has become deeply involved in intrigues to share the Queen's bedroom. In the final section of the story, Lancelot frees Arthur and many of his knights (including Gauvain and Hector) from Camille, the enchantress (xi). Thus it is the search for Lancelot, beginning when he first takes his hurried leave from the court of King Arthur and culminating in his successful struggle against Camille, which provides the main thread of continuity for this section of the Vulgate Cycle. The episodes involving Gauvain, Galehaut, Arthur and the others

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remain secondary to the Lancelot plot but they are directly or indirectly linked to it by the overwhelming desire to find Lancelot of the Lake. In this, the vital similarity with the search for Galahad in the Queste cannot be overlooked. In both instances structural unity of the text is the result.

It now remains for us to examine plot and sub-plots in some detail, and in particular, to note that at virtually every critical point in the story the action is moved forward either by deception, or by disguise or by the mistaken identity which usually arises out of that disguise.

"Mais souent metoit sus ocoison de barat & de decheuanche" (27:8-9). In this way, the author of the Lancelot Proper draws attention to one aspect of the character of Claudas, the personification of fraud and deception and the initial catalyst who sets in motion the events of the Lancelot story. Coveting the possessions of Ban, Claudas conceives a plan by which he will convince the seneschal of the former to deceive his lord (i) in return for a promise of the castle of Trebes, Ban's last stronghold, as a reward for his treachery. To this the perfidious vassal readily agrees and, leaving the gates of the castle unlocked for Claudas and his men, he yields it up to them. However, the castle is not taken without bloodshed, for Ban's god-son, Banin, in whose charge Ban has left his stronghold while he and his family secretly

5:40

make their way to enlist the aid of King Arthur, sees what has happened and recognizing the deceit of the seneschal, resists bravely until he is forced to yield. When from  
3:42-3 afar, King Ban sees his last fortress in flames, he dies of a broken heart, the direct result of the faithless Claudas' deception. When his young wife, Elaine, realizes what has happened, she leaves her young son and runs to her husband's side where she succumbs to her grief. Finally, recovering from the swoon into which she has fallen and returning to the spot where she has left her child, Elaine discovers him in the lap of a damsel who is caressing him. Catching sight of her, the damsel quickly disappears with  
4:39-42 the child into a lake nearby. This is, however, no ordinary lake; it is merely an illusion, conjured up by the lady who has taken Elaine's child. A fairy, versed in the arts of magic, she is, in this version of the story, the same damsel who deceived and imprisoned Merlin and hence the same one who learned the secrets of the supernatural from him. It was the function of this illusion to disguise her real intent by concealing her dwelling-place from ordinary mortals. It is then to the security of this place that the Lady of the Lake withdraws, together with the young son of King Ban, and takes upon herself the task of rearing him to manhood and making possible all of the adventures which he will one day achieve.



Thus, within a very short period of time, the young child, Lancelot, twice becomes the victim of deception: initially, as a result of Claudas' fraud, he and his mother are separated from King Ban; subsequently, the child is then separated from its mother who is turned back from rescuing her son by her faithful squire who fears that she will drown in the lake which the lady has created.

But Claudas' penchant for fraud, which fans the flames of his greed, does not allow him to stop after he has acquired the possessions of Ban, and turning his attention to the latter's brother, Bohort, he wages war against him and besieges his castle, Montclair, where Bohort is slain. His wife Evaine and two children, like the family of King Ban, are thus also forced to leave the territory. Their escape is made possible only through the aid of one of Claudas' men, Pharien, a knight earlier banished from Bohort's court. Remembering a favour which she had once done for him, thereby saving his life, he spares Evaine's life and assumes the upbringing of her children, swearing to protect them against all harm while their mother takes refuge in the same abbey in which Elaine now resides (i). All of this Pharien does without the knowledge of his liege-lord, Claudas. Thus it happens that the story of Bohort and Evaine runs parallel to that of Ban and Elaine, insofar as Claudas' deceitful behaviour leads to the initial separation of the two kings from their wives and children. Like Ban's son who is

guarded by the Lady of the Lake and hidden from view by the illusion of the lake she has created, Bohort's children are concealed from Claudas by Pharien, who swears to hold himself accountable for their safety. The parallel is drawn even more closely when one realizes that Ban and Bohort were brothers and Elaine and Evaine, their wives, were sisters. In despair at the loss of their children, both accept the only possible alternative to their situation and take the veil.

2:34-36 In the meantime Claudas and Pharien's beautiful wife carry on a clandestine affair, thinking that they are deceiving the lady's husband, but he merely feigns lack of knowledge of their intrigue. A complicated web of deceit is thus woven among the three, and soon encompasses the two children, Lionel and Bohort, entrusted to the care of Pharien. Arranging a false charge against Pharien, Claudas relies upon a ruse to have him put out of the way. This proves to be unsuccessful until Claudas deceives his seneschal with the promise to return to the children as soon as they come of age the inheritance which he has wrongfully taken from them. When Pharien produces them, he and they are promptly locked in a tower and Claudas becomes the absolute ruler of Gaunes. Once again truth is perverted by deception and the course of events is thereby altered.

Some time later, when Claudas has returned from the kingdom of Logres where he has just spent some nine months disguised as a pilgrim in order to learn more about King Arthur whose possessions he now covets, his inclination toward fraud very nearly goes too far. Asking a faithful servant his opinion of Arthur, he feigns anger when the man swears that he would gladly defend Arthur, the flower of knighthood, to his death, even against blood relatives, but in the end, when he realizes the strength of the servant's convictions, Claudas has to admit that he has not really meant what he has said.

In the meantime, Lancelot, the son of King Ban, continues to flourish under the watchful eye of the Lady of the Lake who takes great pains to see that he is well cared for. But Lancelot did not yet know exactly who he was, and even though others had repeatedly suggested that he resembled the late King Ban who was his father, Lancelot did not yet connect this fact with his own identity: ". . . il li

[li vauassors] est avis que il sorsamble & si ne seit a qui . si i pense moult longuement . Tant quil li ramenbre quil resamble miex le roi de benoich que nul autre homme"

(37:30-32), and again: "Qui fu fait li enfes li preudons qui ie resamble . Et li vauassors respont en plorant .

Chertes fait il che fu li rois bans de benoyc" (37:42-38:1).

Like a leitmotif, suggestions concerning Lancelot's real identity abound throughout the initial portions of the text,

for by his very appearance it was clear that Lancelot was of noble birth (i). Leonce suspected this: "Et auoit ses iex en lui fichies autresi comme vns hons derues . Car moult guide bien soupechouer qui il estoit" (89:14-16), and again: "Tant sachies vous bien fait leonches que chis enfes fu fiex au roi ban de benoyc . ne nul figure domme ne resambla onques autresi bien com il fait a lui" (90:30-32), and even the Lady of the Lake herself hints at Lancelot's origins: "Et se vous sauies qui vostre peires fu . ne de quel lignage vous estes estrais de par vostre meire . vous nauries pas paor destre preudomme si com ie quit" (117:37-9), although she was not yet willing to disclose to him the truth of his birth, for she dreaded the day when Lancelot would have to leave her. Thus she conceals from Lancelot the true origins of his birth, thereby laying the groundwork for his later quest for his own identity which he undertakes after he has been made a knight at King Arthur's court.

The Lady of the Lake, then, hoping to delay the hour when he would leave her and she would once again be without his company, makes preparations to bring Bohort and young Lionel to her home in the hopes that at least the latter

48:1-2 would remain with her for a longer period of time (ii). To this end she sends her servant Saraide to snatch Lionel and Bohort from Claudas who still holds them prisoner in his tower. Once again, the structure of the plot which brings the cousins together is dependent upon illusion, for, after

Lionel has angrily spilled a cup of wine over Claudas and he and his brother have cut down and slain the son of their captor, Saraide must resort to supernatural powers to change them both into greyhounds (ii) and, conversely, two greyhounds into the likeness of Bohort and Lionel. This accomplished, she is able to lead them safely out of the court and into a wood. As a result of this piece of deception, Lionel and Bohort are welcomed at the lake by the lady and by Lancelot as her nephews.

57:28-  
35

Believing Claudas still to be in possession of the two children (when in actual fact all he had was the two greyhounds in the semblance of the children), Pharien leads a revolt of the people against the King and demands their return. Finally, Claudas is forced to yield them up but, unknown to him, the two greyhounds have by now assumed their own real form as soon as the children regain their normal shapes. Thus, when all Pharien and the townspeople find in the tower is a pair of dogs they immediately assume, this time incorrectly, that Claudas has once again deceived them

66:1-4

as he has done in the past (ii). But indeed, Claudas has practised deceit so often in the past that the townsfolk are quite prepared to avenge the apparent death of the two young boys. No amount of protestation can convince them that Claudas had really acted in good faith, for they believe only what they see and, as a result, a battle is inevitably fought--a battle which could have been avoided if deception

had not played so prominent a role.

When Pharien finally succeeds in convincing the townsfolk, and in particular his own nephew, Lambegues, to allow Claudas to become his prisoner, yet another ruse is devised, this time by Pharien, for he fears his own nephew's intentions and is fully aware that he may well try to kill Claudas, whom he considers his mortal enemy. Consequently, in order to conceal the reality of the situation, one of Claudas' men impersonates him and is put into prison along with two other faithful servants. But, as Pharien suspected, Lambegues immediately struck down the supposed Claudas and is in turn attacked by Pharien. The battle rages with no apparent victor, until, some time later, after negotiations and with much mistrust on both sides, peace is concluded.

The next larger segment of the Prose Lancelot, sees Lancelot, now the central figure of the story, make his way to the court of King Arthur where the Lady of the Lake has in-

118:5-6 structured him to be knighted on St. John's feast day (iii).

In the confusion which follows Lancelot's vigil in the church and his subsequent oath to avenge the knight who lay  
127:31- wounded with two lanceheads in his body and a sword in his  
3 head, Arthur forgets to gird Lancelot's sword about him.

This oversight, superficially innocuous as it may seem, is  
131:23 also deeply rooted in illusion (iii). Lancelot is well aware of the fact that Arthur has not fulfilled all of his

responsibilities in the matter when he failed to gird on his sword, but clearly there was no slight intended toward the young man. However, this apparently harmless oversight, enables Lancelot deliberately to alter the course of events to follow by subsequently involving the Queen in the ceremony and having her instead of the King entrust him with his sword. Indeed, it is obvious that he does not wish Arthur to bestow the sword upon him. "Sire par mon chief vous nestes mie cheualiers . porcoi fait li valles por chou fait mesires ye[u]ains que li rois ne vous a pas lespee chainte . Or alons a li si la vous chaindra . Sire fait il or matendes dont . & ie courai apres mes escuiers que la moie enportent . Car ie ne vaudroie que li rois me chainsist se chele non . . . Il sen uoit & mesire yeu[u]ains latent . Mais li valles na talent de reuenir . Car il natent pas a estre cheualiers de la main le roi" (131:22-30). Having already taken care to entrust his sword to one of the servants, Lancelot immediately indicates that he must find that servant before the ceremony can be completed. When he fails to return with the sword, Arthur and his companions are somewhat confused and assume that they must have offended by the King's error. Lancelot, for his part, shows not the least remorse for his actions in leaving Arthur and his knights with their false illusions and he sets out on the way to succour the Lady of Norhaut. At this point, Lancelot encounters his first adventure with some degree of

success as he frees a damsel who is being guarded by a huge knight in a pavilion. Significantly, Lancelot has not yet girded on his sword: "Mais il vous couient faire vne chose que ceste damoisele vous prie & ie au[s]si . que est che fait il . que vous ce[i]ngies vostre espee fait li cheualiers et metes vo escu a vo col . & vous aues boine lanche que cest damoisele vous a faite baillier a vn de vos escuiers . lescu fait li valles & la lanche prendrai ie volentiers . Mais lespee ne puis ie chaindre ne ne doi . tant que ien aurai autre commandement" (135:41-136:5), but he does allow it to be fastened to his saddle. Lancelot's intention remains obscure to all but himself: only the Queen must bestow the sword upon him and consequently, since the opportunity now presents itself, he sends the two damsels he has freed to the court of King Arthur and requests from the Queen a new sword. Clearly Lancelot takes this request and the fact that the Queen has seen fit to give it to him far more seriously than she does: "& dist que ore est il cheualiers dieu merchi & sa dame" (137:13-14). In thus achieving his goal by means of deceit (iii), Lancelot becomes the Queen's knight--a fact which inevitably leads to the love between him and Guinevere and which is indeed in no small measure responsible not only for countless adventures undertaken in her name but also for the final destruction of Arthur's kingdom.



It is significant that the Lady of Norhaut arranges the confrontation between the young Lancelot and the huge knight at the pavilion in order to test him, her champion, before he undertakes the tasks with which she must entrust him, for as a result of this Lancelot gains his ends by means of a ruse which someone else has directed toward him (iii).

9:40-1

At this point in the story, Arthur, Guinevere and the court do not yet know who Lancelot really is; nor, in fact, does Lancelot himself know his real identity, but as he moves from adventure to adventure, overcoming in turn the King of Northumberland and then Alibon, the son of the vavasor of the Queen's court, he gradually takes the steps which will disclose to him precisely who he is. Thus Lancelot's confidence in his own ability increases until his next adventure at the Doloreuse Garde where he learns his own name which has been concealed from him for so long (iii). Arriving before the castle, he is told by a veiled damsel whom he does not recognize, the conditions of his entry into the castle to free it from the evil customs which have held it ensnared for so long. Unknown to Lancelot, the damsel has been sent by the Lady of the Lake for his protection, bringing with her three magic shields which are all of silver. Each bore either one, two or three bands which possessed the power to double, redouble and then double again his strength as he fought in succession the ten knights who guarded the entrance to the castle. When

2:37-9

7:7-17

Lancelot has finally succeeded in routing not only the ten knights of the outer wall, but has also put to flight a second group of ten guarding the inner wall, he is led to a cemetery where a metal plaque adorns a tomb. The inscription on the plaque represents the culmination of his early adventures and reveals an essential truth to him.

"Et si i auoit lettres qui disoient . ceste lame niert ia leuee par main domme ne par esfors . se par chelui non qui conquerra cest doleros castel . & de chelui est li nons escriis desous . . . & lors voit les lettres qui dient . Chi gerra lancelos del lac li fiex au roi ban de benoyc" (152: 24-38). Immediately, however, he begs the damsel not to reveal his secret to anyone, for he chooses at this moment to hide his identity and so, at this critical point in the text, the illusion which Lancelot creates concerning his own identity gives rise to a subsequent series of events which conclude only after he has released Arthur and his knights from Camille's prison.

In order to further confuse the issue, Lancelot then has the inhabitants of the Doloreuse Garde set false inscriptions upon the graves of the cemetery of the castle. Deception follows deception as Gauvain, still unaware of Lancelot's real identity, leads some of his companions in search of the new knight. Misled by Lancelot's ruse, they believe the false inscriptions which list the knight who conquered the castle among the casualties. Quickly they send back

word to the court where Arthur and Guinevere both decide to come to the Doloreuse Garde in order to see for themselves what has happened. In the meantime, Gauvain and his men are convinced by a vavasor that they could see some of the knights for whom they were shedding tears if only they would accompany him. Accepting his offer they suddenly become aware that they have been deceived and find themselves prisoners of the lord of the Doloreuse Garde.

59:11-  
12

Arthur and the Queen are not granted immediate access to the castle, but when after several days they are finally allowed to enter, Lancelot, in a state of shock brought on by the presence of the Queen, forgets all rules of social behaviour and precedes the Queen through the gate leaving her locked outside (iv). On the surface of things, Lancelot's actions appear to be a slight to the Queen but this is not the

62:10-  
11

truth; it merely seems to be. Unfortunately, this belief is strengthened when Lancelot, deeply disturbed by what he has done, rides off to the Doloreuse Chartre where Gauvain and his companions are. Meanwhile, Arthur and his company have also been lead astray by the inscriptions on the tombs.

2:42-  
3:5

"Et il commenchent a lire & a noumer asses des cheualiers de sa maison & dautres terres . Et tant quil viennent a vne tombe ou li nons monsignor Gauvain estoit escriis . Si i auoit chi gist mesire gauvain . . . & autretel dient de tous les compaignons que mesires Gauvain auoit amenes auoec lui . Quant li rois ot cheus noumer . a poi quil nesrage de duel

& la roine & tout li autre" (162:42-163:5). As they mourn the deaths of those whom they have loved (iv), Lancelot sets out to gain the release of Gauvain from the Doloreuse Chartre in the hope that he might consequently win back the favour of the Queen whom he loves. Thus, a series of deceptions moves the plot of the story forward to new adventures.

Once again, at a critical point in the plot, Lancelot employs a ruse to divert an attack on Arthur and his knights and in so doing he succeeds in arousing Arthur and in capturing Brandus des Illes, who holds the companions of the Round Table prisoner in the Doloreuse Chartre. Gaining their release, Lancelot orders the prisoners be brought to him, but he does not reveal his identity to them. Requesting them to await his return, Lancelot returns to the Doloreuse Garde where the townspeople, much to Arthur's surprise, cry in vain for the King to capture him. However, because he is unaware of Lancelot's identity and of the fact that Lancelot must remain in the castle for forty days to break its enchantment, Arthur allows him to ride away and return to Gauvain. Still he refuses to tell them who he is, and this, of course, motivates Gauvain to seek out the knight who has rescued him.

An air of mystery, therefore, surrounds the knight of the Doloreuse Garde and his strange behaviour. The confusion is further compounded when Arthur learns that Gauvain's benefactor was the same knight as the one the townspeople

had wanted him to capture. He must now be found if the adventure of the Doloreuse Garde is to be brought to a conclusion; Gauvain accepts the responsibility of finding him even though he does not know who he is. "Sire fait il tant sachiez vous bien . que ie ne ierrai en vne vile que vne nuit . se prins ou malades ne sui tant que ie sache qui chis chevaliers est" (171:6-8). Gauvain's quest for Lancelot is, therefore, hampered by the fact that he does not know precisely whom he is seeking. Consequently, even after he has ridden for many days, when finally he happens upon the tents of the King of the Hundred Knights, he fails to recognize the wounded Lancelot who is being carried on a litter. When he has recovered from his wound, Lancelot takes part in a tournament arranged between Arthur and the King d'outre les Marches but, since he is carrying the shield which he acquired at Orcanie, no one associates the marvellous deeds they see him perform there with Lancelot himself. The disguise again misleads Gauvain who continues to search elsewhere (iv). Subsequently wounded by the King of the Hundred Knights, Lancelot is visited by Guinevere and Gauvain, but neither recognizes him before he swoons at the sight of the Queen.

In the meantime, Gauvain learns that the wounded knight is the same as the one who was carried in a litter and he becomes suspicious, especially when he realizes that Lancelot has not one but two wounds. To Gauvain the signs seem to

point to something significant--to the successful conclusion of the search of the unknown knight but, unfortunately, appearances are not sufficient and he can get no confirmation of his suspicions from the wounded knight himself, for he is determined to conceal from Gauvain all he can and to continue his movements about the countryside incognito. The following morning, in order to preserve the secret of his identity, Lancelot hastily leaves this place. It is not until some time later that Gauvain learns from a damsel that the knight with the red shield, that is the one that Lancelot got at Orcanie, was indeed the one he sought. Thus taken in by his ruse, they now set out together to find him.

In the meantime, the Lady of Nohaut comes upon Lancelot who is lying asleep, recognizes him and persuades him to heal his wounds at her castle. When Gauvain learns he is there, he and the damsel of the Lady of the Lake who accompanies him go to see him. Lancelot, however, wishes to continue his masquerade and will not grant him entry. ". . . car trop est malades" (184:14-15). Even though the damsel receives assurance that she has at last found Lancelot he compels her to silence: ". . . & il li prie a nului ne die son non . . ." (184:30-31), and so Gauvain is again frustrated in his search. This, of course, only makes him more persistent in his mission and thus, from a structural point of view, the plot line is further advanced by this rather complicated series of adventures. So near and yet so far

from his goal, Gauvain cannot pry from the damsel the secret of the identity of the wounded knight and so, at this critical point in time, he has no alternative but to accept the damsel's assurance that she will lead him to a spot

4:30-3 where he will learn Lancelot's name (v). This, of course, gives rise to a new series of adventures.

The time has come for the assembly at which Lancelot intends to be present and again, in order to escape detection, he changes his shield: "Li mires sen part atant . & li cheualiers oirre toute ior comme chil qui ne veut estre conneus & pour che sest partis del mire quil ne fust par li conneus de nule chose en lieu ou il vausist estre cheles . si fait son escu courir que nus ne le voie . & chestoit encore li vermax escus" (189:27-30). However, before Lancelot can attend the tournament, he must accomplish one further adventure. Learning that the Queen is being held prisoner at the Doloreuse Garde and that only the conqueror of the castle can free her, Lancelot agrees to follow a squire back to free her but instead he, himself, is deceived, taken to a vault beneath the palace and incarcerated (v). Here, he learns that he must complete the adventure of the Doloreuse Garde before the enchantment can be removed and to this end he swears an oath. Thus Lancelot is brought back to the castle by a ruse devised to force him to undertake the rest

92:21 of his adventure.

Proceeding thence to the assembly, Lancelot still strives to remain anonymous; he carries a white shield with a black band and here again his feats of daring once more arouse Gauvain's suspicions that he has finally discovered the knight whom he has been seeking so long. "De toutes cheualeries venqui tout li cheualiers chelui ior . Et quant mesire Gauvain voit que il vaint issi tout . & que il a ses . ij . freires abatus . si se pense que chest li cheualiers que il quiert" (195:26-28). Because he is angry at being found out, Lancelot refuses Gauvain's request that he identify himself except to say: "Sire . . . vns cheualiers sui che poes vous veoir" (196:1-2). Thus the damsel who accompanies Gauvain, in accordance with the oath she has earlier sworn to Gauvain to reveal Lancelot's identity when they find him, is forced to tell what she knows: "Mais iel vous dirai que ia ne men pariurerai . bien sachies que chest lancelos del lac . li fiex au roi ban de benoyc . chil qui a hui vencu ceste assamblee . & lautre venqui il autresi as vermeilles armes . & fist le roi entrer en la dolerouse garde" (196:7-10). With this revelation, this portion of the story in which Gauvain gropes for clues to Lancelot's identity as he follows him about the countryside, reaches a climax. The complicated events which have involved him and Lancelot have arisen time and time again in misunderstanding and disguise, in deceit and illusion until, finally, after long months of search Gauvain knows whom he seeks and has indeed found him. "Mesire Gauvain sen uait auant . & sen



retorne au chastel arriere si fait lie mainte gent de sa  
 queste quil a achieuee" (196:21-2), and: "Et chi fu  
 premierement conneus a court li nons lanceLOT del lac li  
 fiex au roi ban de benoyc . . ." (197:4-5).

The episode of the Doloreuse Garde with its many sub-plots  
 now behind him, Lancelot, the central figure of the story,  
 once again enters upon a series of adventures which are  
 directly linked to the threat of invasion of Arthur's lands  
 by Galehaut. News of the impending disaster reaches  
 Arthur's court at Camalot where he and the Queen are  
 gathered with their retinues. Here in Camalot, Lancelot  
 catches sight of the Queen and, losing all sense of reality,  
 he slips into a sort of trance brought on by his love for  
 her (vi).

Allowing his horse to wander aimlessly, carrying him where  
 it will, Lancelot is very nearly drowned when the animal  
 enters a river to drink and ventures beyond its depth.  
 Saved from certain death by Yvain, the son of King Urien,  
 Lancelot again carries a shield which no one recognizes.  
 "Mesire y[w]ains li demande biax sire qui estes vous . &  
 comment entrastes vous en ceste iaue . Sire ie sui vns  
 cheualiers qui abeuroie mon cheual" (204:12-14) and: "Sire  
 fait il ie sieuoie . j . cheualier et mesire y[w]ains le  
 connoist moult bien sil eust lescu quil porta a lassamblee .  
 Mais il lauoit laissie en la maison au cheualier que il

sieuoit . si en auoit prins . j . qui estoit viex et enfumes" (204:16-19). Nor does he respond to the Queen's desire to know his identity, and instead, upon hearing her voice, he lapses into unconsciousness before her. Finally, he is sent on his way by Yvain and no one is any wiser concerning his identity. It is not until Yvain has returned to court and related the events of the day to the Queen and Gauvain that they realize who he is. "Ele vous dist fait mesire Gauvain que nous oriemes noueles del cheualier qui nous fist entrer en la dolerouse garde a la premiere assamblee qui seroit el roialme de logres & a le seconde & a la tierche . & . cest la tierce . Et li cheualiers qui les gaians a mors si est lancelos del lac . & de voir le sachies" (207:35-39).

213:1 Shortly thereafter, Lancelot finds himself the prisoner of the Lady of Malohaut who has him put in chains for killing her son, and consequently, when the battle of the knights of Arthur and those of Galehaut who have invaded his territory comes to pass, Lancelot makes every effort to gain permission from his captor to go to the battle scene (vi). Finally he receives permission from her, but with the proviso that he return to prison once he has carried out his plans; she fails, however, in an attempt to force him to

4:13-15 disclose to her his name upon his return. Carrying a red shield and bearing his own arms, Lancelot enters the fray, where, as one might expect, he distinguishes himself (vi). At nightfall, true to his promise to return to the Lady of

Malohaut, he suddenly disappears from the battle zone, leaving everyone to wonder who he really is. Incentive for the next major quest to find Lancelot arises out of the truce which Galehaut proposes for a period of one year, after which time he hopes to have the red knight (i.e., Lancelot) on his side. Arthur too is also curious about the knight and admits that he would like to learn his identity and win his services for his own cause. However, the prospects for this do not seem very promising. Once again a search for the identity of an unknown knight moves the plot-line forward, providing an impetus to a whole new series of adventures.

28:25- When Lancelot has returned to prison and the Lady of Malohaut  
6 learns of his daring feats on that day, she is obviously attracted to him, and, as a result, she intensifies her own efforts to learn her prisoner's real identity (vi). Thus the search begins again, this time for Lancelot as the red knight. It is critical for both Arthur and Galehaut to find him, for the one who does will have the advantage at the end of the period of truce. So critical indeed is the situation that the very Kingdom of Logres rides on its outcome.

Led by Gauvain, forty of Arthur's knights take up the challenge to find Lancelot, while at the same time the Lady of Malohaut sets out for Arthur's court in her own quest to learn more about her illustrious prisoner. Arriving at

29:27-  
9

Arthur's court, she cleverly disguises the real reason for her mission, saying that she is seeking a champion for her cousin--preferably the red knight who so recently fought for Arthur, but when Arthur himself admits that he does not know who the knight is, she is compelled to return home, her ruse unsuccessful. Here, however, she continues her efforts, feigning anger at Lancelot and delivering him an ultimatum (vii), assuring him that unless he accept one of three conditions he will never leave her prison again: "Ie vous commanderai . iij . choses & se vous nen prenes vne ia ne mait diex quant vous iamais istrois de ma prison . ne par auoir ne par proiere . Dame or me dite vostre penser et puis c'a chou en sui venus le quel que soit me couenra il prendre . Ie vous dirai fait ele que vous me dites qui vous estes et comment vous aues non . vous seres de ma prison quites . Et se vous che ne me voles dire si me dites qui vous ames par amors . & se dire ne voles lun ne lautre . si me dites se vous quidies iamais autretant faire darmes com vous feistes lautre ior a lassamblee" (230:28-35). Lancelot accepts the terms of the third condition, but because he still wishes to remain incognito he asks her for arms of a different colour from those he wore in the battle just concluded. "Mais ie ne voeil que nule riens sache que vous aies a moi fine . Et vous me dites queles armes vous voldres porter . & il dist vnes toutes noires . Atant sen va en sa gaiole & la dame li fait apparellier cheleement escu tout noir &

cheual autretel . & cote armoire & couertures autreteles"  
(231:21-25).

Unable to find Lancelot, the red knight, within the period of the truce, Gauvain and his knights are forced to return to help Arthur in the impending conflict. With the battle under way Gauvain immediately recognizes a resemblance between the black knight (Lancelot) and the red knight, the object of his quest, who previously stood at the same spot where this knight now stands and like him he seemed as though he lived in another world: "& il esgarde si voit le cheualier al noir escu qui pensoit apoies sor son glaive . si dist a la roine . Dame memberoit il vous ore que ie refui antan blechies si gisoie chais . que vns cheualiers pensoit autresi sor chele riuiere ou cist ou vns autres . Mais il portoit vnes armes vermeilles . & che fu chil qui lassamlee venqui . biax nies fait ele il puet bien estre . Mais porcoi le dites vous . Dame fait il por ce que ce fust il . Car ie ne ui onques proeces de nul cheualier si volentiers comme les soies" (235:33-40). Finally, when the Queen is prevailed upon to ask him to fight on her behalf, Lancelot, his identity still unknown, is spurred into action.

In the meantime, Galehaut, impressed by Lancelot's feats of arms, persuades him to be his guest in return for a promise to fulfill any request Lancelot will later make of him (vii). Wined and dined by Galehaut, Lancelot then employs

44:41 a little deception as he requests before witnesses a boon,  
that once his host has conquered Arthur, he will give him-  
self up to him and do whatever he bid him do. Clearly  
Lancelot knows what his objectives are, even if Galehaut  
does not. His plans are furthered by yet another change of  
48:24- arms which disguise him as Galehaut. When Galehaut's forces  
5 finally carry the day, Lancelot makes his mysterious request  
of his host, sending him to Arthur to ask his forgiveness  
and to make his peace with him. However, Lancelot compels  
Galehaut to refrain from inquiring after his name.

In a move which proves to be significant for the development  
of the plot, the Queen demands to see the black knight (vii)  
53:15 and implores Galehaut to arrange a meeting between them, in  
spite of Galehaut's protestations that he knows nothing of  
the man. Her intuition tells her who he really is. With  
the subsequent secret meeting arranged by Galehaut, in which  
Lancelot reiterates all the adventures he has had, this  
portion of the text culminates in the Queen's revelation of  
Lancelot's identity. ". . . ha . fait ele dont sai ie bien  
qui vous estes . vous aues nonancelos del lac" (260:30-31).  
Thus she has not only penetrated his disguise; her affir-  
mation of Gauvain's words discloses the secret love she has  
for him. ". . . se diex me doinst fait il sante auo[i]r ie  
voldroie orendroit estre la plus bele damoisele del mont  
saine & haitie par couent que il mamast sor toute rien  
toute sa vie & la moie" (253:38-41) and ". . . par dieu

fait ele mesire Gauvain i a mis quanque dame i puet metre .  
ne dame ne puet plus offrir . & il commencent tout a rire"  
(254:2-3). The exchange of a kiss seals their love for

3:18-  
27

one another (viii). Thus, the Queen and Galehaut are now aware of the identity of Lancelot of the Lake; so too is the Lady of Malohaut who by chance caught sight of the kiss which Guinevere gave her lover. And so, after a complicated series of disguises and the granting of a boon which, in itself, borders on deceit, the events of the plot are given the impetus which climaxes in the fateful avowal of love between Lancelot and the Queen.

Gauvain, however, knows nothing of these developments and, suffering from King Arthur's accusation that he and his knights have perjured themselves by returning to Camalot before finding the red knight, Gauvain and nineteen other knights now set out to fulfill their mission. The new search, however, differs from the former one insofar as Gauvain now has something tangible upon which to set his sights. Before he leaves, the Queen informs him in confidence: ". . . biax nies vous en ales & si ne saues ou . Dame fait il vous dites voir . Je vous dirai comment vous troueres le cheualier . Mais vous me creanteres que vous nen aointeres homme ne feme ne ore ne autre fois . & il li creante . Vous ires fait ele la ou vous quideres trouver galahos . & sachies que vous troueres en sa compaignie le cheualier . se en nul lieu le deues trouver . & sachies que

chou est lancelot del lac" (275:8-13).

Since this is primarily a quest originating with Gauvain, it is natural that it is about him that the story now revolves. The first of his many adventures brings him into contact with three people: Hector, as well as a dwarf, who is with him, and a niece of the dwarf with whom Hector is in love and who is so protective of Hector that she refuses to allow him to seek adventure for fear of losing him. None of this trio is aware of Gauvain's identity (viii). The dwarf continually insults and degrades Gauvain calling him the worst knight in the world and, by contrast, he praises Hector. Three times he exhorts Hector to perform superhuman feats for him. However, it is not surprising, that, when Hector is asked to defend a lady against Segurades, who is terrorizing her, the niece of the dwarf refuses to give him leave to do so. Consequently Gauvain agrees to accept the challenge in Hector's stead. Still no one is aware of Gauvain's identity, not even the dwarf, although ironically it was he whom the lady originally requested to defend her honour. Like Lancelot, Gauvain refuses to disclose who he is but this is not usual for Gauvain. He even requests the Lady of Roestoc, whom he is to champion, to refrain from asking his name. "Dame ie sui chi appareillies por vostre bataille faire a laide de dieu . si vous pri & requier por toutes mes seruices que vous me dounes . j . don que ie vous



demanderaï sans coustement . & ele li creante . Dame fait il vous maues done . & ie vous demant que mes nons ne me soit demandes deuant . vij . iors . & ele li otrie . or sachies fait ele que che fust la premiere chose que ie vous demandasse" (291:18-24). Ironically, Segurades too, refers to Gauvain, suggesting that not even he could dissuade him from his avowed purpose to win the lady or take possession of her lands.

295:10

Having successfully defended the Lady of Roestoc against Segurades (viii), Gauvain finds himself alone on the field after the excitement of his victory, and so takes advantage of this brief moment to slip away unnoticed. In so doing, he is able to continue to move about incognito. But the Lady of Roestoc is quickly made aware of her shortcoming in ignoring Gauvain even for this short time instead of rewarding him richly. Consequently, at this critical point in time, the seeds of a new quest, a search within a search, are laid, for Gauvain must be found. "Après dist la dame que ele ne poroit pas estre lie se ele ne sauoit la uerite del cheualier . & dist quele sest porpensee . & veut aler a la court le roi artu por oir de li ensignes" (297:26-29).

In the meantime Gauvain takes refuge in the home of Helain de Tanguis who is quite unaware of his identity. Here, Gauvain is informed that his host, Helain, has been seeking him for many months in the hopes of having his guest

right a wrong that the latter once committed against him. Although Helain has sworn to himself to allow no one but Gauvain to make him a knight (viii), he now despairs of realizing this possibility and asks his guest to undertake this task quite unaware, in fact, that this is Gauvain himself before him. This chance meeting with Helain now provides Gauvain with an opportunity to continue his anonymity, for when he has been knighted, Helain is overjoyed to learn that Gauvain himself has knighted him and he readily accedes to Gauvain's request for a boon. Therefore, in exchange for the arms he bears, Gauvain acquires those of Helain. From a structural point of view the consequences of this deceptive action are obvious as Gauvain's adventures continue.

At Arthur's court, where the Lady of Roestoc seeks information concerning her champion, there develops a somewhat complicated situation arising out of the granting of a boon. As we have already indicated, the boon in itself, often has the purpose of acquiring from one person something which he or she might not ordinarily grant. More often than not, an element of deceit is involved. This, in fact, is what the niece of the dwarf alleges when she insists that she has been tricked into granting her lover, Hector, leave to go in search of Gauvain (ix). Indeed, she even goes so far as to threaten not to honour her commitment until she is threatened by the Queen with the loss of her lands and imprisonment.

At this point in the story there occurs a situation which gives Gauvain an even stronger reason for finding Lancelot. Unwilling at first to give a helmet full of his blood in order to heal a sick knight, Gauvain valiantly but vainly fights against impossible odds until he learns that what is required is the blood of the two best knights in the world. Although at this moment he is unaware that the sick knight is his own brother, Agravain, Gauvain readily agrees to the proposal. "Car vous i a[u]rois & honor & aumousne . honor en ce que vous series li mieudres cheualiers del monde" (314:42-315:1). After learning that the knight who lies ill is his brother, he realizes that he must take up his search for Lancelot with renewed vigour, for he is the best knight in all the world (ix).

It is interesting to note by way of contrast that Hector who has set out in search of Gauvain openly admits his identity to all who ask and does not rely on disguise or anonymity in any way. When he has successfully given aid to Sinados of Windesores and released Yvain and Sagremor from Marganor's prison (ix), the latter are able to give him vital information concerning his quest on behalf of the Lady of Roestoc: ". . . lors conte comment il va en la quest dun cheualier quil ne connoist mie . Et il demandent quel escu il porte & il lor deuse tant que il seiuent bien que che est mesire Gauvain si li dient" (349:29-31). Thus he now knows whom he seeks and the next critical stage of his search is completed.

In the meantime, Gauvain has learned that Lancelot is probably in Sorelois. En route to that place he fights with Giflet who at first fails to recognize him: "Car il ne guide mie que che soit mesire Gauvain . & se che est il si soit . car toutes voi[e]s ni puet il auoir se honor non se il iouste a lui" (363:19-21). Similarly Lionel, with whom Gauvain also meets, refuses to believe who he is: "Puchele dites vous que chest mesire Gauvain . Ia diex ne mait quant che fu il onques" (373:5-6). Ultimately however the paths of Hector and Gauvain are destined to cross and when both

98:41 find themselves at the Pont Norgalois (x) their reunion finally occurs, although not without one final element of deceit. Because he denies he is one of the Knights of Arthur's Round Table, Hector is forced to fight against Gauvain at the bridge, but no serious wounds are inflicted by either of them before they recognize one another. "& mesire Gauvain le regarde si le reconnoist au puing & au heut & as lettres . si vient auant & demande a hector comment il a non . Quen aues vous a faire fait il . Ie le sauroie volentiers fait mesire Gauvain . Iai non fait il hector . ha hector fait mesire Gauvain vous soies li bien venus" (398:34-38). Thus the search associated with the sub-plot is brought to completion and together Hector and Gauvain continue to look for Lancelot.

Finding him and Galehaut on the Isle Perdue (x), Gauvain and Hector are forced to joust with Lancelot and the King of

the Hundred Knights. Gauvain recognizes Lancelot, who this time is bearing Galehaut's arms, and he advises Hector to take his companion. At a critical moment in time, Lionel arrives on the scene and announces first that arrangements have been made for him and Galehaut to meet secretly with Guinevere and the Lady of Malohaut. He also tells him that his opponent is Gauvain. Lancelot quickly tries to flee, but Gauvain takes hold of him. "Et quant mesire Gauvain voit quil ne li respont si seslaisse & saut deriere lui el cheual tos armes . si lenbrache parmi les flans . & dist . par sainte carite vous ne mescaperes tant que ie saurai vostre non pora morir ou moi ou vous" (404:1-4). A successful conclusion to Gauvain's mission sees Lancelot persuaded to talk with Gauvain and then to be bled so that the blood might be sent to Agravain (x). Thus all disguises are removed; the four agree to succour Arthur in a new battle with the Saxons, but Gauvain is persuaded not to tell Arthur of the success of his mission until later, in order to allow Lancelot to meet with the Queen. Gauvain succeeds in finding the other companions of his quest at the assembly, where by prearrangement all had agreed to carry their shields reversed to enable them to recognize each other.

The final episode in the text is also motivated by deception, for Arthur, unknown to Guinevere, is suing for the love of Camille, the enchantress who owns the castle at Arestuel. Having made arrangements to go to Camille in her tower,

10:29

Arthur informs the Queen not to wait up for him and secretly goes to his trysting place. Guinevere, for her part, is more than willing to let him go, since she has her own plans involving Lancelot. Thus a double deception occurs. But the ruse is turned back upon Arthur and he himself is betrayed by Camille and captured. Once again the action is moved forward by deception as the friends attempt to free Arthur. First Lancelot and Galehaut and then later Gauvain and Hector are deceived and captured. It is not until Lancelot has lost his reason and been released from prison that he can be healed by the Lady of the Lake and subsequently nursed to health by the Queen. He is then able to free all of the prisoners held by the Saxons (xi).

When Gauvain announces the success of his mission the culmination of events is reached: "Et mesires Gauvain saut & dist au roy Sire uees chi celui que nous auons tant quis . Iou lai trouue si men aquit . Ha . diex fait li roys qui est il . Chest fait mesire Gauvain lancelot del lac" (425:38-41). However, there is a clear hint of the nature of things to come in the words of the Queen who expresses her deep gratitude to Lancelot: "Et elle dist . Sire cheualiers . iou ne sai qui vous estes ce poise moi . Ne iou ne vous sai coffrir pour lamour monseignor . & por la moie honnor que vous aues hui maintenue vous otroi iou mamor & moi . si com loial dame le doit donner a loial cheualier" (427:38-428:1). The

meaning is double-edged and Arthur himself, mourning the loss of Camille whom he loved, fails to see the consequences of this overt avowal of love.

## CHAPTER VI

### LANCELOT PROPER: Part ii

(Sommer, vol. iv, pp. 3-362)

Since, as Sommer has indicated in a footnote to Le Livre de Lancelot del Lac, Part II (p. 3, note 1): "There is here no formal division in the MS. (nor is there in any other MS. containing Parts I and II) . . . ", it is hardly surprising that, like its predecessor, this section of the work, too, is heavily dependent upon the literary devices of deception, anonymity and mistaken identity both to move the plot line forward and to give a semblance of unity to the very complicated series of events which takes place during the course of the story. The initial scenes of this volume, which occur at the court of King Arthur and which introduce the "False Guinevere" episode, provide us with a most obvious example of this statement.

In the absence of Lancelot and Galehaut, Arthur and his court are suddenly made aware of a situation alleged to have happened many years before in the days when Arthur met and successfully wooed his queen, Guinevere. At that time, they are told by the damsel who represents the woman he is supposed to have won, Arthur's present wife and queen was



secretly substituted for the real Guinevere, her mistress, who was in turn cast into prison where she was left to languish for the rest of her life. However, freed from the dungeon by the efforts of the brave knight, Bertolai, who now accompanies the damsel, the "false Guinevere" demands through this damsel her justice /from Arthur. Significantly, Arthur begins to show clearly some of the qualities which, as we shall see in the Mort Artu, mark him as a weak and indecisive man and ultimately lead him into a situation from which it is impossible to extricate himself--a situation which leads to the destruction of the Kingdom of Logres and his own tragic death. For whatever reasons,--perhaps because he himself has not been true to their marriage vows,--Arthur reacts in such a way as to shift the onus for proof of these accusations away from himself toward others, in this case to the Queen herself.

11:9-10 It is, of course, entirely possible that the shock of such sudden and unexpected news as the damsel and the old knight brought is so great that he cannot think clearly and decisively in the excitement of the moment, but as the great king he is supposed to be, there can be no room for even the slightest vacillation. Such behaviour is quite unbecoming a king. Unfortunately, these first signs of indecisiveness noted here are magnified many times over in the Mort Artu. Had he instead reacted violently to these accusations or even demanded more concrete proof than the contents of a vaguely-worded letter in the hands of a total stranger, one

might be able to defend his actions. But instead, in a gesture characteristic of the later Arthur, he crosses himself and turning to the Queen insists that she defend herself against the accusation. "Dame leues sus . & si vous descoupes de ceste coze qui sor vous est mise . Si mait diex se vous estes tele . comme cele demoisele tesmoigne . vous aues bien mors deseruie . Et trop vilainement aues le monde deceu . Car on vous a tenu a la plus vaillant dame del monde . Et vous series la plus desloial et la plus fausse . se vous auies ce fait" (14:41-42-15:2). Thus, he assumes her guilty even before she has had an opportunity to reply to the charges. "Et prist toute la semaine conseil as plus sages hommes et as plus haus barons quil eust . Car bien guide que la damoisele ait faite sa clamour a droit . et que tout soit voirs ce quele li auoit dit" (44:33-36).

In contrast to the King, who is clearly either unwilling or unable to choose between appearances and reality at this point, Gauvain takes a firm step and throws the weight of his words behind Guinevere, insisting that she is innocent of the charges as stated. During all of this, the Queen herself remains, at least outwardly, composed and gives no obvious indication that she has anything to fear in this situation. "Lors sest leuee la royne et ne fait mie samblant de femme paourouse" (15:3). In so doing she further draws to the attention of the reader the totally ineffective way in which Arthur deals with this crisis.

Indeed, even when he is given the opportunity to clarify the situation once and for all by Gauvain's offer to defend the honour of the Queen against a knight to be chosen from the lady's retinue, Arthur procrastinates, insisting that he cannot act with such haste: "Bele douce amie iai bien oi comment vostre dame a fait sa plainte . par ses lettres & par vous . mais iou ne voeil pas sans conseil ne sans iugement mener a chief si haute chose comme est ceste . Car iou nen voldroie mie estre blasmes de vostre dame ne de ma baronnie que iou eusse la royne deportee ne a vostre dame fait tort" (16:17-21). Clearly Arthur would prefer not to have to act at all. His threats to punish to the fullest extent of the law those who are lying gives one the impression that this is more for his own benefit--to convince himself rather than any guilty party of his great power. That is not to say that Arthur is unable to carry out his threat--indeed he could do so with a vengeance if he chose, for he was, in fact, one of the most powerful figures of his day, but he hesitates and hides behind a facade.

To complete the picture offered by the author in the "False Guinevere" episode, it is interesting to note the reaction of Lancelot and Galehaut when news of the Queen's predicament reaches them (xii). Neither is deceived by the claims made against the Queen and in fact to Galehaut, a man of decisive action, there is clearly no problem at all. Indeed, as he sees it, the choice hinges not on the apparent

guilt or innocence of Guinevere, but rather on which of two possible alternatives the two friends should follow. Both of these are remarkable for their straightforward simplicity: the first, assuming that Guinevere will, in fact, be found guilty, is a positive one insofar as it means that she will automatically be free to marry Lancelot. The second, quite in keeping with the character of Galehaut, would have him and Lancelot surprise Arthur and carry off the Queen to Galehaut's territory. In the final analysis the end result would be the same. Both are, of course, decidedly coloured by the interest Galehaut himself has in his friend, whom he loves more than anything in the world, and thus they can hardly be considered objective solutions, but they do indicate clearly how at least this man of action is not led astray by appearances--indeed the illusion or the reality of the situation is not even pertinent to him at this point. He knows what he wants and sees an opportunity to seize it.

The two dreams (xii) which trouble Galehaut as he sleeps, unlike the dreams and visions of the Estoire or the Queste, do not present him with alternatives between which he must choose. Like the dreams of earlier sections of the Prose Lancelot, these do not allow for any margin of error in interpretation, for they are prognostications and as such, inevitably come true. Since there is no question of misinterpretation of the dreams, it naturally follows that there can be no question of confusion between reality and

illusion. However, these dreams and the subsequent interpretation given to Galehaut are directly related to our investigation insofar as Galehaut does not reveal to Lancelot the interpretations which he knows are true, for he has

34:36 promised Helyes not to do so (xii). Galehaut deliberately deceives his friend by giving false information concerning certain aspects of the dreams. Specifically, he misleads Lancelot with the suggestion that the crowned serpent (again a woman figure) is really death and not, as he now knows, a symbol for the Queen herself. Galehaut knows full well what this figure implies and that in her person lie the seeds of his own destruction, but not wishing to lose Lancelot forever, and unwilling to prevent him from going to the court at will, he finds it necessary to deny the reality of his dreams. Consequently, Lancelot's insistence that the Queen approve of everything he does obviously causes pain to Galehaut. "Mais pour ce que vous maues tant ame sui iou prest de faire quanque vous voldries . sauue la volente madame . Et ensi comme elle la tornera si soit" (36:38-40). To these words of Lancelot Galehaut replies: "Noient fait Galeholt ne maues dit . Car iou sai bien que madame ne voldroit nulle riens vouloir . que vous ne le volssissiez ensement" (36:42-37:1-2). Galehaut is aware of the terrible consequences for himself if matters be allowed to continue as they are. Thus, Galehaut's deception is clearly responsible for the subsequent direction which the course of the

story now takes. Had Galehaut been able to act in any other way, for he did after all possess knowledge concerning the future (and it is very clear that he wished to do all he could to govern the way in which the future would affect him), Lancelot might have been persuaded to act differently toward the Queen. But this is mere conjecture. Galehaut does not act otherwise and the plot unfolds in accordance with the actions which he takes. As a result, Lancelot is happy with Galehaut's explanation: "Si quide bien que ce soit voirs ce que Galeholt li fait entendre" (42:17), and the future course of events is firmly established as Galehaut and Lancelot return to Arthur's court (xii).

Thus each of the two introductory episodes, the Lancelot-Galehaut scenes and the Arthur-Guinevere adventure, is directly dependent upon a perversion of the truth for its motivation, the former because Galehaut wishes to retain Lancelot's friendship and the latter because the Queen is accused of usurping the power which rightly belongs to another.

When both of these plots are subsequently united by the appearance of Lancelot and Galehaut at Arthur's court, the action is again motivated by deception--this time by a reiteration of her accusations from the lips of the "False Guinevere" herself. However, since she has chosen the path of deception to gain her ends, the lady now finds it

necessary to resort to a complicated web of intrigue in order to carry the day. First, Arthur is tricked (xii) and led into an ambush where he is taken prisoner; then, feigning a lack of all knowledge of the incident, the "False Guinevere" returns to court insisting that she must see the King, who she well knows, is her prisoner. She demands of him the return of the Round Table he acquired as part of his bride's dowry. While he is her prisoner, she relies on another form of deception when she gives him powerful potions which arouse in him a sincere love for her. "Et li roys le trouua si debonaire et si cortoise que moult li plot . Et en oubliia lamour de la royne . Car elle fist poisonz quele li donna a boiure par coi li roys lama tant . et fist tant quil le mist en son lit & en fist son boin & lama sour [tou]tes les femmes del monde" (50:7-10). Finally she convinces him to support her claim for the throne of his Queen.

To most of the members of the court it appears that Arthur is dead, even though some, like Galehaut and Gauvain, refuse to believe that this could be so. Guinevere, however, is distraught for she is firmly convinced that the predicament in which she now finds herself is a direct result of the deception which she practised against Arthur by making love to Lancelot. ". . . mais la force de lamor par coi iou ai meserre estoit si tres grant que mes cuers ne sen pooit partir . et la proiere de celui qui tous lez bons

a passes" (54:4-6). The problem of the Queen's apparent guilt which is raised by the "False Guinevere" is, of course, really only a problem for the characters directly involved, for the reader is well aware of the innocence of Arthur's lawfully wedded Queen and of the cruel plan of her half-sister; he is not required as they are to make the ultimate choice between the illusion of the situation and its reality.

0:8-10 Arthur, of course, now under the influence of the drugs administered to him by the "False Guinevere" is no longer able to make a rational decision, for the drugs have done their work well. Indeed, he is already convinced of his wife's guilt and is prepared to remove her from his side. Consequently, when he addresses his barons to ask them for their advice, he is really asking them for confirmation of a decision which he has already reached for himself. "Iou sai bien fait li roys comment il en est . Et se ne fust li grans pechies iou lamaisse miex que vne autre femme . mais iou le tenroie encontre dieu et encontre droit ne ia pour nulle riens deseuerance nen fust faite . mais cele a qui li baron de cest pais sacordent et tenront sera dame & royne" (55:30-33). His admonition to them rings hollow: "Et pour ce que li voirs ne puet estre si bien seus par autres comme par vous . Si vous en ai chi semons . si voeil que vous me iures sour sains . que vous nen dires riens pour amour ne pour haine se parmi la uerite non . et que vous seres feu a celi que li drois hoirs en doit estre" (55:40-56:2). It



is interesting to note that when the death of the Queen is demanded by the "False Guinevere," Arthur is surprisingly quick to make a decision. Under the influence and prodding of his new Queen and motivated by his own love toward her, he readily accedes to her demands, and thus once again he shows himself to be lacking in the virtues of a king. "Et conieure sez hommes sor lor feutes que il fachent ce quil lor a requis . Et se vous ne le voles faire . iou trouerai bien qui le fera . Et il dient quil ne le feront pas . Car li iugemens aporteroit quele fust arse ou dampnee puis quele nest royne espousee . Et quant li roys voit quil nen feront plus si iure quil sera fait ains la nuit" (57:19-23). By way of comparison at this point it is worth noting that Lancelot, emotionally involved in the affair, proves to be something less than a tower of strength himself. It is again Galehaut who continues to see the situation from the very practical and effective point of view necessary for his own ends. "Par foy fait Galeholt madame est bien amee de tous ses barons et il ne deussent pas souffrir por perdre cors et auoir quele fust destruite . Et bien li promech & bien voeil que chascuns le sache que iou en perdrai auant mons cors & toute ma terre . que elle en muire . Mais pour ce quil conuient lafaire belement mener . si que lonour madame y soit sauue . voeil ie que vous proies a monseignor le roy que pour lamor de nous tous otroit quele viue . si len proies tantost quil reuient del iugement . Et sil ne le

veult faire si atendes le iugement . Et se vous vees quele soit iugie . si prenes congie daler en uostre pais . et dites que vous ne porries veoir sa mort en nulle maniere du monde . Et apres ce verres vous bien comment ie en ouuerrai" (57:40-58:8), even though this is not (as we later realize) because he is convinced of the innocence of the Queen but because this is necessary for his own ends: "Et li roys lor respont que de ce ne li poise il mie se li sairement en sont fait . Et quant Galeholt lentent si se traist vers celui qui le cor doit sonner . et li fait sonner . Et ce fist il por ce que il quidoit que la royne eust tort del blasme que on li auoit mis seure . et que li iugemens fust droituriers" (65:2-6). Consequently his actions move Lancelot to challenge the decision of the court. As a direct result of the tangled web of deceit spun first at the court, later augmented while Arthur was the prisoner of the "False Guinevere" and finally increased again at the court, comes Lancelot's decision to renounce his seat at the Round Table and to fight on behalf of the Queen.

In the meantime, Arthur continues to vacillate as he tries in vain to avoid a battle between Lancelot and three of the best knights of Carmelide. When Lancelot will hear none of this, Arthur takes his position with the "False Guinevere" for he is torn between his love for this, his finest knight, and the belief that his new Queen has told the truth. At

this point Arthur is quite unwilling to distinguish illusion from reality:<sup>1</sup> ". . . mais iou ne le porroie hair . pour outrage quil mait encore dit . Et encore hui ai iou proiet a nostre segnor quil li doinst lonor de la bataille . Ne iou naimme tant nul cheualier qui de mon sanc ne soit . comme iou fais lui . et iou li ai bien moustre [semblant] chi et aillors" (62:31-34).

The ultimate decision is made in Lancelot's combat and the innocence of the Queen becomes evident. After a moment of pious introspection Arthur declares: "Et sachies que se

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<sup>1</sup>The poet allows a certain ambiguity to cloud the situation at this point. Although he has made us quite aware of the effect of the potion on Arthur's previous judgement, he does not dwell on this fact, nor indicate whether or not this is still a factor in the story. Consequently, the reader is left to decide for himself exactly what motivated the King to retain the "False Guinevere." However, on the basis of this vacillation in particular and of statements such as: "Biaus nies [Gauvain] fait li roys ie sai bien que vous maues raison moustree . et iou ferai pour lui retenir moult grant meschief . Et se iou ne lamaisse de grant amour il neust mie si legierement mon iugement fausse . Mais parmi tout ce li prierai iou de remanoir . et par couuent que iou ferai tout outreement ce quil voldra . fors de ceste femme laissier . Car de li departir ne me porroie iou mie en cestui point . aincois en sofferroie la hayne de la moitie de tous mes barons" (70:14-20); "Et sil auoit amee lautre . toute la mise en oubli por lamor que il a mise en cestuie" (72:10-12), it would seem to us that Arthur's motivation is inherent in his own personality and not the result of any drug administered to him by the "False Guinevere." The problem may, in any case, be academic, however, since, whether Arthur is unwilling or unable to see the truth, the result remains the same and the King loses both Guinevere and Lancelot.

iou estoie sans femme . iou lamerioie miex que femme qui soit en tout le monde . Ne pour autre ne la lairoie ie mie.. mais tant comme li vins est boins le doit on boire . Et ensement tant comme iou ai cele espousee et acompaignie en mon regne . ne doi iou autre auoir . Car on en diroit plus mal que bien se iou tenoie ma femme espousee et ma soignant Atant sen partent du conseil . entre lui et monseignor Gauvain et sont venu la ou li baron les atendent . Si lor deuisse tout ensi comme il auoit dit a monseignor Gauvain . Et cil li loent ensi por ce que sa uolente y estoit plus que por ce que il lor plaise" (69:8-16), and then relinquishes Guinevere to

:17-28 Galehaut's keeping (xii).

It is now clear that the Queen is innocent of the charges levelled against her but it seems that the question of taking back his rightful queen never enters Arthur's mind; nor does the admission, wrung from the second knight whom Lancelot faced, that the judges who passed sentence upon the Queen were traitors, have any effect on the king. In both instances, the reality of the situation has been revealed and yet Arthur persists in clinging to the illusion. Obviously the same desire to lust after other women, to seek out the adventure of a romance outside of marriage as he did with the enchantress, Camille, has led him once again into difficulties. As we have indicated, Arthur refuses to do anything which will take the "False Guinevere" from him, and so, unwilling to see the truth which he knows in his own

heart is obvious to all, Arthur clings to the illusion and thereby relinquishes not only his wife but also the services of the best knight in the world.

Nor is this all Arthur loses as a result of this stubborn illusion. Impervious to the outspoken warnings of Gauvain: ". . . et iou vous quidoie tant auoir dit que vous vous en pensissies . mais vous estes ensi comme beste" (74:30-32).

Arthur continues to love the "False Guinevere": "Et sil auoit amee lautre . toute la mise en oubli por lamor que il a mise en cestui" (72:10-12), and in the process he incurs the wrath of the Pope and loses the loyalty of those who once loved him and respected him. It is this latter development which ultimately forces Arthur to listen to

6:25-8 Gauvain's advice and to turn to God to ask forgiveness for his sins.

The "False Guinevere" episode ultimately reaches its climax and conclusion with the confessions of both Bertholai and the false queen herself in order to save their souls, but  
 9:19-20 and  
 9:37-8 to reach this stage in the development of the story has required some two and a half years. Only now is Arthur prepared to open his eyes to a reality which he has long possessed.

The Queen, once again at Arthur's court (xiii), longs to have her lover nearby and although she has promised Galehaut not to try to convince Lancelot to remain at Arthur's court,

she reneges on her word. Making Lancelot swear not to disclose her actions to his friend Galehaut, she wrings from him a promise not to consent to remain at court until after 85:39-41 she has begged him to do so on bended knee. In this way, for all intents and purposes, things will not appear to be quite as they really are. Thus an apparently minor incident, based as it is on deliberate deception, ultimately has tragic consequences, for it helps to fulfill the clerk Helyes' prediction concerning Galehaut's death. Guinevere's intrigue with Lancelot unfolds according to plan: "Lors se met la royne a genouls deuant lui . Et lancelot ne le pot ueoir . si len cort releuer et il li dist ha . dame por dieu merci . iou remaing puis sen uait agenoillier deuant le roy . . ." (85:29-31) so that, as a result of their deception, which gives the illusion that the Queen is really doing the will of the King, Lancelot agrees to remain at Arthur's court, where inevitably matters must unfold in accordance with these events.

The next segment of the Lancelot Proper relies on a device used in both the Lancelot Proper, Part I and in the Queste and to a lesser extent in the Merlin and the Estoire: the search. While the actual search itself is hardly deception, it invariably introduces elements which are clearly designed to mislead or to misguide and these are unmistakably linked to the confusion between reality and appearances. As we shall see, the device of the search itself introduces a

thread of continuity into the plot line, but it is only by means of repeated events involving mistaken identity, knights incognito, or deliberate deception to mislead those in pursuit of a given character that the search may be continued and a particular episode brought to an acceptable conclusion. Again it is important to realize that each such incident is invariably associated with a crisis in the development of the story itself.

While seeking adventure in the forest near London, Gauvain is kidnapped (xiii) from under the very eyes of his companions, Lancelot, Yvain, and Galeschin, by a huge knight, Carados, and is subsequently locked in the Tour Doloreuse. Although his friends are, of course, aware of Gauvain's identity, they do not know who has carried him off or why. Separating from one another in order to search effectively, each of the three knights experiences a different series of adventures in the quest for Gauvain and these the poet welds into a coherent and cohesive unity.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Although the technique of "entrelacement" is essential to this section of the text, as indeed it is to all the Prose Lancelot, equally important is the thread of unity provided by the quest for Gauvain. Always foremost in the mind of the searchers is the desire to learn first, who Gauvain's captor is and then to discover how to release him. Thus the author finds himself compelled to reiterate time and time again the purpose of their mission. This is true for Galeschin, the Duke of Clarence: "Et cil [s]en vint a lui . Et li dus li demande quel poigneis illuec auoit este . Sire fait il la dame de briestoc a qui iou sui uenoit a la cort le roy artu son cousin . si encontrames iehuy matin cheualiers descorgies si quil en estoit tous sanglens Et madame le quida rescorre et fist sez cheualiers assambler



Adventures quickly follow one another, most important among them from Lancelot's point of view being the freeing of the inhabitants of Escalon li Tenebreux from perpetual darkness (xiv) and the release of the knights in the Val sans Retour. This latter adventure, in particular, is significant for future developments and again deception plays a role. Using

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a ceus qui lenmenoient . si furent tout que mort que pris . et iou meisme y fui tels atornes comme vous poes veoir" (103:1-8) and again: "Et li dus li conte comment mesires Gauvain fu pris . et la dame en fait moult grant duel" (103:31-32); ". . . se il entroient tout en la queste por lancelot . quar il les auoit tous deliures de prison . Et il si acordent tout . si montent sor lor cheuals" (125:2-4); "Sire chaiens est laenture de la dolerouse tor . Et uees vous cele petite lu[i]serne la . et il dist oil . Cils fait elle qui porra tant aler auant quil puisse ourir luis la ou vous vees vn poi de clarte . cils achieuera lez auentures de la dolerouse tour . et metra a fin ceste auenture" (107:33-6) and Lancelot: "Lors demande saigremor a monseignor yvain & a lancelot ou il vont . Et il li content le grant besoing . et il en fait moult grant duel . et la damoisele aussi . quar de monseignor Gauvain li poise il trop (101:9-11); "Et elle lor demande porcoi il[se] sont arreste . Et il li dient por ce quil ne seuent laquele voie il doiuent aler a la dolerouse tor . Et quales vous querant fait la damoisele . Et il dient que grans besoins lez maine . Et liquels fait elle bee a monseignor Gauvain deliurer de prison" (109:24-27); "Or y ales dont fait elle que li glorieus dieus qui plus preu vous a fait que tous lez autres vous doinst ceste honor a conquerre . et se vous la conqueres iamais a autre ne faldres . Car ce est la cles de toutes autres auentures" (119:31-33). Yvain, by contrast, seems to be more concerned with doing good deeds and helping ladies in distress than finding Gauvain. Even when he rescues the damsel who is hanging by her hair from the oak tree he fails to mention that he is seeking Gauvain, although she mentions his name and bemoans the fact that he is not there to help her and her knight who has been cruelly misused. This discrepancy in the treatment of the third character of the group (i.e., of Yvain), would tend to give credence to the idea that these adventures are a later interpolation in the story.



20:37 a ruse to cross the plank leading into the castle as well as the magic ring which he has received from the Queen and which has the power to dispel all enchantments, (i.e., to distinguish between reality and illusion), Lancelot soon frees the inhabitants of the enchanted valley, including Galeschin and Yvain, but in so doing he himself incurs the wrath of Morgan. Motivated by her hatred of the Queen and the desire for vengeance, she secretly administers a potion

23:29-31 to drug Lancelot as he sleeps and carries him off in a horse-litter. Concealing her real intent, she informs Lancelot she is holding him for ransom but more than anything she wants possession of his ring. "Et de la mut la grant hayne que elle ot tout iors enuers la royne . Et por ce assaioit elle se ia a lancelot porroit atraire lanel . Mais atant se taist ore li contes a parler de morgain et de lancelot" (124:34-36). At this point, then, the situation is similar to the one in which the "False Guinevere" drugged Arthur to make him love her. Drugs which hold the mind captive and render rational choice between reality and illusion impossible dominate the story, triggering a new search with all its attendant adventures (xiv). Out of this deception, therefore, there arises a further series of episodes complicating the original quest for Gauvain. It becomes a quest within a quest, not unlike the one in which Gauvain, who was seeking Lancelot in Part I, found himself the object of a search by Hector. And so, spurred on by

Galeschin, the knights whom Lancelot has just rescued from the enchanted valley set out to find their benefactor. But in this instance, the search is soon terminated as Lancelot himself discovers them. Having secured his release from

27:5-7 the prison of Morgan the Fairy on the promise he will return when asked to do so, Lancelot arrives at the Doloreuse Tour with the intent of freeing Gauvain firmly set in his mind. Consequently, this quest once again clearly emerges to dominate the action. The adventure is brought to a successful close with the reunion of the four: Lancelot, Galeschin, Yvain and Gauvain and the recounting of their adventures in their quest (xiv).

The next major segment of the Lancelot Proper, Part II is also set into motion by deceit or illusion. Unable to force Lancelot to give up the magic ring which he wears, Morgan resorts a second time to drugs and exchanges his ring for a similar one of her own (xv). Significantly, Lancelot is 40:9 unaware of her actions, i.e., the reality of the situation: "Et puis quele li ot oste li monstra elle par maintes fois . por sauoir sil le reconnistroit . Car sil sen aperceust & il ne leust tantost . elle se cremoit quil nen issist du sens de duel . Et por voir si feist il . Et quant elle li ot moustre par maintes fois . et elle uit quil ne sen aperchut mie . si fist vne des greignors desloiautes del monde" (140:4-8). With it Morgan is then able to deceive the court of King Arthur and, in particular, the Queen, her

foremost adversary. Directing one of her damsels to go to the court, she has her inform those present that Lancelot will never return but begs their forgiveness for his faithlessness to them. Her cruel deception reaches a high point as the damsel throws the ring which Guinevere has given him into her lap. Naturally, the Queen protests that she has loved Lancelot honourably, but clearly she is troubled about their relationship and what is known of it. Her words have a dual meaning, especially her remark: "Iou voldroie ore quil fust de moi & de lui ensi comme ceste damoisele le dist par conuent quil fust sains & haities yci endroit" (142:14-15). Even Arthur who, of course, misses the subtlety of her words, admits that he would rather the Queen love Lancelot than he, Arthur, lose such a noble knight. But the Queen suspects that something is amiss in the events which have just occurred, for she knows Lancelot as lovers know one another and cannot believe that he would willingly have been a partner of such an outrage. In other words, she suspects the truth behind the illusion which Morgan has created, and so, while the rest of the court, including Arthur, is prepared to believe the worst and to accept at face value the false words of the damsel, Guinevere confides in Galehaut, who undertakes yet another search for his beloved friend--a search for truth. He is joined in his quest by Lionel, Gauvain and Yvain.

As each of the four companions goes his separate way (xv) in order to find the damsel who has brought the message from Morgan in the hopes that she will lead them directly to Lancelot, Morgan continues to weave her web of intrigue and deception around Lancelot. Characteristically, the means at her disposal lead her to attempt to confound illusion and reality for him in order to make him yield to her wishes and to put the Queen out of his mind. Thus she undertakes a form of brainwashing, perverting for her own evil purposes the magic and the enchantments which she has learned from Merlin. Soon Lancelot has no way of knowing whether he is

151:36 experiencing the real world or an illusory one. Finally, coming to believe that his love for the Queen will no longer be reciprocated, he accepts Morgan's offer of conditional release a second time (xv).

The adventures of the four knights who set out to find Lancelot are, therefore, a direct result of the intrigues which Morgan sets into motion and directly dependent upon them. Most tragic are those events which involve Galehaut and ultimately lead to his untimely death. Coming upon a group of maidens carolling about Lancelot's shield, he is informed that the owner of the shield, the same knight who freed Escalon, is now dead. Galehaut does not question the truth of the story but accepts it at face value. The news, coming as it does shortly after Lancelot's disappearance from the court of King Arthur, is sufficient to mislead

Galehaut into believing that his friend is dead, and to him, there can be nothing more devastating than this. Wounded in a skirmish with ten knights and with overwhelming odds against him, Galehaut still thinks only of Lancelot and longs to hear from someone's lips the news that he still lives: "Et Galeholt dist quil ne remanroit pour nulle riens . mais pour dieu dites moi . se vous saues de lancelot nulles noueles ne de sa mort ne de sa vie . Certes fait li preudoms auant hier nous fu dit quil estoit mors . mais ore en auons nous tant appris que bien quidons quil soit vis . mais nous ne sauons ou il est" (146:6-10). None the wiser but still torn between two conflicting opinions, Galehaut still wants desperately to believe that his friend is alive. Although good news of Lancelot's safety ultimately reaches him from Lionel, who informs him that he has seen their friend, its effect is relatively short-lived, for once again the rumour spreads about the countryside that Lancelot has killed himself when he fails to find Galehaut at Sorelois.

154:26-9 Significantly, the source of the rumour is again illusion which Galehaut's people are unable to penetrate: "Et de langoisse quil auoit li escreua son nes a saingnier en son lit . si auoit de sanc sainnie bien plaine vne escuile Et ensi sen ala lancelot . Et quant ce vint au matin et on troua le sanc en son lit si quida on vraiment quil se fust ochis si en firent lez gens Galeholt si grant duel que greignor ne porroit on faire . Mais ore se taist li contes

vn poi de lui . et retorne a Galeholt qui le uait querre" (154:25-29). Nor can Galehaut now retain his hope of seeing Lancelot any longer. In his sorrow caused by the alleged death of his friend, he refuses to eat. An old wound subsequently breaks open and Galehaut is laid low by a strange illness which causes both body and limbs to wither and ultimately results in his death (xv).

Thus ends the role which Galehaut has played in the Lancelot Proper almost from the beginning. His death is clearly a direct result of the deception perpetrated by Morgan at the court of Arthur--a deception which becomes more and more involved as the story progresses.

Lionel, like Galehaut, is also motivated by the desire to find Lancelot and he, too, is told that the object of the search is, in fact, dead: ". . . quar iou quier le meillor cheualier del monde et le plus bel et si nen puis oir noueles . si ai moult grant paour quil ne soit mors . Comment a il non fait elle . quar teuls poroit il bien estre . que iou vous en dirai bien la uerite . Et il dist que ce est lancelot del lac . pour voir sachies fait elle que lancelot est mors" (149:12-16). He is alleged to have been slain by a traitorous knight with whom Lionel is then compelled to fight. This information, like that given earlier to Galehaut, has no foundation in fact; indeed, it proves to be an outright lie, told by a maiden seeking vengeance for a lover whom Lancelot has killed. "Certes fait elle iou ne connich

onques lancelet . Mais iou le vous disoie pour ce que il mauoit ochis vn mien ami" (151:2-3).

Gauvain and Yvain, his cousin, who with Galehaut and Lionel also take part in the search for Lancelot, unexpectedly encounter him fighting in a tournament, assisting first one side and then the other, each time bolstering the weaker forces and helping to shift the tide of battle back and forth. By his involvement, Gauvain is immediately able to recognize him, even if Ivain is not: "Cousins saues vous qui cils cheualiers est . Et il dist nenil . Si mait diex fait il ie ne connistrai iamais homme se ce nest lancelet del lac" (153:21-23), but they are unsuccessful in convincing him to return to court. Thus the search by Gauvain and Yvain comes to an end with the discovery of Lancelot, but failure to disclose to him the fact that Galehaut, too, is looking for him, leads to further complications. Not finding his friend in Sorelois whither he has gone, ". . . Lancelot . . . [fu] tous desues . . ." (154:21). When he flees the place, his actions lead Galehaut's people to believe that he is dead.

At this point the Conte de la Charette, sometimes considered as Part II of the Lancelot Proper, begins. The next important episode involving Meleagant, the evil son of the good King Baudemagus, is set into motion as a result of a boon granted to Keu by the Queen in the hopes of persuading him to stay in court. Keu has just expressed his dissatisfaction

with the fact that no one there seems to appreciate him and indicated his intention to leave. Accepting Guinevere's offer of a boon, and hence relying upon deception (xvi), 158:35 Keu demands that she accompany him to the wood where he has decided to defend her against Meleagant in accordance with the unaccepted challenge which the latter has just issued to Arthur and his knights. To be sure, Keu is no match for Meleagant, but the instant the latter sets off with the Queen as his prisoner, Lancelot appears on the scene and scatters Meleagant's knights. Nor does he reveal himself to Gauvain who fails to recognize him and offers him a fresh mount for the one he has lost in the fray. Only Meleagant is astute enough to realize that his new adversary is Lancelot.

The episode in which Lancelot allows himself to be trans-ported ignominiously in a cart is also directly linked to 162:39 the concealment of identity, as Lancelot himself admits after he has rejoined Gauvain (xvi). "Lors prent lancelot entre sez bras & li dist biaux douls sire pourquoi vous estes vous tant celes enuers moi . pourquoi fait lancelot . pour chou que iou doi auoir honte de tous preudhommes veoir . Car iai este en point et en lieu de toutes honors conquerre . et par ma maluaistie y ai failli" (166:41-167:4), but the very fact that neither Gauvain nor Lancelot is willing to disclose to the two damsels of the castle near Terre Foraine exactly who Lancelot is, leads them to try to



discover his identity for themselves and to resort as well to deception. To this end one of the damsels follows a shorter route and arrives at a point on the road ahead of the two friends. Not recognized by either of them when they pass by, she accosts them there and extracts from each a promise--a sort of boon--to grant her first request she will make of them, if she will show them the way to the Terre Foraine. After a series of adventures in which Lancelot proves his prowess to the damsel, he finds himself before a burning grave where the voice of Symeu, whose soul Joseph of Arimathea had saved, discloses Lancelot's real identity: "Ne tu nas mie a non lancelot en baptesme mais Galaad" (176:31). When Lancelot realizes that she now knows who he is, he begs her not to reveal his secret to anyone, for he wishes to move about incognito until such time as he will be able to deliver the Queen in accordance with the prediction made to him by the Lady of the Lake. "Or vous pri iou fait il par la riens que vous plus ames que vous ne le dies a nullui deuant ce que vous saurois comment iou aurai exploitie de ma queste ou bien ou mal quar de tant comme il mest ia mescheu ai iou honte trop grant" (177:38-41). Again he makes a similar request that his identity remain a closely guarded secret when the son of a vavasor who has invited Lancelot to share his venison recognizes his shield. "Che poise moi que nus le set . Car iou ai poi donor aquise & moult de honte . Car iai failli a vne des plus hautes auentures del monde" (179:20-22).

Finally, Lancelot reaches the Pont d'Espee which he must cross before he can enter Gorre and rescue the Queen.

Meanwhile as Gauvain makes his way to the Pont Perdu and Gorre, he encounters and does battle with unknown knights on three separate occasions. In the first instance neither knows the other's identity, but when Gauvain does disclose his to his adversary, complimenting him on his courage, the latter immediately denies that they can ever be friends, for it seems Gauvain has been responsible for the death of his cousin. Again a combat between Gauvain and another knight arises where the exiles wish to take prisoner the damsel accompanying Gauvain; the end result is the same and Gauvain forces the knight to submit. In the third instance, Gauvain is forced to do battle with Fergus, his host, as soon as he learns Gauvain's identity. Fergus, too, is slain. Ironically, in each case revelation of Gauvain's identity leads to each of the adventures in which he takes part.

192:13

With but a few exceptions, Lancelot has managed to conceal himself well as he seeks to free the Queen in the series of episodes devoted to the conflict between Lancelot and Meleagant. No one recognizes that he was the knight of the cart, although reference to that episode recurs frequently. Nor does anyone know who he is when he arrives at the Pont d'Espee. Here again enchantment plays an important role as the ring given to him by the Lady of the Lake dispels the illusion of the lions sent to attack him. Ultimately the

Queen recognizes him, although she is not yet prepared to admit this openly, not even to Baudemagus, who also suspects Lancelot's identity. Nor does Lancelot reveal who he is until he is asked by Baudemagus to remove his helmet for the love of the Queen. When he is finally presented to the Queen, she denies her true feelings and pretends to be angry with him, refusing to see him because he had left London without her permission (xvi). "Et puis li requier lancelot quele li die pourcoi elle ne volt lautre iour parler a lui Et elle li dist Dont ne vous en alastes vous de la grant cort de londres sans mon congiet . Et il li dist que chi ot grant forfait" (209:7-9). Her actions are thus directly responsible for turning him away. Consequently, when he is mistakenly captured by Baudemagus' men, a false rumour of his death begins to circulate. When it reaches the Queen, she is so beside herself with grief that it is not long before news of her death reaches Lancelot's ears. Resolving to kill himself, he fails, but not before the initial deceit of the Queen has all but destroyed both him and herself. In the course of events he is returned to the castle where he is finally welcomed by the Queen.

Lancelot's next battle with Meleagant also stems directly from a misinterpretation of evidence which deceives Meleagant into believing that the Queen has slept with Keu. As soon as Meleagant notices blood on the Queen's pillow, he jumps to the hasty but incorrect assumption that the blood belongs

to Keu for recently some of his wounds split open before they were fully healed. Little does he realize that Lancelot is responsible, for in making his way into his lady's chamber he has cut his hands while forcing the bars on the window. The Queen is forced to lie to cover up the evidence and when Meleagant demands justice from her, Lancelot defends Keu. But once again Baudemagus prevails upon the Queen to stop the battle before his son is slain.

12:41-2 Shortly thereafter there occurs yet another incident in the Lancelot-Meleagant story in which the former is again deceived, this time by a dwarf, working for Meleagant (xvii). Leading Lancelot to a castle, the dwarf allows him to fall through a trap-door in the floor where he is taken prisoner by 14:8-10 Meleagant. This treachery is further compounded by a false letter which the evil Meleagant subsequently sends to the Queen, who with Gauvain is awaiting word of Lancelot (xvii). Ostensibly from the King, the false letter informs them that Lancelot has already returned to Arthur's court, when, in fact, he is still being held captive.

19:19 Promising the wife of the seneschal who held him prisoner a boon in return for his conditional release, Lancelot succeeds in persuading her to free him in order that he might attend, incognito, an assembly being held by Arthur at Pomeglay. Since he is bearing the arms of the seneschal, no one recognizes him, but unfortunately this disguise has

been made possible only at very high cost, for as he then learns, the boon granted to the wife of the seneschal promises her his love. At the assembly, both the Queen and Gauvain soon recognize the knight who performs such feats of daring as Lancelot, but Guinevere has ideas of her own. ". . . si en est moult lie . mais elle pense quele deceuera monseignor Gauvain & tous lez autres" (220:32-33). Bidding him to do badly on the field, she forces her lover to feign incompetence during the match. However, on the following day she reverses her order and demands that he do his best. Consequently, by the time he leaves the field to return to prison, everyone knows that it is Lancelot who has performed so well.

Once again the plot of the Lancelot-Meleagant story is motivated by deception and disguise, for through the intervention of the step-sister of Meleagant, Lancelot is freed from the tower which serves as his prison and, disguised as one of the maidens of this girl, he makes his way to the court of Arthur where Meleagant, fully aware that Lancelot is his prisoner and believing that he is still there, insists either on doing battle with Lancelot or, failing this, on taking possession of the Queen herself.

The action of the story now swings to Bohort (xviii). Admonished by Lancelot to seek out adventure in order to improve his stature as a knight, Bohort resolves to find

Lancelot and to experience whatever adventures he can along the way. The first of these involves the return of the castle to the Lady of Hongrefort, but in the process she behaves badly and in a fit of anger at the treatment she has received at the hands of her adversary, she mistreats the prisoners sent to her by Bohort and brings about their death. When she becomes aware of her error she is morally obliged to beg Bohort's forgiveness but, since he has answered a summons to appear before the Lady of the Lake, the Lady of Hongrefort is forced to set out on a quest for him. Thus the reader is again confronted by a quest within a quest as Bohort seeks out Lancelot while he himself is being sought by the Lady of Hongrefort. Of course, deception and mistaken identity have a role to play in these adventures as well.

57:31- Bohort's next adventure inevitably gives rise to a confusion  
6 of identities, for once he has freed the lady who is bound in iron bands<sup>1</sup> and has sworn to avenge her, he must accept the conditions of her release and for a year and a day in his quest for Lancelot bear the shield which she provides for him. The quest for Lancelot upon which he has embarked

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<sup>1</sup>The lady is the daughter of King Agrippe and had, a year earlier, poisoned the only remaining well supplying water to King Vadalon who was besieging her father in "la roche Mabon." Some five hundred of Vadalon's men died. Later she was hunted down and taken before him. Believing death to be too mild for her, Vadalon had two iron bands fastened about her. Agrippe's daughter vowed to leave them intact until her deliverer should swear to punish her tormentor.

is directly responsible for an apparent slight committed against King Brangoire's daughter, for Bohort fails to fulfill an old custom of her country which demands that he choose twelve knights for twelve beautiful damsels, including the daughter of the King. Since Bohort cannot take a wife (his quest held priority over everything else) he excuses himself from among the knights to be chosen and, because it was assumed that he, as the finest knight, would select the daughter of the King, she cannot fathom his reasons for failing to do so and believes herself wronged: "Et lors quant la fille le roy vit quele auoit failli a celui qui elle quidoit auoir . si en est moult dolante . mais samblant nen ose faire . Si sen esmerueille moult pourcoi li cheualiers ne lauoit prise . Et aussi font tout li autre" (266:4-7).

Bohort cannot accept her as a bride and still continue his adventures. Thus, the lady conceives of a plan--an intrigue not unlike the one which resulted in Lancelot's deception and the conception of Galahad, which is designed to make Bohort her own. Once again, it is enchantment, again in the form of a ring given to Brangoire's daughter by an old nurse, which sets events into motion: "Et bohort si prent lanel & le met en son doit . Et si tost quil li ot mis si li est li cuers mues moult durement" (269:11-13). As a result of this one act of deception, the lady conceives Helain le Blanc and in so doing, automatically relegates Bohort to third place amongst the knights of the Grail, after Galahad

and Perceval, for willingly or not, he has broken his vow of chastity (xviii). The effect of the revelation of her intrigue the following morning causes him great sorrow:

"Et lor saperchut il quil auoit este deceus . si en fu moult dolans" (270:19-20).

Three minor episodes, also arising out of mistaken or unknown identity, involve Lancelot as he makes his way to the court of Baudemagus where he successfully defends himself against Argondras, who has charged him with treason in Meleagant's death: "Si dist comment vns cheualiers a vnes armes uermeilles lauoit apele de traison en la cort le roy artu pour la mort melyagant . si men conuient a desfendre en la cort le roy baudemagu" (281:34-36). On the way to that trial he defends, incognito, the damsel who freed him from Meleagant's prison (xix) and then, not knowing who his adversary is, he fights and overcomes the cousin of Melians li Gais: "Quant lancelet entent lez paroles que li cheualier dist . si ot trop merueilleusement grant ioie . si oste son heaume et cort acoler le cheualier pour lamor de melyant que il amoit moult . et li prie quil li pardoinst ce que il li a fait . Et cil dist que chou fera il moult volentiers" (286:22-25). Nor does Lancelot disclose his identity to Banin, the godson of Ban, who has sworn to take vengeance on Meleagant because he believes that he has allowed Lancelot to die in prison.

83:33-  
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89:15-  
18



Yet another important series of episodes is given an impetus by something which Guinevere merely thinks she sees (xx).

Convinced that she has glimpsed the head of Lancelot of the Lake hanging from the saddle of Griffin del Malx Pas, the black knight who earlier gave arms to Lancelot while he was in pursuit of Argondras, her grief is immeasurable. Revealing the news to Arthur and the court, she is quite beside herself. Significantly, her story, although only the result of her own incorrect observations, motivates Gauvain to lead a party of knights to learn the truth. "Si dist mesires Gauvain oiant tous chiaus de laiens quil mouura de laiens le matin sans faille . ne iames ne finera desrer . si en saura uraies noueles sil est mors ou vis . . ." (320: 36-38).

The action now shifts principally to Gauvain (xx) as he sets out to determine the accuracy of what the Queen believes she has witnessed, i.e., whether she has seen an illusion or reality; whether Lancelot is alive or dead. The concept of the mission to find Lancelot is firmly and repeatedly stated by the poet, for in a series of events such as follow, involving ultimately thirteen knights, each experiencing his own separate adventures, the danger of fragmentation of the plot clearly calls for concern. In any case, deception and mistaken identity still play an important role in providing an impetus to plot development. Gauvain's encounter with Mathamas is based upon a misconception. Believing incorrectly

that a sad and pensive Gauvain, lost in his own thoughts, has snubbed his greeting, Mathamas prepares to do battle with him. It is not until Gauvain defeats him that he realizes that it is Mathamas who holds Sagremor prisoner. His release is thus a direct result of Gauvain's alleged affront towards Mathamas. Soon Gauvain's quest takes him to the Castel del Molin, where he encounters a knight in red armour fighting on the side of the forces against which Gauvain is fighting. Of course, he is not known to Gauvain: "Quant mesires Gauvain entent lez noueles del cheualier qui si bien le faisoit . si sesmerueille trop durement qui cil puet estre" (338:1-2). If Gauvain had not been virtually convinced that Lancelot was, in fact, dead, he would have assumed without hesitation that the red knight was Lancelot on account of the great feats he performed on the battlefield. Pursuing him, he finally discovers to his surprise that the knight is Hector (xxi), against whom he would never have fought if he had known who he was. ". . . et troua hector qui se seoit sour vne couche . Et il cort cele part et l'acole" (339:1-2).

Because both Gauvain and Hector fail to understand the significance of the warning on a marble tomb which they happen upon in a churchyard, they proceed to enter the churchyard

where they are disgraced.<sup>1</sup> Only when it is too late do they realize the mistake they have made and understand that this adventure is really intended for Lancelot. Hector, in particular, seems to have gained nothing from the experience, however, for immediately thereafter he purposely refuses to heed the warning on a sign which directs him to follow the road leading to the right. As a direct result of this, Hector is denied the marvellous experience of the Grail Castle which Gauvain now experiences (xxi). But even Gauvain's adventures at the Grail Castle are closely influenced by his failure to understand the full significance of the rich vessel which is borne into the room by the lovely damsel: "Après chou ne demora gaires . que mesires Gauvain uit issir de la cambre ou li coulons estoit entres . vne damoisele la plus bele quil eust onques mais ueu en iour de sa vie . La damoisele estoit deslije & estoit trechie a vne bende . Et auoit le plus bel chief . que onques femme portast . Si estoit si bele de toutes beautes . que el monde nauoit sa pareille . Elle issi de la cambre . et portoit entre ses mains le plus riche uaissel . que onques par homme terrien fust ueus" (343:28-34). At this point Gauvain's characteristic weakness for the ladies deceives him for,

44:10-  
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<sup>1</sup>The warning informs them that only the knight who can no longer achieve the Grail because of his "luxure," i.e., Lancelot, can complete the adventure of the churchyard successfully. This is reinforced by a second inscription which Hector and Gauvain discover on the chapel-door after they have been disgraced, indicating that only the son of the Dolorous Queen (Elaine) can enter the churchyard without shame.

watching only the girl, he stands in awe of her great beauty:

"Après regarda la pucele qui tant estoit bele et gente et plaisans si sesmerueille moult de la grant biaute dont elle est si plaine . quil ne set riens del uaisel" (344:1-3).

Realizing that he has failed at this the most critical moment in his life, Gauvain gives himself up to his wretchedness:

". . . & maldist leure que il fu nes . quar ore est il li plus vils cheualiers del monde" (348:1-2). He is fully aware that the source of his misery lies in his absorption in the beauty of the girl: "Et lors li dist au chief de pieces . ha . sire si mait diex voirement est chou moult grant mescheance . quar vous ueistes . et si ne seustes que ce fu . ha . sire fet mesires Gauvain se vous le saues si le me dites . Certes fet li prodoms ce fu li sains graaus . li sainz vaissiaus ou li sans nostre seignor fu expandus & en quoi il fu recoellis" (348:18-22).

Thus, misled by a physical attraction to the damsel--the same sort of attraction upon which the devil played in various scenes in the Estoire and in the Queste in order to lead his intended victims astray--Gauvain finds himself dishonoured and shamed and is ultimately led from the castle in a cart. It is to be noted here that the damsel is in no way an instrument of the forces of evil. What the poet is clearly trying to say is that it is Gauvain's physical attraction to a woman which leads to his downfall. He is deceived by human beauty--an illusion--and consequently fails to recognize

the real, the absolute beauty of the vessel before him. As we are already aware, the relationship of a knight to a lady plays an important role in the Grail adventure: only a knight who has held himself totally aloof from sexual relationships can achieve the ultimate adventure of the Grail. Even Bohort, whose one sin was caused by the deceit of magic and not by his own lust, is relegated to third spot in the hierarchy of the Grail knights after Galahad and Perceval.

## CHAPTER VII

LANCELOT PROPER: Part iii

(Sommer, vol. v, pp. 3-409)

The series of events which introduces Part iii of the Lancelot Proper is devoted initially to the adventures of Guerrehes and Agravain. Closely linked to Parts i and ii in both form and content, this section reveals little essential difference in the treatment of the confusion of appearances and reality from that already evident in the first two sections of the text. Taking up the quest for Lancelot, which originates in the erroneous report of the Queen, who believes that she has recognized Lancelot's head hanging from the horse of a passing knight (Vol. IV, 317: 5-6) (xx), the knights of the Round Table set out to determine the authenticity of this news. Most are inclined to believe what Guinevere thinks she has seen and fear that he is dead. As was the case in both Part i and Part ii, the author repeatedly makes clear reasons why each of the knights, whose adventures he relates, is present: "Car mesires Gauvain est en cest pais . lui tresime de cheualiers de la table roonde . si vont querant lanceLOT" (8:36-38) and again, "iou diroie quil fust vns dez meillors cheualiers

del monde fors seulement monseignor Gauvain mon frere . mais nous quidons bien quil soit mors" (12:24-26). And yet again, "Et Guerrehes demande a saigremor . sil oy onques puis noueles de ce que il quierent Certes fet il nenil" (27:16-18), so that the quest itself has the effect of being a unifying force within the text, providing a consistent thread of action with which all the sub-plots are united. Behind all of this, however, there remains the fact that mistaken judgement and illusion have set the wheels of the search in motion, for clearly there would be no quest at all were it not for the fact that the knights who seek out Lancelot are all moved by the one desire to determine whether the Queen really saw what she believed she saw and hence to ascertain whether Lancelot is alive or dead.

As one of the numerous sub-plots subordinated to the principal theme, the story of Agravain helps to make the plot more intricate and complex, thus adding to its suspense and its interest and moving the story forward. Here too, as in the main plot, a great number of events is set into motion by confusion of appearances and reality. Two examples of this are pertinent at this point: on both occasions, it is the boon, that device which allows one individual purposely to deceive or mislead another while appealing to the friendship or love of the other, which plays an important role. In the first instance, the life of Agravain is spared as a result of a promise made by Sornehan, his adversary, to a damsel

who happens upon the scene just at this critical moment as he, Sornehan, is about to sever Agravain's head from his body (xxii). Obviously, the importance of this action enables the author to continue to narrate the adventures of Agravain here as elsewhere, so that he avoids a situation which would have led to his removal from the story, but the granting of the boon also gives rise to the scenes in prison where Agravain and Guerrehes are both being held captive by Sornehan and must subsequently be freed by Gauvain. The second occasion on which a modified aspect of the boon plays an essential role in motivating the action of the story, involves a damsel whose mother earlier promised her to a knight whom she hates. In this instance, the lady has found herself in dire straits and thus agreed to grant the knight who captured her whatever he wishes; namely, her daughter. Now that he has come to claim his boon, both mother and daughter are desperate. Guerrehes, of course, rescues the lady from the treachery of the knight and nullifies the effects of the promise made to him.

On yet another occasion within the initial scenes of the Lancelot Part iii, deceit stimulates the action of the story. Finding himself in the castle of a knight who treats his wife most ignominiously, Guerrehes plots with Sagremor to teach him a lesson. Feigning illness (xxii), Guerrehes retires to a chamber where he arms himself secretly, awaiting the outbreak of a confrontation which Sagremor provokes with



their reluctant host. Once this has occurred and the struggle has begun, Guerrehes is able to hold his own against the husband and his relatives, while awaiting Sagremor's aid. Thus, having tricked their adversaries, the two succeed in putting an end to the mistreatment which the lady has suffered for so long at her husband's hands.

:41-  
:1

One incident in these initial adventures of Guerrehes relies on illusion for its motivation. Unaware that the husband of a lady who is asleep in a pavilion is close by, Guerrehes decides to lie with her, and consequently, he is caught by the angry husband. A fight in which Guerrehes slays him naturally ensues. Finally, victorious over his opponent, Guerrehes forces the lady who, it seems, is a cousin of Lancelot, Bohort and Lionel, to accompany him. However, she manages to free herself from him by taking the veil at the convent which they pass by. In each of these instances, the fact that someone or other has been deceived and is not therefore in full possession of the truth gives rise to an adventure which otherwise would not have occurred.

Similarly, the sub-plot which narrates the adventures of Gaheriet, who also sets out in quest of Lancelot: "Si mait diex fet il iou nen sai riens fors que on dist quil est mors" (35:28-29), and "Certes fet Gaheries sil estoit mors che seroit trop grans damages . Ne ia diex ne mait sil na tels . xl . cheualiers en la table roonde dont il ne seroit

pas si grans damages sil estoient tout mort comme il seroit de lui" (41:29-32), is also primarily the result of a series of misunderstandings, for, had Sornehan known that his two captives were Gaheriet's brothers (Agravain and Guerrehes), he would certainly never have detained them. This, of course, would have precluded any conflict between himself and Gaheriet to whose will Sornehan was forced to submit when the former defeated him in order to free them: "Et quant sornehans sot quil estoient frere a monseignor Gauuain . si est mains dolans de Gaheriet que se vns autres leust conquis . Si lez fist uenir deuant lui . et lor prie quil li pardoignent ce que il lor a mesfait . Car bien sachent il quil ne cuidoit mie quil fuissent frere a monseignor Gauuain" (49:38-42). In this way, the three are united and, setting off together to seek Lancelot and to achieve as many adventures as they can in the process, they decide to commit themselves to the aid of Duke Callas who is being besieged by his six sons whom he has disinherited in favour of his only daughter. They agree that, at least for the moment, they will not reveal to the Duke who they are, but rather ask him to have patience for a time and they will tell him what he would like to know later. "Et Gaheries qui ne voloit mie que on les conneust respont quil sont destrange pais Sire fet li dus il me samble que vous soies frere . Et sil est voirs si ne le me celes mie Certes sire fet Gaheries frere sommes nous voirement . Si vous pri

:38-  
42

3:25-9

que vous vous soffrez atant de nostre estre a demander .  
 quar vous le saures bien a tamps" (53:25-29). Agravain,  
 Gaheriet and Guerrehes fight with some success until the  
 issue is further complicated during the second battle with  
 Callas' sons. They have, by now, been assisted by Lancelot  
 and Lionel who, unfortunately, have been deceived (xxiii)  
 concerning the nature of their complaint and thus, on the  
 basis of that deception, they have promised their aid to  
 the treacherous sons. "Et quant la uielle ot laiens amene  
 lancelot . il li demanda la verite de la guerre . Si li  
 conta len lez greignors merueilles del monde . et blasmerent  
 le duc a merueilles . Et lancelot quida que ce fust uoirs .  
 si iura son sairement quil ne lairoit pas lez . v . freres  
 deuant ce que li dus fust desherites et aussi fist lyoniaus"  
 (85:1-5). To be sure, they wreak havoc among the supporters  
 of the Duke; even the three brothers find themselves hard  
 pressed: Guerrehes and Agravain are captured and Gaheriet  
 is seriously wounded by Lancelot himself who, of course, is  
 totally unaware of his opponent's identity until, at a time  
 somewhat later, after the battle, he requests that the  
 prisoners, Guerrehes, Agravain and Gaheriet, be brought to  
 him. "Et quant il lez vit uenir si lez connoist bien tan-  
 tost . mais pour ce quil ne veult mie quil le connoissent  
 lez fist il metre arieres . si est tant dolans de ce quil a  
 este contre euls en ceste bataille quil ne set quil doie  
 faire Car moult amoit Gaheriet de grant amour . Et dautre

part il li en poise moult pour lamour monseignor Gauuain lor frere" (86:30-35). In order to make amends for what he has done and to prevent the disclosure of his own identity, Lancelot prevails upon the old damsel to grant him a favour in return for the services he and Lionel have rendered to her, and so, he requests her not to disclose his secret to them: "Dame me sui iou bien aquites uers vous . Et elle li dist Sire oil . Or[uous] pri iou dont fait il pour la riens el monde que vous plus ames que uous a nullui qui de moi demant ne dites mon non ne ne faites sauoir qui iou sui. Et saues uous pourcoi iou le di . ie vous en pri fet il por ce que cil troi cheualier qui sont prison chaiens sont frere monseignor Gauuain . Et iou lez aime tant que iou ne uoldroie mie que il seussent que iou eusse este encontre euls" (87: 6-12).

Thus Lancelot's desire to remain unknown to the brothers effectively prevents them from discovering who their conqueror has been and from bringing their search to a successful close. Indeed, not even the description of him given by the sons of the Duke Callas is of any help at this point, for Lancelot's hair, which had fallen out during his illness following his drinking of the poisoned water is now quite short and serves as an unexpected disguise and misleads them. As a result of this they fail to associate him with the description which is given to them. "Et est vn poi brunes et ne puet pas auoir plus haut de . xxv . ans . et est tondus

de nouel . Et quant il o[i]ent ce si sont plus desuoiet  
 que deuant si nen seuent que dire" (87:30-32). Ironically,  
 then, in possession only of a description of the arms which  
 Lancelot and Lionel are bearing, the three brothers set out  
 in search of the two knights who have defeated them, little  
 realizing that the man they initially set out to find--  
 Lancelot--is also the object of their secondary quest. By  
 allowing Lancelot to continue to move about incognito, the  
 author opens new avenues for adventure by prolonging the  
 primary search for him and subordinating other, secondary  
 ones to it.

In the meantime, the members of the court of King Arthur are  
 still convinced that what the Queen has seen is indeed  
 reality and that Lancelot is, in fact, dead: "Che dist li  
 contes que . . . li roys artus remest mas et pensis de la  
 nouele quil auoient oi dire de lancelot . Car bien quidoit  
 quil fust ocis par la nouele que la royne li auoit dite"  
 (59:1-4). The problem is further compounded when this same  
 false illusion once again misleads not only the knights of  
 the Round Table such as Bohort, who, upon returning to the  
 court, learns the tragic news: "De ma garison est il noiens  
 fet il . sil est mors Et sil est vis iou garirai bien tout  
 sans mire" (60:11-12), it also has a most obvious effect  
 upon the Queen. Pining for her secret lover, fearing the  
 worst, but always hoping for the best, ". . . quar li cuers  
 me dist quil nest mie mors . . ." (63:3), she falls ill as

a result of her inability to sleep and her unwillingness to partake of adequate nourishment. Arthur, of course, is quite unaware of the real reason behind the illness which forces her to take to her bed for a fortnight, and thus, deceived by the appearance of things, he remains uninformed: "De ceste chose fu li roys moult coroucies . ne il ne quidast pas en nulle maniere que ce fust pour lanceLOT . quar tous iors sen fu elle moult sagement deduite . Si ne se set a qui conseillier" (60:32-34). Both Bohort and Lionel decide that they must seek out the truth concerning Lancelot and so set out to find him.

While Guinevere is still confined to her bed, she has first a dream and then a vision (xxiii). In the dream, she sees Lancelot with a beautiful maiden in his bed. Angered by this, she chases him from her sight while he is still clad only in his nightshirt. He, in turn, ultimately loses his mind. This episode is immediately followed by a vision in which the Queen, still disturbed by the dream she has had, desperately feels she must beg Lancelot's forgiveness for her actions. Catching sight of the image of a man at the foot of her bed, she imagines the figure to be her lover and throws her arms about it, pleading for forgiveness. But in vain. As a direct result of the dream and the vision which reveal a truth to be realized in the future--a truth the Queen is not aware of at that time, Guinevere sends her cousin Elyzabel to the Lady of the Lake with a message for

3:32-  
5:2

her to come immediately for Lancelot's sake.

In the meantime, Lancelot, whose identity still remains a secret to all he meets, realizes that there is great despair at the court in Camelot concerning his well-being and so comes to a decision to inform the Queen, and through her, the court that he is still alive. Immediately, when the truth is known, the Queen's spirits are lifted and she recognizes Lancelot by his description. Guinevere, overjoyed then at the news, soon forgets the prophecy which is so important for the future, with the result that, ironically, at a time when the truth that Lancelot is alive is revealed to the Queen, another truth vital to the future unfolding of the story is concealed from her. It is worth noting at this point that although news that Lancelot lives has been received, the search for him goes on, for even though the Queen is aware that Lancelot is still alive, those of the companions of the Round Table who still seek him have yet to learn this and continue to look for him.

As a logical consequence of the fact that the Queen knows that Lancelot is alive, there arises yet another deception which moves the story forward. The Queen longing fervently to see Lancelot and to be with him, conspires with Lionel how she can do so, but, of course, it must be done clandestinely. Lionel advises her to prevail upon her husband to call a tournament a week after



St. Magdalene's Day to which he will endeavour to bring Lancelot unnoticed by anyone save themselves: "Et quant il seront assamble . et li tornois sera pleniers nous y uendrons en tel maniere moi et lui . que ia nus ne nous y connistera . Et ensi le porres ueoir & auoir . Et por ce que on ne lapercoiue de riens" (78:13-16).

The next major episode in the text is also motivated by deception. In it is revealed how Lancelot is enchanted and made a prisoner of Morgan, Sebile and the Queen of Soresan, each of whom vies with the other to win the love of the as yet unknown knight whom all three consider to be the most handsome knight in all the world. Declaring his intention to love none of them, Lancelot remains confused concerning his presence in their prison, for all he knows is the fact that he fell asleep under a tree and now, upon awakening, here he is. Angered by his decision to reject them, the three women swear to get even with him but, as a result of his illness which followed the drinking of the poisoned water, Lancelot has lost his hair and consequently he has a completely changed appearance. Therefore none of them recognizes who he is before he is freed by a damsel: "Ne morgue ne lauoit mie encore conneu pour ce quil ert to[u]ses de nouel" (93:28-9) (xxiv).

A similar situation in which Lancelot's short hair--the result of his serious illness--misleads others who under



normal circumstances would know him, arises after Lancelot has left Corbenic and Pelles' daughter. Seeking to learn why his horse was taken from him without his knowing why, he returns to the scene of the incident where he was earlier struck down into a ditch by another knight: "si sen vait par desore le pont ne onques ne lai[s]sa son penser Et li cheualiers sen uait uers lui le glaive alongie & le fiert si durement quil li fist la sele widier" (113:1-3). He turns out, in fact, to be Hector's uncle (xxiv). However, while he is willing to make an honourable peace with Lancelot, he is not at all prepared to accept the fact that the knight whom he has just put into the ditch is really Lancelot on account of his short hair: ". . . ce nest mie lancelot . quar il a le plus bel chief soret & cresse que nus homs puist auoir" (118:35-36). To confirm his statement, he correctly suggests that he could never have defeated a knight such as Lancelot so easily. There is no way, as far as he is concerned, that the knight now being identified as Lancelot could in fact have been he.

Still wishing to keep his identity a secret, Lancelot does not reveal himself to anyone before he comes to Corbenic. It is here that the background for one of the most important deceptions of all--if not the most important--is prepared, as Lancelot comes into contact with the daughter of Pelles, King of the Grail Castle. During the meeting, Lancelot is

tricked into lying with her and she conceives Galahad (xxiv),

the finest of the Grail knights. Events leading up to this union are set into motion by the intrigues of Brisane, the nurse of Pelles' daughter. Realizing that Lancelot has sworn to love the Queen forever, Brisane recognizes that there is no way they can induce him to be untrue to her. Consequently, there is but one way open to them if they are to fulfill the predictions of the future coming of Galahad--deception. On the pretext of leading Lancelot to the Queen, Brisane takes Lancelot to a castle near Corbenic to which Pelles' daughter has already been sent. There, in order to bring the two together, she prepares a potion for Lancelot and orders it be given to him when he has arrived at the castle. The intent of the potion is clearly stated: "Iou li ferai entendre que ce est la royne Genieure . Et iou ai vn boire appareilliet que iou li donrai . Et puis quil en aura beu & la force len sera montee el ceruel . Iou nen dout mie quil ne face ma volente" (109:16-19), and Brisane does not hesitate for even a moment to tell Lancelot what he really wants to hear, even if she knows it is not the truth. Thus, upon their arrival at the castle, she informs him that the Queen has retired to her chambers and, when she is certain that the potion is having the desired effect upon Lancelot and ". . . que elle porra bien faire de lui sa volente" (110:12-13), she takes the final step by informing him that the Queen would like to entertain him in her chambers. The union of Pelles' daughter and Lancelot is inevitable: "Lors se descauche & se despoille puis entre en

la cambre en braies et en chemises et sen vint au lit et se couche avec la damoisele comme cil qui quide que ce soit sa dame la royne . Et cele qui riens ne desiroit fors dauoir celui de qui terriene cheualerie estoit enluminee . le rechoit lie et ioieuse . Et il li fait autele ioie comme il feist[a]sa dame la royne se il la tenist" (110:19-24).

We must assume, however, that the end--the birth of Galahad--has justified the somewhat devious means by which this was accomplished, just as Merlin's deceptions--particularly the one which led to the birth of Arthur--were condoned: "Car elle ne le fist mie tant pour la biaute de lui ne pour escauffement de char comme elle fist por le fruit recheuoir dont tous li pais deuoit reuenir en sa premiere biaute qui par le dolerous cop de lespee auoit este desertes et escillies" (110:28-31). Indeed it is made quite clear that even God smiled upon this union: "Et pour ce que li sires . . . regarda cele assamblee selonc le preu a ceuls del pais comme cil qui ne voloit mie quil fussent tous iors en escil . si lor donna tel fruit a engendrer et a conceuoir . que pour la flor de uirginite . qui illuec fu corrompue . fu restoree vne autre fleur . dont grans biens vint al pais . . . Que de ceste fleur perdue fu restores Galaad li uirgenes li bons cheualiers . cil qui lez auentures del saint Graal mist a fin" (110:38-111:7). On the following morning, when the effects of the potion have worn off and much to Lancelot's surprise he finds himself



1:34- with Pelles' daughter, he is grieved and angry even to the  
37 point of wishing to punish her for the deception in which she willingly took part. "Et quant il a ueu celle de par qui il a este deceus . si est tant dolans quil guide bien issir del sens . si pense quil sen uengera orendroit sans plus attendre . Lors trait lespee et vint uers la damoisele & fu trop dolans et trop durement iries" (111:34-37).

The quest becomes more complicated as Lancelot, who himself is the object of a search by the companions of the Round Table, feels himself driven by a burning desire to find his brother, Lionel. Setting out to discover his whereabouts, he comes upon the "forest perdue" where he is warned by means of a sign not to enter the wood on pain of death (xxiv). So great is his desire, however, to complete his quest for Lionel, he ignores this warning and the admonition of an old hermit as well and determines to know the secret of the forest. Here, in the "forest perdue," Lancelot once again falls victim to enchantment--in this instance a sort of deception designed to provide the King's daughter, whose love Ban's brother sought, an escape from the every-day reality of the world (xxiv). The result is more than is expected; the carolling which she had hoped would last forever is extended to include others as well: "Et si vous dirai comment . Car iou vous detenrai ceuls qui chi sont en tel maniere que tout lor uiuant ne seront trauelliet de caroler & caroleront en este & en yuer & toutes lez heures

50:17- reality of the world (xxiv). The result is more than is  
25 expected; the carolling which she had hoped would last forever is extended to include others as well: "Et si vous dirai comment . Car iou vous detenrai ceuls qui chi sont en tel maniere que tout lor uiuant ne seront trauelliet de caroler & caroleront en este & en yuer & toutes lez heures

que il fera biau tamps . ne ia plus ne lor anuiera comme il fait hore . Et pour chou feroie iou tant que tout cil qui des ore mais enteroient en cest pre pour tant quil aiment ou aient ame par amours remandront avec euls pour caroler en tel maniere que de nulle autre chose ne lor souuenra que de feste faire . Et tout ensi comme il uendront caroleront tout iours iusques apres uespres" (150:17-25). Lancelot, too, falls under the spell of the enchantment until the conditions of this spell are met: "Si durra cele carole tant que nous viueronz ne apres nostre mort ne faudra elle mie por cose qui auiengne deuant que li mieldres cheualiers del monde & li plus biaux y uendra . mais a celui iour remandra la carole" (150:29-31), and he, Ban's son, places his father's crown on his head. Thus he learns the nature not only of this enchantment but of another, the chessboard which mysteriously checkmates anyone who plays it. This chessboard had a similar purpose to amuse the damsel for whose sake the carolling was established.

In the meantime, as Lancelot searches for Lionel, "Enon dieu fet mesire ywain nous quidiemes bien a cort quil fust mors . Car la royne le nous auoit fait entendant . Et por sauoir ent la uerite sommes meut de la cort iusques a . x . cheualiers de la table roonde . . ." (126:11-13), Yvain continues his quest for Lancelot. In the course of events, he tries to return a dog to a dwarf who has agreed to give him information about Lancelot and possibly lead him to him, but

he soon finds himself fighting against Bohort whom he does not recognize because he, Bohort, lends aid to the damsel who has taken the dwarf's dog (xxiv). The battle continues, with Yvain seriously wounded, until he is moved to inquire after his opponent's name: "Quant mesires ywains entent que ce est bohors si en ot moult grant ioie si giete son escu a terre & dist a bohort . ha . sire ie vous quit ceste bataille" (126:1-3). Having learned both from the dwarf and from Bohort that Lancelot is indeed still alive, Yvain rejoices: "Enon dieu fet mesire ywain tu en dis teuls noueles & teuls enseignes que len doit bien croire . si men porrai bien retorner quant moi plaira . quar bien mest auis que bien ai ma queste achieuee . puis que iou ai oi teuls noueles" (126:25-28), but this does not necessarily mean the end of his adventures, for he soon comes upon a dwarf whom an old woman is dragging by the hair. In a sense, he is deceived, for she refuses to cease her actions until he grants her a promise (xxiv), the nature of which is not known by Yvain until he has agreed to do so. When he learns that the boon--the deception which stimulates the action of the story--which she has demanded is a kiss, he is reluctant to grant her wish, but since he must be true to his word, he suggests instead that he would prefer to fulfill his obligations to the old woman in some other way. But even as he seeks a way out of his dilemma, he unwittingly becomes more and more entangled in the web of deceit spun by the old woman, for she

is fully aware of her future course of action (xxiv). Ultimately agreeing to his alternate proposal, then, she requests him to provide her with a helmet and a sword from a pavilion nearby, and to knock down a shield which is located in it. Little does he know at the time what destruction he has caused, for he has been deceived into freeing the giant, Mauduit, from his oath to do no violence and to cause no destruction except to avenge his shame. Bearing the giant's shield, thus making it obvious what he has done, Yvain is ultimately captured and put into prison to await the arrival of the giant. Here, much later, he is found by Lancelot and Bohort. The former agrees to fight Mauduit but, deceiving his friend Lancelot by asking for a boon (xxvi), Bohort gains the right to fight the giant himself:

"Lors dist bohors a lancelot . Sire donnes moi vn don . Et il li donne uolentiers . et il requiert a tous les compaignons qui laiens sont qui<sup>[1]</sup> li otroient ce quil demandera . Et il le font moult volentiers Et il les en mercie moult . & puis lor dist . Biau seignor . saues vous quel don vous maues donne . nenil font il . vous maues donne fait il la bataille encontre le iaiant qui demain doit uenir" (200:33-38). To complicate matters, Bohort must carry the giant's shield, for the latter has to be deceived into believing that his opponent is really Yvain, the one who originally caused the damage (xxvi): "Et li iaians li escrie si tost quil voit son escu . ha . sire cheualiers vous estes cil qui mon escu abatistes en despit de moi" (201:40-42). Mauduit is

finally slain after a great battle, and once again Lancelot takes up his search for his brothers.

The adventures of Bohort which occur after his departure from Yvain but prior to their reunion and his subsequent slaying of the giant, Mauduit, on Yvain's behalf, are a comparatively loosely connected series of events not motivated in any way by deception, ruse, the boon, etc. Each is relatively short and quite quickly concluded: he defends the Lady of Galvoie at Corbenic and defeats Mariales; he returns a hawk to a damsel; he learns of Lancelot's baptism and his own father's presence at a hermitage long ago and finally he is admonished by a damsel for not having stayed in the Adventurous Palace. (The possibility that all of these events are interpolations by another hand is therefore a distinct reality.)

Still obsessed with the idea of finding Lionel and Hector, Lancelot experiences yet another adventure which has its roots in deception. Becoming involved with a knight who declares that he must slay him as soon as he learns his name, Lancelot is forced to cross swords with this new adversary and routs him, putting him to flight. With Lancelot in pursuit, the knight tricks him (xxv) into entering a castle where he is captured by thirty other knights and cast into a well filled with all sorts of vile vermin, but he soon escapes from this place with the help of a damsel.



Lancelot's subsequent adventures are again motivated by deception, for it seems the damsel who released him was unaware that she was being watched by some of her father's men who betray her actions to him. The important adventures in company with the damsel which follow are a direct result of this deception. Their path takes them to the Castel de la Charette where a wedding is scheduled to take place between the brother of the Queen of Soresan, who has recently slain his nephew, and the reluctant daughter of the Duke of Rochedon. Challenged by Lancelot and forced to defend himself for his treachery, the knight quickly becomes aware of his own perilous predicament and decides that he will deceive Lancelot to save himself: "Et dautre part il se sent encoulpe del mesfait & de la traison que lancelot li met sus Si en est asses plus esmaies que deuant Si pense quil donra son gage voiant tous ceuls de la place . Et quant il sen deura aler armer . si montera sor son cheual et sen yra hors del pais . et ensi sera deliures de ceste bataille" (166:9-13).

66:38 But this is a minor event which is subsequently overshadowed by the actions of the master deceiver, Morgan, the wicked fairy who, coincidentally, finds herself among the wedding guests. Still unaware of Lancelot's identity, she endeavours to learn his name but is rebuffed by him (xxv): "Et il li dist que elle ne le saura pas a ceste fois quar bien la connut . Si pense maintenant morgue que cestoit lancelos

Non fet elle . si ne le saurai mie . Et il'estoit li homs del monde que elle plus haoit" (166:38-41). Only when she resorts to trickery does she achieve the desired results, for she asks him to disclose who he is: ". . . par la riens que vous plus ames" (167:1). Some time later, making good her promise to get even with him for insulting her, she will ultimately make him her prisoner, but in the meantime Lancelot puts her out of his mind.

All now return to Camalot where a tournament is soon to be held. Here, two important events motivated by deception occur. First of all, as a result of the Queen's boast that Lancelot is equal to any knight in the world, there arises an argument concerning his ability and this ultimately leads to a decision by certain of the Round Table knights to disguise themselves and fight against Lancelot. However, they are found out by the Queen, who counters their plans with a request to Lancelot to teach them a lesson: "Car iou sai bien fait elle que ce est envie . si voldroie bien fait elle sil pooit estre quil fuissent me[ne] a desconfiture" (170:17-18). Again in disguise, this time wearing red armour, Lancelot accepts the Queen's plan and commits himself to King Baudemagus in order to fight against the knights of the Round Table (xxv). Arthur, who is unaware of Lancelot's disguise, soon realizes how valuable he really is to the Round Table as the red knight causes his own knights to flee: ". . . lancelot biaux tres douls amis

or voi iou bien que ma mesons est auques widie de preudommes quant vous ni estes" (175:36-38). The deception is further complicated upon renewal of the tournament on the third day when the Queen requests Bohort to wear red armour and Lancelot, white (xxvi); only she and they, and later Baudemagus, are therefore party to the secret. Bohort and Lancelot press Arthur's knights so hard that they put them to flight, chasing them all the way to Arthur's palace. Here, the King becomes suspicious of the identity of the white knight in particular: "Si ot ueu lancelot qui si bien lot fait que nus nel peust miex auoir fait . mais il ne le connoissoit mie pour les armes dont il estoit armes Et nonpourquant pensoit il bien que cestoit il" (188:5-7). When finally Lancelot's identity is revealed, Arthur realizes that Lancelot has, indeed, proved his worth to him: "Par mon chief se iou le seusse . il ne fust mie ensi ale comme il est" (188:34-35).

The other important event which occurs at Camalot during the tournament is a continuation of the episode in which Lancelot gave the damsel who healed him from the poisoned water and who promised to remain chaste on his account the girdle which Guinevere had earlier given to him as a token of love. "Lors prent lancelot vne chainture quil auoit a membres dor & lauoit chainte pour ce que la royne li auoit donnee Si li dist . damoisele tenes . Certes il na el monde dame ne damoisele [fors celle qui la me donna] a qui iou le donnaisse .

Et cele len mercie moult si le prent ioieuse & lie . Et cele li dona vn fermail dor . si li prie quil le port a son col pour lamor de li . Et il li dist que si fera il moult uolentiers" (84:28-34).

Unaware of the debt which Lancelot owed her and not realizing the significance of the gift she now possessed, the Queen becomes jealous for she assumes, perhaps not without good reason, that her lover has deceived her. But she is quite wrong: "Si vous di loiaument quil na damoisele el monde que iou tant aime comme ie fai vous . ne namerai iamais au mien escient. Mais de ce que vous me deffendes . que iou autre que vous ne tiegne a madame ne a mamie . me desconforte moult Si vous diraie comment . Il est bien voirs ne onques mais ne le dis a homme ne a femme . que iou aim en tel lieu que ia ni fausserai ains y amerai loiaument" (83:1-7);

Lancelot will always be faithful to her. Thus taken in by appearances (xxvi), she fails to perceive the reality of the situation and puts the damsel to a harsh test to determine whether or not she is speaking the truth. Finally Guinevere accepts her story and ascertains at the same time that Lancelot has been true to her.

Since not all of the companions who originally undertook to find Lancelot have returned to Camelot, it is decided that yet another quest must be begun to find those who are still absent from the court. Lancelot, who sets out specifically

to find Hector and Lionel, accompanies them in their search and thus a second quest of major proportions begins. But it is not long before deception again has a role to play in the adventures of Lancelot. Seeking out Lionel, Lancelot requests assistance from a damsel who will divulge to him the information he seeks only if he will disclose to her his name: "Et cele le regarde . & le coniure par la riens que il plus aime . . ." (204:32-33) and, in addition to this, promise to follow her whenever she asks him to do so. Here again, of course, deception assumes the form of the boon, the "don," for the damsel is well aware of what she is asking; only Lancelot is left in the dark concerning her purpose, but so intent is he on completing his quest for Lionel, he pays no heed to the possible consequences. In any case, following her advice, Lancelot directs his steps toward the hill on which Terrican, the brother of Carados, lives and it is here, she has told him, that Lionel is being held prisoner. The damsel's information proves to be accurate and to his surprise, Lancelot discovers not only the shield of Lionel among some sixty hanging from the branches of a pine tree, he finds as well those of Agloval, Sagremor, Keu, Gosenain and Brandelis. From this evidence, it would seem that they are all prisoners of Terrican, but, unknown to Lancelot, Lionel's shield is false. It is not long before

207:23- Lancelot has slain Terrican and thus released his prisoners  
 4 when, suddenly, just as he is about to meet the captives, the damsel insists he must follow her as he has promised

(xxvii). And so, with Lancelot's sudden disappearance resulting from this deception by a damsel, yet another search is initiated by the companions of the Round Table whom he has just released from prison and in particular, by Hector, who now wishes to disclose his identity to his brother Lancelot, for he has remained unknown to him for a very long time (xxvii): "Enon dieu fait gaheriet a hector . lancelot se plainst molt de vous . Car il dist que vous sauies bien quil estoit vos freres . . . Et lors respont moult honteus . Biau sire fait il se iou deisse quil fust mes freres . il est plains de si grant cheualerie & de si grant afaire quil ne men daignaist mie croire par auenture . ne il ne quidast mie que ce fust voirs . Si en eusse honte se il me refusast a frere" (209:22-31).

Some time later, having fulfilled his obligation to the damsel he was following and still seeking Hector (for he is still unaware that he was among the prisoners he released) Lancelot comes across one of the damsels of Morgan to whom he reveals his identity (xxvii). This fatal error quickly leads to Morgan's capture of Lancelot for, tricked by the damsel into following her on an adventure, which only he, she alleged, could accomplish, he suddenly finds himself Morgan's prisoner in ". . . le plus fort manoir del monde . quar elle y quidoit bien lancelot tenir a tous iors mes" (215:17-18). Relying as usual on drugs to accomplish her ends, she carefully lays her plans: "Et quant il aura pres

que mangie . vees chi vne poison que iou ai faite . que vous li donres a boire . et il le sentira douce si le buuera uolentiers . Et quant il en auera asses beu si en porrons faire a nostre volente . Et cele li otroie que bien pense que ensi porra il estre bien deceus" (215:35-39).

She, herself, then blows a silver powder through his nostrils and into his brain in order to make him take leave of his senses. Her motives are clearly dependent upon deception: "En tel maniere fu lancelot deceus par la poison que morgue li ot ap[p]areilliet. . . Il est voirs que quant li compaignon de la table roonde ne sa[u]ront noueles de lancelot que il le querront par toutes terres . Et il a . ij . cousins germains moult boins cheualiers dont li vns a a non lyon[ia]us et li autres bohors . & iou les he tant pour lamor de lui que sil venoient chi par auenture iou men uengeroie a ma uolente" (216:23-35)--a deception which directly contributes to the continuation of the quest for Lancelot by the companions of the Round Table. But this is perhaps a secondary consideration, for while he is in the power of Morgan, one of the most significant events in the entire Vulgate Cycle occurs. Moved by a series of paintings depicting the history of Aeneas, Lancelot comes to the conclusion that he would like to do something similar with respect to his own life. Consequently, he undertakes to paint scenes on the wall of his prison to record his adventures--in particular, his affair with the Queen. Thus the

secret which he and she have had for so long and which is known to but a few close confidants, is soon revealed to Morgan and subsequently used against the Queen and Lancelot in the Mort Artu. Morgan herself is delighted at the turn of events which her deception has brought about, for this exceeds anything she ever hoped to achieve (xxvii). All she need do is sit back and patiently allow her prisoner to complete his work: "Car iou sai bien quil y paindera toutes lez oeures de lui & de la royne . Et se il auoit tout paint . lors si feroie iou tant que li roys artus y uendrait . et puis si li feroie connoistre lez fais & la uerite de lance-lot & de la royne" (218:27-30). Lured by deception, held by enchantment, another aspect of deception, Lancelot unwittingly lays the groundwork for his own future difficulties.

In the meantime, the quest for Lancelot continues and must even be extended through two winters and a summer when he has still not been found (xxvii). Later when he has escaped from Morgan's prison, Lancelot begins his own quest again: ". . . or voi iou bien que se il sont perdu que chest par moi . mais se dieu plaist iou en saurai par tamps noueles . Car puis que iou sui ore en ma lige poeste ne finerai iou mais iusques atant que iou lez auerai trouues" (227:20-23), so that once again the seekers are also sought. As his first priority in his search, Lancelot sets himself the task of finding Lionel. At the same time, the plot is



further complicated as he, himself, is also being sought by the knight in whose thigh is lodged an arrow which only the best knight in the world can remove. Ironically, the knight had earlier refused Lancelot's offer to remove it because, unaware of Lancelot's true identity, he did not believe he was the best knight in the world.

Events leading to the reunion of Lancelot with Lionel at the "Ille estrange" are further rooted in deception for when he arrives Lionel finds himself a prisoner of Marabron's brother. Unwilling to make love to the wife of his host, Lionel has been falsely accused by the lady of an attempt to dishonour her and after successfully defending himself against her husband and killing him, he is cast into prison. Lancelot agrees to fight Marabron on Lionel's behalf and frees him (xxvii).

Lionel's next adventure, which takes place at the "tertre devee," relies on his failure to recognize Bohort as the very gallant knight with whom he does battle there. Inspired by the fact that he has seen the shields of many of the companions of the Round Table who have been conquered there: among them Gauvain, Yvain, Galeschin and Hector, Lancelot does his utmost to overcome his opponent and free his captives. Suddenly, recognizing the sword given to him earlier by Galehaut at Carmelide, he requests the knight to disclose his identity to him (xxviii): "Certes sire fait

li cheualiers a qui que iou le celaisse a vous ne le celeroie iou en nulle maniere . Car iou voi bien que vous estes li mieuldres cheualiers du monde . Ne on ne deuroit mie si prodomme comme vous estes escondire chose que il volsist demander Iai non bohors li escillies . et sui cousins germains monseignor lanceLOT del lac" (239:29-33). The situation is further complicated by Bohort's explanation for his presence on the hill, for he, Bohort, does not even know which of the knights of the Round Table he has subdued: "Et ceuls qui uous tenes en prison saues vous qui il sont . par foy fet il nenil . onques ni ot celui qui me uolsist dire son non" (241:3-5). At this point Gauvain, who has observed the fighting, is astute enough to recognize the unknown knight by the skills he has displayed: "Sire fait messire ywains a chou ke uous en dites mest il auis ke uous le counissies bien . Par mon cief fait il uoirement le connois iou bien . Et iou le doi bien counoistre car en maint beso[i]ng ma il eut mestier & maint autre preudome & uous meismes le deues bien counoistre" (241:33-37), and "si sai ore bien sans faille ke cou est messires lanceLOT dou lac cil ke nous alions querant . . ." (242:3-4). Thus, the adventure at "tertre deuee" reveals the truth of the situation and leads directly to the reunion of the two brothers Hector and Lancelot.

The next series of adventures involving Lancelot arise out of a dream in which Lancelot is told by his grandfather to

go and seek out an adventure in the Perilous Forest (xxviii). Thus, unknown to his companions, with whom he has just been reunited, he sets out once again. As a result of this, after achieving the adventure in which he successfully removes his grandfather's head from boiling water,<sup>1</sup> Lancelot is told about the coming of a better knight than he--Galahad. Lancelot subsequently becomes disoriented and loses his way in the forest but as a direct result of his miscalculation, 249:24 he observes the miracle of the lions and the stag which they are guarding (xxviii). Out of this experience there arises first his resolve to know the truth: "Certes fait il ore ai iou ueu la greignor meruelle que iou onques mais ueisse que iou sai bien vraiment que cil lyon qui par ci sen passent gardent cel cierf que on ne li face mal . quar sans faille ie guide bien . que sans vertu ou dencantement nest ce mie que li lyons ait plus sens en lui que nature ne li aporte Et pour ce sai iou bien quil font chou par le commandement de dieu . ou par encantement Et pour sauoir ent la uerite fai iou orendroit . j . ueu tel comme cheualiers le puet faire que iamais ne men [par]tirai [de ceste forest] deuant que iou sace la uerite del cerf se par homme ou par femme

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<sup>1</sup>Lancelot's grandfather was treacherously slain while drinking at a fountain. His head, severed from his body, fell into the water but could not be removed by his murderer because the water into which it had fallen suddenly became boiling hot. The reason for this is obvious: God was displeased by his death. Only Lancelot, the best knight in the world, would succeed in removing it. Having done so, he then buried it with the body in the bleeding tomb which miraculously ceased to bleed as soon as Lancelot opened it and placed the head inside.

le doi sauoir" (249:29-37), and secondly, the impetus for a new series of adventures, both of which are to some extent the result of deception. The first of these leads him to slay a knight whose identity he determines to discover:

"Si mait diex fait lancelot . iamaisse miex que iou neusse feru cop de gla[i]ue en cest an . si ne serai iamais lies deuant que iou sace qui il est" (251:12-13). The second

adventure, undertaken with Sarras of Logres, is also the

result of deception, for Lancelot purposely takes the wrong road in order to mislead Sarras into believing that he is riding off and then he returns unknown to his companion to watch him fight against Belias. Ultimately Lancelot must defeat Belias to avenge Sarras, who is himself unhorsed.

Belias, it seems, had earlier struck down Gauvain, and Sarras wished to avenge himself upon him for this. As a result of his deliberate attempt to deceive Sarras, then, Lancelot is forced to defend him against Belias, whose brother, Bridas, subsequently attacks Lancelot for slaying Belias. Put to flight by Lancelot, he is pursued by him right up to his castle, where subsequently Lancelot finds Mordret in chains. Consequently, it might well be argued that by deceiving Sarras and then returning to watch him do battle with Belias, Lancelot inadvertently sets into motion once again the events which are ultimately to lead to Salisbury Plain.

After visiting a hermitage, where Lancelot learns that his vision of the stag and the lions represents pure and absolute

truth: "Car bien sachiez vraiment que ce nest nus encantemens ne oeure de dyable . ains est vns merueilleus miracles qui auint iadis par la uolente de nostre seignor" (280:11-13), Mordret and he are prevailed upon to attend a tournament which is to be held at Peningue. Borrowing a red shield, he makes his way to a small church where one of the most critical turning points in the Lancelot Proper as a whole occurs, for it is here that Mordret learns that he will kill his father, King Arthur, and so destroy the Kingdom of Logres. Enraged at this news, he immediately slays the priest who predicts these events to him, even though the latter pleads with him to allow him to speak first with Lancelot before his death. In so doing, Mordret conceals the truth of this prediction and provides the impetus for the final events of the Mort Artu to unfold as they now must. Lancelot, too, when he comes into possession of this terrible truth after reading a small scroll which he finds clutched in the hands of the priest, chooses to close his eyes to it, and, allowing his feelings for Gauvain to interfere with his own better judgement (for Mordret was Gauvain's brother), Lancelot refrains from striking him dead (xxix).

At the tournament at Peningue both Lancelot and Mordret wear armour given to them by the vavasor, and are thus effectively disguised (xxix). As he has done before, Lancelot allies himself with the side opposing the knights

of the Round Table,--in this case, Gauvain and his companions. Although Bohort fails at first to recognize him, Lionel does become suspicious. After the battle, Bohort alone discovers Lancelot and, identifying himself, brings about the reunion of the two for a short time. When finally they separate until their reunion at Camalot at Whitsuntide, Bohort makes his way to Corbenic where he experiences the adventure of the Adventurous Palace, but Lancelot, having rescued Keu from harm, mistakenly takes Keu's arms instead of his own (xxix). Recognizing his error immediately, he decides to masquerade as Keu and, of course, it is not long before he is indeed mistaken for him. He is set upon by two knights who bear him a grudge. Lancelot defeats them, fully enjoying the deceit which he has practised upon them. "Et lancelot sen sousrit de ce quil guide quil soit keux" (308:21). The pattern repeats itself a second time when Sagremor also believes that Lancelot is Keu and wishes to joust with him. Of course he is defeated by Lancelot, but not without arousing Hector's suspicions. Matters become even more involved when Hector, assuming that Keu is dead and that another knight is now wearing his armour, sets out to learn the truth for himself. He, like Yvain, and then Gauvain after him, is defeated by Lancelot who, in turn, fails to recognize his opponents. Finally, upon learning his mistake, he hides himself from them.

307:27

The planned reunion in Camelot which sees all of the companions together again, their quests a success, serves as a point of departure enabling Lancelot to rise against Claudas in order to avenge the wrongs which the latter has committed against both him and the Queen. Before the campaign against Claudas begins, however, Lancelot reveals to the Queen the fateful prediction concerning Mordret's

34:35- actions which must ultimately terminate in Arthur's death,  
39 but he does not reveal to her the whole truth (xxx). By thus concealing even a part of the story, this time in deference to the feelings of Arthur, Lancelot brings the ultimate reality of the prediction closer to fulfilment:

"lors li conte coment Mordret ocist lo preudume pur co quil dist que par li murroit tut li grant parentez lo roi Artus . et coment li rois ociroit Mordret et Mordret li . puis li conte la senefiance del serpent . Mes il n'è li dist mie que li rois eust engendre Mordret [pur co] quil amoit tant lo roi que en nule manere ne uuloit dire sa honte" (334:29-33), and "Mes pur co que ele ne crut pas lauenture auant que ele auint . si sen tut & fist mal a meintes genz que se ele leust dit au roi . li rois qui de ceste chose estoit suspeconeus & qui meinte chose & meint signe auoit ueu . leust chasce hors de sa curt si fust remese la grant bataille mortel qui puis fu es pleins de salesbires" (334:35-39).

After the defeat of Claudas, Arthur holds court at Whitsuntide. To this court, comes Brisane, the daughter of Pelles,

and Galahad. Lancelot's behaviour, his reluctance to look  
 18:34- at her, leads her to believe that he is haughty and rejects  
 5 her (xxxi). Of course, his actions can be logically ex-  
 plained; he is, in fact, embarrassed by her presence since  
 the Queen is at the court as well. But Pelles' daughter  
 is quite unaware of this and complains to Brisane, who  
 once again promises her that she will bring Lancelot to  
 her. Thus once again illusion has an important role to  
 play in moving the plot forward. Once again Brisane must  
 rely on deception (xxxi). Acting quickly and secretly, she  
 informs Lancelot that the Queen wishes to see him and, in-  
 deed, this is the truth: "Sire madame vous mande que vous  
 vous hastes de uenir . Et cil qui bien guide que ce soit li  
 messages la royne sa dame" (379:18-20). What Lancelot can-  
 not realize is the fact that Brisane refers to the daughter  
 of Pelles and not to Guinevere. It is not until much later  
 in the night that the Queen realizes that Lancelot is with  
 her rival: "Et maintenant sesueilla lancelos . si o[i]t la  
 royne loing de soi . si connoist bien tantost quil est  
 deceus" (380:12-13). In her anger, she falsely accuses  
 Lancelot of betrayal and sends him from the palace in a most  
 wretched state. Her misunderstanding of the situation, her  
 inability to understand that Lancelot, himself, has been de-  
 80:15- ceived, leads directly to his subsequent madness (xxxi).  
 16 She realizes what she has done only when it is too late;  
 the sole course of action now open is to organize yet



another quest,--the last of the Lancelot Proper--to find Lancelot and to rescue him.

Meanwhile, Lancelot has acquired a disguise of sorts, not by design but by fortune, for the elements and the lack of food change him greatly: "Et fu tant empiries de chou quil traueilloit & mangoit petit . Si fu teuls atornes aincois que li premiers yuers passast quil nestoit nuls homs qui deuant leust ueu qui iames le rauisast pour lancelot" (393:34-36). No one recognizes him: not Bliant who cares for him, nor a hermit whom he encounters while fighting a boar, nor the children outside the castle at Corbenic who throw mud at him and cause him to flee from them, nor those who care for him there as he sleeps in a stable: "Si ni ot onques celui qui le reconneust" (399:13-14). King Pelles, too, fails to recognize him, although, like Bliant before him, he knew his guest must have been a noble character: ". . . & quant li rois pelles lo uit en cele robe si dit quil auoit este preudum et hauz hum & il lo resembloit ben" (399:28-30). Only Pelles' daughter realizes who he really is: "En ce que la damoisele regardoit celui qui a la fontaine sestoit endormis si li fu vraiment auis que chou estoit lancelot . Et com plus le regardoit & plus li est auis que ce soit il . Si dist bien a lui meisme que ce est il" (400:1-3). When he has been healed by the Grail and while he is still under the illusion that the Queen has totally rejected him, Lancelot tries desperately to conceal

his identity and seeks to find a spot remote from civilization where he can live out his days alone: "si uus pri pur deu que uus me dioiz se uus guidez que nus de uostre osteu me ont coneu. . . . Il est uoirs que io me sui tant forfet el roiaume de logres que la tere mest si defendue que io ne i purrai iames repoirer sanz comandement" (401:9-15). With the daughter of Pelles, therefore, he retires to an island castle, where, as the "chevalier mesfait," he continues grieving for the events of the past (xxxii). Some time later he issues a challenge to joust with all comers, none of whom know who he really is: "Et tous les conquist il . cil qui de pres et de loing y vindrent . mes il nen ocist nul pour quil se volsist rendre a lui . Si en fu la renommee par toute la contree si grande . que on ne parloit se de lui non . Et dirent que voirement estoit il li mielâres cheualiers del monde" (403:33-36). Ironically, in this new role, he reacquires the title of the best knight in the world which he has held so long. Only after he does battle with Perceval does he reveal his identity to him: "Et il li respont tout en plorant et li dist . Sire puis que vous maues tant conieure . ie le vous dirai . len mapele lancelot del lac" (406:40-42), and all return to a final reunion at Arthur's court.

Generally speaking, the Lancelot Proper relies heavily on the devices of mistaken identity and deception, upon the boon

and the desire of characters to travel incognito, to move the story forward and to weave together the innumerable sub-plots into a coherent whole. With few exceptions these structural devices mark a crisis, a high point or a turning point in the structure of the plot. Again, in general terms, this is done efficiently and effectively in the first two sections of the text (Volumes iii and iv) and in the first part of section three (Volume v). However, toward the end of this third section, while deception is still of some consequence to the action itself, one is left with the impression that the use of these devices as crises or turning points is much less skilfully done. Whether this is because this part of the larger plan was written by a less gifted artist, or whether it indicates the exhaustion of the ingenuity of a single artist as he reached the end of his task, must remain open to conjecture.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The appendix to volume 5, the Harley MS. 6342, contains the adventures of Bohort, Hector, Lionel and Gauvain, but with the possible exception of Bohort's desire to hide his identity from Mariale, there is little deception of any real consequence involved in these adventures. Indeed, quite the contrary is the case, for Bohort openly identifies himself whenever the need arises. When Hector defends Perse, she remains unaware of his identity at first, but he soon reveals to her that he is the knight who once promised to love her and return to her when he could. Furthermore, she is quite satisfied with the explanation for his failure to do so; namely, that he felt he had to acquire fame in his own right before revealing himself to his brother Lancelot. Only Gauvain takes up an adventure which is based primarily on deceit but even this has no noticeable consequences in the sense that it fails to lead to any climax or turning point in the plot itself. In the hopes of discovering the meaning of the miraculous fountain he is taken in by a lady who feigns great distress and lies to him: "Mais elle luy

a fait a croyre la greigneur mensonge du monde du cheualier dont messire gauvain ne se donne garde" (456:28-29). Consequently, agreeing to defend her honour, he is forced to fight against a knight, her husband, whom she has also tricked by leading him to believe that Gauvain is her lover. When Gauvain has finally beaten the husband into submission, he realizes that he may have misjudged him and immediately seeks the truth of the situation: "Tu me fianceras fait Il que tu me diras verite de ce que Ie te demanderay et se tu ne vieulx cela faire" (458:22-24). The knight accuses the lady of betrayal of their marriage vows, while she, in turn, blames him: "Car Il ne te dit vng tout seul mot de verite ne Il ne tache a Riens du monde fors a toy deceuoir et a trahir par ses parolles" (459:24-26). Shortly thereafter, while Gauvain is still trying to ascertain the truth, the lady disappears for good. The conclusion to which Gauvain comes is a familiar one, made on many occasions elsewhere in the Vulgate Cycle but not in the Lancelot Proper. Here, it is repeated at least three times: "Ha dieux tant fait oeuure de femme a Redoubter et a craindre et tant se deuroit homme garder de la croyre" (457:14-15); "Et quant messire gauvain voit celle auenture si est tant dollant quil ne scet quil doie faire et pour le grant courroux quil en a dist que homme soy honnist qui croyt femme ne bonne ne malle" (460:36-39); "Sire fait loste a messire gauvain len ne doit mie croyre femme pour ce se elle crie et pleure" (462:27-28). Gauvain's behaviour is criticized by the knight whose forgiveness he requests, and he indicates that the search for truth is often difficult, since one is often deceived. To this the knight replies that God can help to distinguish between evil and good. The absence of any consequential reliance upon mistaken identity or deception and the obvious moral tone which is expressed in this passage, clearly put it outside of the larger body of the Lancelot Proper and seem to indicate that it did not originally belong to this part of the work.

## CHAPTER VIII

### LA MORT LE ROI ARTU

The final section of the Vulgate Cycle, La Mort le Roi Artu, is unique in its treatment of illusion and reality, for, although some of the characteristics which we have considered in other parts of the work are found in the Mort Artu as well, a much more sophisticated and subtle interplay between the way things are and the way they merely seem to be is clearly evident. Thus, for example, the devices of the search and disguise which played so prominent a role in the Lancelot Proper and, to a lesser extent, in the Queste are found in the Mort Artu in a greatly reduced capacity and then only in the initial sections of the text, where Bohort, Hector and Lionel set out to find Lancelot, who has gone to great lengths to hide his real identity in order to take part in the tournament at Winchester: "Dame, fet il, pour ce que g'i vouloie aler toz seus et venir au tornoiemment en tel maniere que ge n'i fusse conneüz d'estranges ne de prives" (8:10-13).<sup>1</sup> Again he repeats his intentions:

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<sup>1</sup>The page references given in this chapter apply to paragraph and line of the Frappier edition of La Mort le Roi Artu.

" . . . ge veuill aler veoir le tornoïement de Wincestre, ne nos ne chevaucherons entre moi et toi fors de nuiz, car por nule riens ge ne voudroie estre conneüz en ceste voie"

(9:5-8) and " . . . il [Lancelot] ne vouloit pas de jorz chevauchier, qu'il ne fust conneüz par aventure" (10:3-4).

Out of this attempt to conceal his identity, two episodes in the story arise: the first of these concerns Lancelot's relationship with the maid of Escalot which, in turn, arouses the ire of the Queen and culminates in her rejection of Lancelot; the second centres upon the wounding of Lancelot by Bohort who fails to recognize him because of his disguise and causes him to take to his bed, unable to bear arms. Structurally, then, both episodes are directly related to one another and to Lancelot's desire to move about incognito in order to avoid recognition. When Lancelot has been away from court for an extended period of time, Arthur voices his concern: " . . . ge vos di veraïement que il ne demore pas por ce, einz gist malades ou navrez, se ge onques riens connui de la plaie que Boorz ses cousins li fist el costé au tornoïement de Wincestre" (36:10-14). This, coupled with the fact that Guinevere has refused adamantly to have anything to do with Lancelot prompts Hector, Bohort and Lionel to seek leave of the King to go and find Lancelot. Shortly thereafter, joined by Gauvain, their search ends successfully, but without passing through the many adventures which characterize the previous searches which we

have considered. Thus, it would seem that the structural function served by these earlier searches; namely, to provide a continuous link between countless minor episodes involving several characters, is no longer valid. Instead, by bringing together Bohort, Lionel and Hector, who show their love and concern for Lancelot as blood relatives, and Gauvain, who is bound to Lancelot by his admiration for him as the greatest knight in the world, the author succeeds in forging a bond of friendship and devotion which stands out all the more clearly when it is broken by Gauvain's stubborn insistence upon revenge against his former friend for the death of his brother. Linked by blood, Lancelot, Bohort, Lionel and Hector remain together to the end, isolated from Arthur and his court by the hatred which is generated against them.

After Lancelot has returned to court and has been refused permission to see the Queen, he hastily takes his leave, much to the consternation of Gauvain. He then sets out on his own, accompanied only by a squire. Wounded accidentally by the arrow of a huntsman, Lancelot is unable to take part in the tournament at Camalot and consequently is away from court when the Queen is accused of treacherously poisoning Gaheris. Upon his return, Guinevere is absolved of her guilt by Lancelot's prowess against Mador de la Porte (once again Lancelot is in disguise), who sought revenge for his brother's [Gaheris] death. From this point onward, Ban's



kin remain together, closely united first, against the intrigues of Agravain and then, against the rising hatred of Gauvain.

One other element which played a predominant role in the Lancelot Proper, in particular, is also of some structural importance in the Mort Artu. We refer to the boon which appears on two important occasions in the text. The first of these involves Lancelot's granting of a request to the maid of Escalot, not realizing the unforeseen consequences his actions could have, for in the course of the events of the story, the girl becomes enamoured of him and convinced that he loves her: "Vos m'avez otroié que vos porteroiz a ce tornoiement ma manche destre en leu de panoncel desus vostre hiaume et feroiz d'armes por l'amor de moi" (14:13-16). However, more serious than this illusion that her love is returned by Lancelot is the reaction of the Queen to these events. Deceived by appearances that Lancelot does indeed love the maid, she refuses to allow him access to her chambers or even to see him. When she is subsequently accused by Mador de la Porte of his brother's death, Guinevere cannot, therefore, rely on Lancelot's aid and soon finds herself on the verge of total despair. But Lancelot, in disguise, does come to her assistance in spite of her false accusations against him concerning the maid of Escalot and forces Mador to submit to him. Guinevere's innocence is thus established beyond any doubt. Significantly, when the



Queen realizes her mistake: ". . . et se ele avoit esté corrouciee vers Lancelot, ele s'en tint a fole et a nice" (85:19-20), the relationship between her and Lancelot intensifies and makes impossible any chance of avoiding the certain tragedy which must inevitably follow: ". . . il l'ama orendroit plus qu'il n'avoit onques mes fet a nul jor, et ele ausint lui; et se demenerent si folement que li pluseur de leanz le sorent verairement . . ." (85:34-7).

The second instance of the use of the boon as a structural device from which emanates deception or illusion also leads directly to the alienation between Lancelot and Arthur.

Moved by her hatred of Lancelot on account of his love for the Queen, Morgan extracts an apparently innocent promise from Arthur to remain with her for a few days in return for the kindnesses which she has showered upon him and his court:

"Sire, ge vos demant un don en guerredon de touz les servises que ge onques vos feïsse. . . . et savez vos que ce est? Ce est que vos sejourneroiz huimés ceanz et demain . . .'" (50:41-6). But her motives are clearly linked to

Lancelot's destruction, for she assigns to Arthur the very room in which she has held Lancelot prisoner so that he, Arthur, quickly realizes that the pictures which the former has drawn on the walls of the room to pass the time away and to record his adventures, reveal the adulterous situation between Lancelot and Guinevere. We shall examine the details of this scene below; for the present, suffice it to

say that the doubt which is implanted in his mind shakes him and ultimately leads to his willingness to allow himself to be convinced by others that the Queen is guilty and must be tried: ". . . et moult li amonesta Morgue que il venchast ceste honte procheinement . . ." (53:70-1).

This, of course, brings him into direct conflict with Lancelot and leads to the death of Gaheriet out of which arises, in turn, Gauvain's hatred. Thus it becomes clear, that from a structural standpoint, the granting of a boon to Morgan precipitates the tragic quarrel between Arthur and his Round Table and Lancelot, his brother and his cousins.

However, none of these technical devices: the search, the disguise, the boon, appears with the frequency which marks their use in previous sections of the Vulgate Cycle. In the Mort Artu their use is more judicious--one might even say more intense--for, as we have indicated, these elements are so closely intertwined and interrelated (from Lancelot's first desire to attend a tournament incognito, through the search for him, the granting of boons to the maid of Escalot and to Morgan, to the rising hatred for Ban's kin) that the entire text assumes the unity and integrity of a truly great work. This, coupled with one further unique aspect of the treatment of illusion and reality reveals La Mort le Roi Artu to be one of the most magnificent examples of the mediaeval story-teller's art. We shall examine that aspect of the text below.

In the Etude sur La Mort le Roi Artu, Jean Frappier has suggested that the ". . . thème de Fortune--du Destin--est sans doute le thème majeur de La Mort Artu" (Frappier, Etude, p. 287). Such an approach to the romance would seem to indicate a pre-determined course of events in the hands of a force not answerable to man, and thus, essentially beyond the control of those involved. However, to consider the work primarily from the point of view of a fate-tragedy is to ignore, or at least to play down, certain essential characteristics which contribute not only to the superb psychological portraits of which the mediaeval author has proved himself to be a master, but also to the very structure of the romance itself. While one cannot deny the importance of the concept of fate to the thirteenth-century mind, there is little justification for considering it to be the most essential force at work in La Mort le Roi Artu. Far more critical to the development of the characters and the plot is the interrelationship between appearances and illusion on the one hand, and reality on the other. For various reasons, either because of their inability or their unwillingness to go beyond the apparent truth of a given situation, men are deceived. Invariably they have a certain freedom of choice between two possibilities, just as they do in the interpretation of the dreams of the Estoire and to some extent of the Queste, but the reasons for their predicament are more subtle--indeed more human--and certainly not religious. By allowing themselves to be blinded either by

their own unwillingness to face up to reality or by the baseness of human behaviour, they choose incorrectly and unwisely. Such actions inevitably lead to crises which, in turn, culminate in the ultimate destruction not only of King Arthur, as the title of the work would suggest, but also of the Round Table with him. This is the principal theme of the romance. Human folly and the inability to distinguish between apparent truth and reality bring about the end not only of one man, the most powerful king on earth, but of an entire society. That is the essential tragedy of La Mort le Roi Artu.

In the opening pages of La Mort le Roi Artu, King Arthur is confronted by the insistence of his nephew, Agravain, that his Queen, Guinevere, is involved in an adulterous love affair with Lancelot del Lac. Even though the situation is a recurrence of an earlier illicit relationship which Lancelot has vowed to terminate, Arthur is outwardly struck by disbelief and, at least initially, refuses to pay heed to the accusations. In spite of the fact that Agravain's suspicions are well-founded, the King's angry rejection of this contention as totally without justification would seem to indicate to Arthur the impossibility of such a relationship: "Car ge sai bien veraiement que Lancelos nel penseroit en nule maniere. . . ." (6:25-6). He leaves no doubt concerning his certainty that Lancelot could never betray their friendship in so base a way, and yet, in virtually the same

breath, Arthur belies this apparent conviction and vacillates: ". . . et certes se il onques le pensa, force d'amors li fist fere, encontre qui sens ne reson ne puet avoir duree" (6:26-9). This is but the first slight hint of many such instances in which the King proves himself at best, indecisive and hesitant, at worst, weak and pitiful. Thus, when Agravain pursues the matter and suggests that Arthur have the two lovers closely watched in order to catch them in the act, Arthur finds himself in a dilemma from which there is no easy escape. The indecisive nature of his character, perhaps intensified by advancing age, will not allow him to act. By neither approving nor disapproving of Agravain's plans, not necessarily, as Frappier has suggested, since he admits ". . . cette impuissance de la volonté humaine en face de la passion avec une résignation généreuse qui ne l'empêchera point de vouloir faire payer leur faute aux amants, quand il ne pourra plus douter de la vérité" (Frappier, Etude, p. 266), but because he is immediately and painfully aware of the consequences of Agravain's accusations should they prove true. A confrontation with Lancelot del Lac at this particular moment would hardly be in the best interests either of Arthur or of the Kingdom of Logres. Indeed, acting in an attempt to bolster the failing morale of a sadly depleted Round Table, Arthur has just announced a tournament ". . . por ce qu'il veoit que les aventures del roiaume de Logres estoient si menees a fin qu'il

n'en avenoit mes nule se petit non. . ." (3:38-41). It is abundantly clear to him, now as later, that the destruction of the Round Table is directly affected by his actions. Consequently, Arthur avoids taking the firm course of action necessary to discover the truth for himself, and at the risk of his honour, he is forced to close his eyes to the reality of Agravain's accusations, all the while trying to convince himself that they are not true. Significantly, the anger which he has shown upon hearing Agravain's denunciation of the two lovers is evidence of the frustration which arises out of his dilemma.

There follows for Arthur a period of deep soul-searching in which Arthur must wrestle with his problem: "Cele nuit pensa li roi Artus assez a ce que Agravains li avoit dit . . ." (7:1-2). Ultimately, his nature being what it is, he is able to persuade himself that there is no truth to Agravain's contention. Convinced of this, ". . . [il] ne le torna pas grantment a son cuer, car il ne creüst pas legierement que ce fust voirs" (7:2-4). And yet his actions in leaving the Queen behind, ". . . por esprouver la mençonge Agravain" prove that he is clearly deceiving himself in order to avoid coming to terms with reality.

Although this psychological approach to Arthur's character is important in itself, one must not fail to recognize a further consideration which finds its origin in Arthur's

indecision. His moments of weakness, his vacillations and self-deception, here, as elsewhere, invariably occur in times of crisis during which the necessity of decisive action is of the utmost importance. In each instance, Arthur is faced by a freedom of choice between two distinct alternatives: one centred in reality, the other in the appearance of reality. It is the latter--the deception of appearances, assuming the form of deliberate distortion or misinterpretation of the facts, half-truths and mistaken identity,--which invariably holds sway at crucial moments in the story and ultimately culminates in the inevitable destruction of the Round Table on Salisbury Plain.

Furthermore, the baseness of human behaviour intensifies the problem and contributes to the deception. And so, Agravain, motivated in the first instance by his hatred of Lancelot and not by his concern for the honour of the King as he would have Arthur believe, has taken note of the lovers' indiscreet behaviour and interpreted it correctly:

" . . . et tant s'en prist garde que il le sot verairement . . . "

(4:16-17). By his accusation, he sows the seeds of suspicion and doubt in Arthur's mind and they take root, creating for Arthur the dilemma in which he finds himself and from which he cannot escape without closing his eyes to reality. His psychological make-up is such that he can act in no other way. Arthur ponders the accusations carefully and, after wrestling for some time with his problems, finally succeeds

in dismissing them. But he is never able to convince himself completely and decides, in spite of himself, to put Agravain's information to the test.

Arthur's dilemma is further intensified by his meeting with his half-sister Morgan. Like Agravain, she, too, is motivated by her hatred of both Lancelot and the Queen, but her means of revealing to Arthur the deceit of the two lovers is more carefully and deliberately planned. The proof with which she thus confronts him with all the supernatural powers at her disposal, is all the more difficult for him to ignore. Even the circumstances of the King's arrival at Morgan's castle would seem to suggest something more than mere chance, and the subsequent systematic way in which Morgan sets about convincing Arthur that he should take action against Lancelot and the Queen would tend to reinforce this assertion. After his stay in Tauroc, Arthur enters the forest in which Morgan once imprisoned Lancelot del Lac. As he does so, he feels unwell, and shortly thereafter, he and his company have lost their way. The suspicion that the supernatural powers of Morgan are already at work in the darkened woods is strengthened by the sound of the horn. Although it is later made clear that the King is tired after the long ride from Tauroc, the fact that no further issue is made of Arthur's illness suggests that it was a transitory state, probably induced by the supernatural powers of Morgan herself and followed up by the sound of the



horn and the dazzling display in the castle itself. Clearly, Morgan has laid the groundwork for her plan most carefully.

At first she tells him no more than is necessary for her purposes: ". . . et ele l'en dist partie et partie l'en ceile" (50:81-2), until such time as she is prepared to reveal her identity to him and to allow him to discover the pictures on the wall of the room to which he has been brought. Having once examined these pictures and deciphered them, Arthur is forced to consider the authenticity of the message they convey. Significantly, he is not yet prepared to accept the reality of the evidence which they present, for once he has recovered from the initial shock of his discovery, he immediately questions their authenticity: "Par foi . . . se la senefiance de ces letres est veraie . . ." (52:6-7). However, the consequences of the situation are obvious to him: ". . . car ge voi tout en apert. . . ." (52:8). At this point, Arthur again finds himself confronted by his dilemma, for he is fully aware that if the pictures portray the truth, no greater sorrow could come to him than through the illicit relationship between Lancelot and the Queen and no greater grief than the destruction of the Round Table which would inevitably follow.

Morgan's plan moves forward and, just as she has expected, Arthur requests from her the truth about the pictures. After some initial protest, obviously contrived to shift the blame

for disclosing this information from herself, Morgan reveals to him the truth he seeks: "Et ge le vos dirai donc en tele maniere que ja ne vos en mentirai de mot" (52:32-3). If the pictures themselves were not sufficient to arouse Arthur's curiosity, Morgan's explanation ". . . que Lancelos ainme la reïne Guenievre des le premerain jor que il recut l'ordre de chevalerie et por l'amour de la reine, quant il fu nouviaux chevaliers, fist il toutes les proescs qu'il fesoit . . ." (52:35-8) should be adequate to convince the King of the truth she speaks. Furthermore, in order to strengthen her argument and persuade Arthur to take action against Lancelot and Guinevere, she alludes to the events at the Castle of the Doloureuse Garde with which Arthur is familiar. Nor is she, as Frappier points out in his edition of the Mort Artu (p. 283, note §52 to lines 39-46), above altering the truth just a little in order to deceive Arthur and make her point more forcefully. The admittance of Keu, one of the Queen's knights, to the castle should have aroused his suspicions a long time ago, and yet: ". . . ne de ce ne vos aperceüstes vos pas si bien comme firent aucun" (52:45-6). Now the incident is recalled by Morgan as proof of the illicit love affair which exists between Lancelot and the Queen. But Arthur is still not totally convinced of the significance of these events and demands further proof of Morgan's accusations: ". . . mes ce ne sei ge se ce fu por l'amour la reïne ou por moi" (52:49-50). Inspired by the

Queen, Morgan insists, Lancelot performed countless feats of chivalry for her love until he finally gained his longed-for reward. "Et tout einsi comme il li promist, li fist il, car il proia tant la reïne qu'ele s'otroia del tout a Lancelot et si le sesi de s'amor par un besier" (53:17-20). With these words, Morgan's carefully prepared arguments reach an agonizing climax for Arthur. He claims now to be convinced of his own shame and Lancelot's treachery. There can be no mistake; he admits that he sees "toute aparissant." He cannot justifiably ask for further proof from Morgan. If he cannot accept her words, sworn in "God's name," it is because he will not. Pursuing the matter further, Arthur discovers the circumstances surrounding the origin of the pictures. Again, as in the scene with Agravain, Arthur falls silent and gives himself over to careful thought. Fully aware of the consequences of the accusations of both his sister and his nephew, Arthur ponders his dilemma. Recalling Agravain's words to him a few days earlier, Arthur admits that ". . . ceste chose qui ci est meinne mon cuer a greigneur certineté que je n'estoie devant . . ." (53:55-7) and although he hedges, he knows that both have spoken the truth. Nevertheless, here, as earlier, Arthur vacillates. In the same breath with which he recalls Agravain's warning, he insists that he must now seek out "la pure verité." But, as his conditional reply suggests, Arthur is still unwilling to accept the reality of the

situation: "Et se il est einsi . . ." (53:59; the italics are my own), and again: "Je en ferai tant . . . que se li uns ainme l'autre de fole amor, si com vos me dites, que ge les ferai prendre ensemble ains que cis mois soit passez, se il avient que Lancelos viegne a court dedens celui terme" (53:77-81; the italics are my own). He puts his crown on the line, promising punishment to both, if they are guilty. In short, if Agravain's arguments were essentially unproved, leaving the door open to doubt, Morgan's are not. Any hesitation on Arthur's part to delay positive action to catch Lancelot and the Queen in their deception can only be construed as Arthur's inability and unwillingness to face up to the awful consequences of this situation. And yet, Morgan finds herself in the position of urging the reluctant Arthur on, knowing full well that even now he is not prepared to act decisively. In both the scene with Agravain and the encounter with Morgan, Arthur's hesitation serves a secondary structural purpose as well, for by vacillating between truth and the semblance of truth, he allows the plot to unfold as it must until the terrible climax on Salisbury Plain becomes a reality.

Essential to the events of Arthur's stay in Morgan's castle is the leitmotif of brilliance and light which marks the scene from the arrival of Arthur's retinue when countless candles gave forth such an intense light that all were amazed, to the dawning of the morning on which Arthur first

discovered the pictures Lancelot had painted on the walls. As the sunlight illuminates all parts of the room, it symbolically reveals the truth to Arthur, who refuses to see.

Arthur continues to vacillate. At times, he is resolved to do what he must: "Bele suer . . . il ne m'en couvient prier, car ge nel leroie por la moitié de tout mon roiaume que ge n'en feïsse tout ce que g'en ai empris" (54:7-10). But Morgan must continually urge him into action, for Arthur is remarkably content to dismiss the entire problem from his mind: ". . . car li leus estoit biax et plesanz et plent-eürex de bestes sauvages. . . ." (54:11-12). Clearly avoiding the issue at hand, Arthur buries his head in the sand and, by refusing to acknowledge the obvious truth before him, deludes himself in a deliberate attempt to cast doubt on the facts which confront him and thus provide himself with a way out of his dilemma.

One further passage is of some importance in this connection. As long as he remains with Morgan, Arthur refuses to allow anyone but his sister to enter his room. While this in itself is quite probably a natural reaction grounded upon his shame alone, ". . . por les peintures qui si apertement devisoient sa honte . . ." (54:17-18), Arthur must have been aware that if the truth were known he would be forced by outside pressures to take the necessary steps against Lancelot and the Queen and face up to reality. Thus he

tries desperately to maintain appearances by consciously covering up the truth.

Whichever way he moves, Arthur stands to lose. Should he fail to take appropriate action to avenge his shame, his own position as King would be jeopardized, his authority a sham and his honour degraded. If, however, Arthur were to move against Lancelot, the reverberations of his actions would be sufficient to bring about the final destruction of the Round Table as he knows it,--and this is for him the greatest fear of all. This latter consideration should not be underestimated. Subtle but repeated references to the glories of the past punctuate the entire text and make obvious the concern of an old man for a world--the only one he has ever lived for--which is slowly but surely crumbling around him. Nowhere is this more clearly stated than in the scene in which Gauvain and Arthur come upon the boat containing the corpse of the maid of Escalot. Gauvain remarks to the King: "Par foi . . . se ceste nacele est ausi bele dedenz com dehors, ce seroit merveilles; a poi que ge ne di que les aventures recommencent" (70:21-4). Both are aware that they are living in the twilight of the adventures of the Round Table. Once again, just as in the scene with Agravain, we are forced to consider Arthur's attempts to maintain his eternal belief in appearances as crucial in the story. Returning to Camelot, the King discovered that Lancelot has spent only one day at the court and he becomes

confused why this should be so, if Lancelot loves the Queen adulterously. Thus, in Arthur's own mind, there exists just cause to doubt the words of Agravain and Morgan. He readily accepts the appearance of things at face value: ". . . et c'estoit une chose qui moult metoit le cuer le roi a aise et qui moult li fesoit mescroire les paroles que il ot oïes. . . ." (62:11-13).

The structural function of Arthur's hesitation continues to move the plot forward to its inevitable climax as the seeds of suspicion sown first by Agravain and again by Morgan begin to grow and aggravate the dilemma from which Arthur cannot escape. From this point, there can be no turning back. "Et neporquant il ne fu onques puis eue que il n'eüst la reine plus soupeçonneuse que devant por les paroles que l'en li avoit acointiees" (62:14-16). Arthur is clearly aware of the reality of the situation and any deviation from it is fond illusion aimed at escape from that reality. A turning point has been reached and escape rendered only temporarily possible.

The psychological pressure of his dilemma begins to tell on Arthur in the poisoned fruit episode. It is obvious that the Queen is responsible for giving the deadly fruit to Gaheris; his death which follows immediately upon eating it is, therefore, a direct result of Guinevere's actions. However, the fact that the Queen did not willingly poison him

is simply not considered important, for everyone present saw her offer the fruit to the victim and everyone was witness to the subsequent events. The truth is there for everyone to discern and consider and yet, on the basis of appearances alone, all believe the Queen to be guilty. Even though she protests her innocence of any wrong-doing, the court finds itself deceived by the apparent evidence of the situation, accepts it at face value and rejects her protestations. Arthur, too, obviously shocked at the news of the Queen's treachery, jumps up, instinctively makes the sign of the cross and rushes to the scene of the alleged crime.

Although this scene is not directly related to Guinevere's adulterous relationship with Lancelot which has been on the King's mind for several days, Arthur quickly yields to the pressure and torments of the suspicions which have arisen out of that affair, and therefore, more ready to blame, he accuses her: "Dame . . . comment que vos li donnissiez, l'ouvraigne en est mauvese et vileinne, et ge ai moult grant doutance que vos n'en soiez plus corrouciee que vos ne cuidiez" (62:63-6). He does not make the slightest pause to consider the less obvious truth of the matter. At a loss to know where to fix the blame or where to turn for advice, Arthur proves himself to be distraught. Here is a man--once a great king--so shocked at the news which has just reached his ear that he is able to do nothing save lay the blame for the deed at the feet of the most obviously guilty party,



have arrangements made for burial and disappear, all the while hiding his responsibility behind the sign of the cross. ". . . [il] se seigne plus de mil fois. . . ." (62:76). The inscription on the tomb of Gaheris serves only to confuse the issue and foster the acceptance of appearances: "Ici gist Gaheriz li Blans de Karaheu, li freres Mador de la Porte, que la reïne fist morir par venim" (63:11-13). Although accurate as far as it goes, by recording only appearances, it remains only a half-truth and thus deceives.

Guinevere is prepared to accept her predicament as "mescheance"--bad luck or ill fortune--for it is not obvious even to her that the entire episode has been a direct result of the hatred of Avarlan for Gauvain and that she has been nothing more than an innocent instrument, not of Fortune, but of the baseness of human passions. Confronted by the necessity of choosing between appearances and reality, the members of the court err. Had they been more prepared to question the appearance of truth, the outcome might well have been quite different. And further, had Arthur not been burdened by the thoughts of the Queen's deception with Lancelot, he might have been in a more rational state of mind and decidedly less prepared to accept the illusions of reality which he ultimately does accept. Taking at face value the inscription which is based only on an apparent truth, the Scottish knight, who replies to Mador's query "whether or not it is true" that the Queen killed his brother, answers

unhesitatingly: "Mador . . . je sei bien que vos me voulez demander . . . sachiez que il est eins comme li escriz le tesmoigne" (67:35-9). As a direct result of this, the dilemma from which Arthur has been seeking release is intensified. The woman he loves is about to die because no one will defend her when her guilt is so obvious to them: ". . . et por ce que il le savoient apertement, n'en i avoit il nul qui s'osast metre en aventure de tieus gages" (70:11-13). Repeatedly, in characteristically mediaeval fashion, the author emphasizes the point to be considered: ". . . car ele ne trouvera qui por lui entre en bataille encontre Mador, a ce qu'il sevent bien tuit certainement que ele ocist le chevalier dont ele est apelee" (67:70-3), and again: ". . . por ce que il savoient bien veraïement que ele avoit ocis le chevalier" (67:11-2). Again and again, he impresses upon his audience the irony of the obvious truth which all allegedly can see clearly. In so doing, he underlines the illusory, deceptive appearances of the situation.

All of this heightens Arthur's dilemma. Whereas his earlier problems consisted in avenging his honour and preventing the demise of the Round Table, his difficulties are now compounded by the fact that he loves Guinevere and stands to lose her. Thus Arthur is overwhelmed by despair "trop est dolenz"; circumstances involving those he loves most--Lancelot and the Queen--weigh heavily upon him, for they

are at once his source of joy and his source of sorrow. Fortunately, the pressure on Arthur is once again relieved when he is able to allow the Queen the customary forty-days grace in which to find a champion.

It is interesting, by way of contrast, to consider Lancelot's role in the trial. If Arthur is unable to cope with the situation, Lancelot has little difficulty. It is true, he finds himself in a very different position from that of the King, but spurred on by his love for Guinevere, he does act, clearing her of all charges of treachery.

One final comment from the standpoint of the structure of this episode is pertinent. As we have previously recognized, in the episode with Arthur and Agravain and again with Arthur and Morgan, whenever a choice must be made between appearances and reality, the author of La Mort le Roi Artu introduces a critical situation, a turning point from which there can be no retreat. The trial by combat in which Lancelot defends the Queen is no exception. Having proved her innocence of deliberately planning the death of Gaheris, Lancelot falls more hopelessly in love: "Et se Lancelos avoit devant ce amee la reine, il l'ama orendroit plus qu'il n'avoit onques mes fet nul jor, et ele ausint lui . . ."

(85:33-5). Their indiscretion becomes more and more obvious to the members of the court, including the nephews of the King: ". . . et se demenerent si folement que li pluseur de

leanz le sorent veraïement, et messire Gauvains meïsmes le sot tout apertement, et ausi firent tuit si quatre frere" (85:35-9). And thus, although the poisoned fruit episode is not, at least initially, directly concerned with the adulterous love between Lancelot and the Queen, it does become obvious that the events of that scene, motivated in the first instance by the entirely unrelated hatred of Avarlan for Gauvain, culminate ultimately in a situation which can only lead to disaster for Arthur and the Round Table. The lack of discretion on the part of the two lovers makes their illicit relationship clear to everyone and brings about a direct confrontation between Arthur and Ban's kin.

The next significant development in the story arises directly out of this indiscretion. To some extent, it provides an interesting contrast with the initial Arthur-Agravain episode, for this time Agravain finds himself on somewhat firmer ground. By now the gravity of the situation has become clear and he deliberately allows Arthur to overhear the conversation between himself and his brothers. Once he has captured the King's attention, he then allows both Gaheriet and Gauvain to parry Arthur's questions in order to cover up the truth about Lancelot and Guinevere. In spite of his anger, neither will yield to Arthur's pressure to tell him what they have been talking about. Furthermore, the King is told: ". . . ne vos chaille de ce savoir, car nus preuz ne vos en porroit venir, ne a vos ne a nul preudome" (85:52-3).

Gaheriet refers to Agravain's words as "fable . . . et mençonge" and Gauvain refuses to tell him ". . . se vos vos deviez corrocier a moi et moi giter povre et essilié de ceste vostre terre. . . ." (85:65-7).

The King reacts to their refusal in a totally irrational way, demanding to know their secret, first on the oaths they have sworn to him, and then threatening on pain of death if they should fail to inform him. In spite of these angry words, neither Gaheriet nor Gauvain reveals the contents of their conversation and both leave the King's presence; Arthur does nothing about it. One has the feeling from Arthur's over-reaction to this situation that he already suspects the nature of their topic of conversation. Once he is aware that his problems must again be faced, the pressure of his dilemma which has been building up inside of him for some time simply must find a release. Arthur loses his temper.

In his attempts to find out what he must certainly already suspect, Arthur's behaviour fluctuates wildly. After his threats of death to all five of his nephews, both Gaheriet and Gauvain simply ignore his commands to return to him. Left in a room with the others, Arthur asks them, he begs them, and then finally, beside himself with anger, he stands ready to strike Agravain dead with a blow from his sword. No longer in control of himself, Arthur shows signs of

cracking under the strain of his dilemma.. Once Agravain has finally told him what he wants to know, Arthur recoils from the truth he fears; subconsciously, he did not really want to hear the truth: "Conment, fet li rois, me fet donc Lancelos honte? De quoi est ce donc? Dites le moi, car de lui ne me gardasse ge jamés que il ma honte porchaçast; car ge l'ai touzdis tant ennore et chier tenu que il ne deüst en nule maniere a moi honte fere" (86:23-8). When Agravain assures him of the facts, he turns pale, and as before in the initial Agravain scene, as well as in the scene with Morgan, falls silent, lost in deep thought. Arthur can no longer take refuge in appearances; the truth is out and the reality of the situation known. "De ceste chose est li rois pensis et dolenz et tant a malese qu'il ne set qu'il doie fere . . ." (86:41-3).

When Arthur ultimately does act, he does so expressing himself in terms reminiscent of his resolve after Morgan's disclosures to him: ". . . et se ge n'en praing venchement tel com l'en doit fere de traïteur, ge ne quier jamés porter coronne" (86:45-7). Finally, after many days of deliberately distorting the facts and taking refuge in the appearance of things, the King is forced to face the reality of his dilemma. Nor does he have any illusions concerning the position in which he finds himself, ". . . car il set bien de voir que, se Lancelos est pris a cest afere et il en

reçoit mort, onques si grant tormente n'avint en ce país por la mort d'un seul chevalier" (87:23-6). Once again in a position to make a choice, but this time so emotionally involved because of the faithlessness of his wife, the deception of his friend and the certain downfall of all his kingdom, Arthur can hardly act with a clear and rational mind. Accepting the treacherous advice of Agravain, he rejects his loyal nephew Gauvain and from this point onward, commits himself to revenge upon Lancelot and the Queen. The implication of his actions from a structural point of view are obvious for, at this critical point in the story, Arthur fails to choose wisely and precipitates the final catastrophe.

Unlike Morgan, who finds herself forced constantly to remind Arthur of the steps he must take, Agravain no longer needs to goad him into action. He merely capitalizes on a situation from which Arthur cannot escape. Once the oath has been sworn to him, there can be no turning back--the crisis which must inevitably lead to bloodshed has been reached. Bohort later explains the essence of the problem to Lancelot with these words as he echoes Gauvain's warning and Arthur's own thoughts: ". . . or vaut pis que devant, car ore est la chose decouverte que nos avions tant celee. Or verroiz la guerre commencer qui jamés ne prendra fin a nos vivans. Car se li rois vos a jusques ci amé plus que nul home, de tant vos haïra il plus, des qu'il savra que vos li meffesiez

tant com de lui vergonder de sa fame" (90:85-92).

Agravain's intense hatred of Lancelot leads directly to the death of Gaheriet, for the former has insisted that his reluctant brother be compelled by Arthur to help guard the fire on which the Queen is to be burned. and once again, the King, in his very volatile state, is unable to see through the baseness of Agravain's intentions and readily falls in with his plans. So impetuous has his anger made him, he is prepared to accept the advice of the barons, who in turn, merely echo the thoughts of Agravain and his two brothers, that Guinevere should die a shameful death. "A ceste chose s'acordent li un et li autre a fine force, car il voient bien que li rois le velt" (93:16-17). Blinded by anger, when ". . . li rois l'entent, si dist qu'il ne l'en estoit pas bel; et puis qu'il est issi que de Lancelot ne se puet vengier, il se vengera de la reine en tel maniere qu'il en sera parlé a toz jorz mes" (92:36-9). Arthur commits the serious sin of "demesure," unjustly sentencing Guinevere to death.

Agravain has well prepared the groundwork for his treachery, and in spite of Gauvain's accusation that the King, in this moment of weakness which has been brought on by anger and the desire for revenge, is unable to see the consequences of such treachery and notwithstanding the pleas of the townspeople for him to reconsider his decree, Arthur remains



stubbornly convinced of what he must do. Finally, after he has wrestled with his conscience for some time, "Atant en lessa li rois Artus la parole et fu tant dolenz que onques la nuit ne but ne ne menja, ne onques ne volt que la reïne fust amenee devant li . . ." (93:1-4), Arthur acts. However, he is deceived by the baseness of human behaviour and fails to grasp the reality of the situation. Even as the Queen is brought before him, Arthur vacillates, for, if for no other reason than pangs of conscience, he is moved by his pity and his love for her; his resolve seems to be on the point of breaking down. Again his love for her overcomes his anger and he is clearly cognizant of the fact that his desire for revenge is not the course of action he would prefer to take. Nevertheless, a crisis in the action has been reached and there can be no turning back. From a structural point of view, these events, coming as they do at a very crucial point in time, provide a fresh impetus toward the final catastrophe, for, by his decision, Arthur contributes to the effectiveness of Agravain's plan which culminates in the death of his favourite nephew, Gaheriet. At the same time, his actions mark the beginning of Gauvain's passionate hatred for Lancelot who has slain his brother.

The death of Gaheriet is significant, falling as it does almost exactly in the middle of La Mort le Roi Artu. Once again, appearances play an essential role in the structure of the plot, although this time in a somewhat altered form.

Gaheriet's death is a simple case of mistaken identity. He is not who he seems to be or clearly, Lancelot would never have slain him willingly. "Moult fu Lancelos corrouciez por la mort de Gaheriet, car ce estoit uns des chevaliers del monde que il plus amoit" (96:15-17). This single event, more than any other to this point, irrevocably alienates Gauvain and sets him off on his senseless quest for revenge upon Lancelot. This, in turn, marks the beginning of what King Arthur fears more than anything else--a confrontation between himself on the one hand, and Lancelot and Ban's kin on the other, for as we have seen, the King is clearly aware of the inevitable consequences of such a conflict. There is no doubt that it will spell the end of the Round Table, and from the very beginning of La Mort le Roi Artu, this has been the issue uppermost in Arthur's mind. The ranks of his knights have been depleted in the quest for the Holy Grail and both Arthur and Gauvain have expressed a longing for a return to the glorious days of the past, but the King cannot escape the reality that such days are gone forever. Even as he later fills the vacancies left by the departure of Ban's kin, there is a hint that this action can never hope to recreate the past.

Thus, the illicit love affair, while obviously important in itself, finds its real significance, not in adultery, but in the fact that it threatens to lead to the confrontation which Arthur has sought to delay as long as possible. The King is

prepared to close his eyes to the truth,--to accept the appearances of the situation as long as he can put off the inevitable. The pity he betrays when he sentences Guinevere to death is indicative of the genuine love he still has for her, while the anger he shows at Lancelot's good fortune in the tournament at Karahés is a reflection of his frustration that the very knight he loves most should be the catalyst in his dilemma. Indeed, there are times, in particular when Lancelot's actions apparently contradict the reality of the situation, when Arthur's vacillations would seem to suggest that he could almost live with the shame of the Queen's adultery if only he could somehow avoid the impending conflict with Lancelot. Let there be no mistake: it is not because Arthur fears Lancelot, but because he loves him and because he is clearly aware of the inevitable consequences that he finds himself on the horns of a dilemma. For this reason, the adulterous love affair plays a less significant role in the second half of the story. But that aspect of it which would lead to confrontation is preserved and developed, not in the love affair itself, but Gauvain's passionate hatred of Lancelot. The structural thread of unity in the work is thus maintained.

The illicit love affair aggravates the dilemma in which Arthur finds himself by slowly but surely forcing a confrontation between Arthur and Lancelot del Lac. The "demesure" of Gauvain takes up where this adulterous

relationship leaves off and continues inexorably to force Arthur into a conflict which he knows will ultimately destroy himself and, more significantly, the Round Table.

Gauvain's obsession with revenge plays an important role in the second half of La Mort le Roi Artu not only as an end in itself, for that is certainly significant, but also insofar as it contributes to the death of Arthur and with him the Round Table.

Out of the death of Gaieriet arise the alienation, the hatred and the irrational behaviour of Gauvain, who, in a state of shock at the news of his brother's death, is unable to gain control over his own emotions. Beyond all measure of normalcy and in direct contravention of the law of "mesure," Gauvain gives vent to his feelings. Possessed by an "idée fixe" of immense proportions, he derives his very "raison d'être" from the thought of revenge upon Lancelot. He cannot see clearly, nor can he make rational decisions. So tormented is he by the death of his favourite brother that life no longer holds any meaning for him: ". . . je sui cil qui plus ne quier vivre . . ." (100:60), and again: ". . . voirement ai ge trop vescu, quant ge voi ma char ocise a si grant douleur" (101:9-11). Motivated by blind passion, his subconscious quest for his own death, which so dominates the second half of the romance, begins, bringing with it the realization of Arthur's fears of an end to the glorious days of the Round Table. So overwhelmed is he by

grief that Gauvain is unable to think clearly and mistakenly lays the blame for his brother's death and his own sorrow upon Fortune. He does not realize that Agravain's hatred-- a hatred which he, himself, has already warned against--has contributed directly to Gaheriet's death. Gauvain, in emotional shock, is therefore deceived by the appearance of things. Confused, he attributes Gaheriet's death initially to the hatred of the man who killed him (for he is not yet aware that Lancelot was responsible), and then to Fortune's dislike first of Gaheriet and then of himself.

Arthur's reaction to Gaheriet's death is also significant, for even though the King has retreated somewhat into the background in a scene primarily devoted to an insight into Gauvain's behaviour, the author has found it essential to re-emphasize those structural elements which retain the thread of unity throughout the work. As one might expect, Arthur views the events of the past few hours less in terms of the death of Gaheriet himself, than in terms of his own personal loss. Still preoccupied with himself and his own dilemma, he considers Gaheriet's death an extension of his problems: ". . . nus hom ne perdi tant comme j'ai perdu" (103:13). Since these problems, at least as far as he is concerned, find their origin in Lancelot, the King accuses him and holds him directly responsible: "Ceste perte ne m'est pas avenue par la justise Damledieu, mes par l'orgueill Lancelot . . ." (103:21-3). Such actions are all the more

regrettable since he has nourished Lancelot himself:

" . . . nos avons eslevé et escreü [Lancelot] en nostre terre par meintes fois, ausint come s'il fust estrez de nostre char meïsmes" (103:26-9). His words recall a similar lament uttered but a short time before: "Ha! Dex, quel douleur et quel damage quant en si preudhomese herberja onques traïson!" (87:19-21). The inevitable confrontation has drawn closer. By all appearances, it has not been enough for Lancelot to have committed adultery with Arthur's wife; in his pride he has now slain the King's beloved nephew. There can be no turning back. An oath of vengeance must be extracted from all the King's followers. Thus when both Gauvain and Arthur are confronted by a choice, they are incapable of acting rationally. The former, blinded by his emotional shock, and the latter, obsessed by his fears that the end of the Round Table is in sight, fail to distinguish reality from appearances. King Yon warns of the very matter which touches Arthur most closely: "Sire, ge sui vostre hom; si vos doi conseillier a nostre enneur et a la vostre; vostre enneur sanz faille, si est de vengier vostre honte. Mes qui au preu del reigne voudroit garder, je ne cuit mie que ja commençast guerre contre le parenté au roi Ban. . . ." (104:6-11). He emphasizes how obvious the truth of the situation should be, ". . . car nos apertement savons . . ." (104:11), but the voice of reason and moderation is construed as cowardice.

If King Yon's arguments are so readily discounted, in particular at the urging of Mordret, whose own motives are suspect, it is hardly likely that Lancelot's offer of explanation and submission to the will of the court can be accepted either. Once again, men are deluded and deceived by the appearance of things and are therefore vulnerable to the baseness of men such as Mordret. Consequently, they reject truth and reason. Repeated warnings have no effect. Arthur is reminded that death often "deceives": ". . . vos en seroiz destruis et menez a mort, ou li sage home par maintes fois sont deceü" (110:39-41) and Gauvain is admonished for his "foolishness." The irony of his situation is heightened because Gauvain is perfectly aware of the consequences of his actions: ". . . car vos pourchaciez vostre mort, et si le poez veoir tout apertement" (110:44-5). Not even the prophecy revealed to him at the Adventurous Palace of the Rich Fisher King can dissuade him from his stubbornness. It is made perfectly clear to him that while he has been visited by misfortune, his own evil intentions are motivating him and will bring about his downfall: "Mes vostre maus cuers et vostre granz mescheance vos chace en ceste emprise" (110:52-4). Gauvain chooses to ignore all warnings. Faced by rational arguments against his foolish behaviour and by a sincere petition by Lancelot for forgiveness, Gauvain still chooses to turn his back on chivalrous behaviour and to continue his quest for revenge. However, even though he is

emotionally upset, he must still bear responsibility for his actions.

Although the main thrust of the story is now, at least temporarily, carried by Gauvain, whose actions at times overshadow those of Arthur, the author of La Mort le Roi Artu never really loses sight of the King as the central figure in the story. Arthur continues to display the weakness which characterized him in the first half of the romance, wavering back and forth between love and hatred, admiration and contempt for Lancelot: "Gauvain . . . la chose est tant alee que jamés tant com ge sois vis, por chose que Lancelos sache fere ne dire, n'avra pes a moi . . ." (110:22-4) and by contrast: "Par foi, ore a il [Lancelos] passez de bonté et de cortoisie touz les chevaliers que ge onques veïsse . . ." (116:8-10). Whenever Lancelot makes a chivalric gesture (quite in contrast with Gauvain's behaviour), by sparing Arthur's life or by willingly returning his Queen, Arthur's resolve begins to vacillate, much to the anger of his nephew. The King still hopes against hope that conflict can be avoided. Had he indeed had the courage of his convictions, recognizing the senselessness of the war between his forces and Ban's kin, he would have rejected those unreasonable demands which Gauvain was making upon him, but instead, he allows himself to be swayed by the apparent truth of Gauvain's arguments: "Puis que Gauvains le velt, fet li rois, il me plest bien" (119:49-50).



Thus, the human weakness inherent in his own character, inevitably leads to the tragedy Arthur would avoid. He is obviously aware of the consequences of continued confrontation with Lancelot, and yet, by refusing to draw the line, he brings his own destruction and that of the Round Table upon himself. In this, he parallels Gauvain, who is also accused of pursuing his own death. By this time, Arthur's passive acceptance of the inevitability of the conflict becomes clearer and he becomes an almost pitiful figure. He almost seems to believe that only death can relieve him of his burden and so he is no longer willing to struggle against a situation he believes he cannot control. And perhaps he is right. The events which have been set in motion can only be stopped by a firm stand by the King himself, and this is something beyond the capabilities of the Arthur of La Mort le Roi Artu.

Once again it is made substantially clear through the words of the old woman whom Arthur and Gauvain meet that the King is ill-advised, mad, to undertake such a foolish venture: "Saches veraïement que c'est grant folie et que tu crois fol conseil . . ." (131:2-3). Gauvain, too, is criticized: ". . . vous porchaciez si durement vostre damage que vous jamais ne reverrés le roialme de Logres sains ne haitiés" (131:9-11). She refers to the prophecy made at the palace of the Fisher King. Here in the warnings of the old woman is the reality, the truth, of the situation, but Arthur's

weakness, indeed the loss of his desire to live, and Gauvain's stubbornness refuse to heed her words. Later it is Arthur who echoes her words: "Biax niés, vostre outrage vos a mort . . ." (159:11-12) and again: ". . . grant damage m'a fet vostre felonnie . . ." (165:21-2). Excess and wickedness--human shortcomings magnified by an inability to distinguish appearances from reality, are to blame. However, by this time Gauvain has come to admit his own role: ". . . car il [Lancelos] ses cors, la commença, et je après; puis qu'ele fu del tot lessiee, la fis je recommencier a mon oncle le roi Artu . . ." (144:57-79), but he still clings stubbornly to the apparent truth that Lancelot deliberately killed his brother. To him, this is an obvious truth. "Si te di bien que, se je n'i vïsse mon droit apertement. . . ." (144:61-2). Unable to distinguish between appearances and reality, Gauvain pursues his foe to the end, dragging with him Arthur and the remnants of the Round Table to their destruction. Not even Lancelot's magnanimous offer of penance can dissuade him. "Demesure," "outrage," "desreson," the most serious sins a knight could commit, thus bring about his death. The moral lesson of the author is unmistakable. Structurally, this closely-linked series of events, moves inexorably to the final battle on Salisbury Plain.

Ultimately, Gauvain realizes the error of his ways and as the events of the story finally draw to a close, Gauvain requests that the inscription on Gaheriet's tomb, which as it stands is a misleading half-truth, be replaced by yet another half-truth for Gauvain, is, in fact, not responsible for Gaheriet's death: "Ci gisent li dui frere, Messire Gauvains et Gaheriez, que Lancelos del Lac ocist par l'outrage de Monseigneur Gauvain" (175:16-18). There is no hint that the whims of Fortune are to blame; human foolishness, pride, obstinacy and hatred--all of which are unbecoming the mediaeval knight, must bear the responsibility for the tragic events which culminate on Salisbury Plain. And yet, the author of La Mort le Roi Artu implies that, in spite of the seriousness of these sins, there is still hope, for the true penitent which Gauvain becomes, can still see God: "Rois Artus, nos avons conquestee la meson Dieu a ués monseigneur Gauvain vostre neveu por les granz biens qu'il nos a feiz" (176:12-15). The quarrel with Lancelot is over, resulting as it does in the subsequent death of the man King Arthur holds most dear; there remains virtually nothing more for Arthur in this life. His loved ones, his kingdom are gone. The fight with Mordret which must follow, serves only to wipe away the final remnants of a once glorious society.

It is significant at this point in the story that Arthur should lament the vicissitudes of Fortune: "He! Fortune, chose contrere et diverse, la plus desloial chose qui soit

el monde, por quoi me fus tu onques si debonere ne si amiable  
 por vendre le moi si chierement au derrien? Tu me fus jadis  
 mere, or m'ies tu devenue marrastre, et por fere moi de duel  
 morir as apelee avec toi la Mort, si que tu en deus manieres  
 m'as honni, de mes amis et de ma terre. He! Mort vileinne,  
 tu ne deüsses mie avoir assailli tel home comme mes niés  
 estoit qui de bonté passoit tout le monde" (172:45-55),  
 whereas Gauvain blames himself. The latter has now come to  
 the point at which he can see beyond the appearance of  
 things, but Arthur, to whom the weight of the plot now  
 shifts, is not yet in a position to understand this.

Using Arthur's determined refusal to confront Mordret and  
 make him pay for his crimes, the author of La Mort le Roi  
 Artu has introduced an interesting parallel between the  
 actions of the King on the one hand, and the earlier be-  
 haviour of Gauvain on the other. The latter's warning to  
 Arthur: "Ha! sire, quel duel et quel damage quant vos  
 hastez si vostre fin!; (176:26-7), echoes similar warnings  
 given to Gauvain himself in his blind quest for vengeance  
 on Lancelot. And yet, in spite of this, Arthur pays no heed.  
 Earthly pride will not allow him to accept the reality of  
 the situation. The parallel is significant, the repetition  
 of the circumstances important. In the dream in which  
 Arthur is assured that Gauvain has attained the Kingdom of  
 Heaven because of his charity, the crowd of the poor who  
 are following Gauvain, remind Arthur: ". . . et fei aussi

comme il a fet, si feras que sages" (176:14-15).<sup>1</sup> But he does not. Indeed, from a structural standpoint, as he commits himself more and more completely to the inevitable battle on Salisbury Plain, he urges the action to its ultimate conclusion.

The dreams which Arthur experiences have a function quite similar to that of the dreams of the Lancelot Proper in which a prediction or warning of things to come is conveyed. These, in turn, are distinct from the dreams of the Estoire where the element of choice is paramount. There is, however, the subtle suggestion of choice implied in Arthur's dreams, for when the truth is revealed to him, he does refuse to consider it. The salvation of his soul is thus in danger. The second dream which he has reiterates the warning of the first, and this time Fortune herself lifts him up on her wheel. The essence of her message is clear: "Mes tel sont li orgueil terrien qu'il n'i a nul si haut assiz qu'il ne le coviegne cheoir de la poesté del monde" (176: 73-5). The baseness of human actions, which overwhelm knightly virtue, can only lead to the rude awakening which he experiences in his dream. There is no implication that Arthur could not have retained his lofty position if he had

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<sup>1</sup>cf. Chrétien de Troyes, Le Roman de Perceval, ll. 9206-9211.  
 Vos deüssiez estre en effroi  
 Et esmaïé et esperdu,  
 Quant nous celui [Gauvain] avons perdu  
 Qui toz por Dieu nos sostenoit  
 Et dont toz li biens nos venoit  
 Par amour et par charité.

acted in accordance with the chivalric code of behaviour. Arthur's worst fears, the final destruction of the Round Table, are about to be realized. He knows this, but he believes that he has come too far to turn back. Like Gauvain immediately before his battle with Lancelot, he still deceives himself by trying to convince himself that victory is possible and that there is an apparent hope for him, but significantly, when he finally reads Merlin's prophecy inscribed on the rock, he realizes where the blame for everything must lie: ". . . et se il m'en meschiet, ce sera par mon pechié et par mon outrage. . . ." (178:35-6).

During Arthur's dream of Gauvain in the Kingdom of Heaven, Gauvain suggests that the King's actions will have tragic consequences, not only for himself: "Sire, sachiez que ce sera granz damages a toz preudoms" (176:36-7). The Archbishop, too, interpreting Arthur's second dream, warns him that such blind foolishness as that which he is showing by pursuing his quarrel with Mordret will affect the whole world: "Car se vos assemblez a Mordret a ce point d'ore, vos i seroiz navrez a mort ou ocis; et nos i avrons si grant damage qu'il durra tant com cil siecles durra" (177:14-17). The moral issue that earthly pride, hatred and blind stubbornness can spread their poison far beyond the individual in whom they arise, is important. Arthur's greatest fears become reality and an entire world is destroyed because of the baseness of human actions. The author himself turns his

criticism to precisely this point: "Einsi fu emprise la bataille dont meint preudome morurent, qui ne l'avoient pas deservi" (180:1-2). The tragic outcome is inevitable.

From the initial scenes of La Mort le Roi Artu, the main thread of the story has been the downfall of Arthur and with him the destruction of the Round Table. Wherever human frailties occur, wherever human weakness is evident and wherever hatred, pride, unreasonable demands or stubbornness blind man to the truth, tragedy must follow. From Agravain's initial accusations against Lancelot and Guinevere, motivated by a passionate hatred for his rival, through Gauvain's irrational pursuit of an "idée fixe" to Arthur's stubborn refusal to see the consequences of his actions, the entire thrust of the romance has been centred upon the downfall of a man and his kingdom because he could not and would not come to terms with reality. Structurally, each instance of deception provides an impetus to the action of the plot, pushing it relentlessly on to the final tragedy of Salisbury Plain.

## CONCLUSIONS

At the beginning of this study we set ourself the task of investigating the various ways in which illusion and reality have been employed as literary devices in the Vulgate Cycle of The Arthurian Romances and of examining their contribution to the structure of the texts as a whole. To this end we have, therefore, considered in turn: the Estoire, the Queste, the Merlin and its continuation as well as the Livre d'Artus, the Lancelot Proper and the Mort Artu and discovered that in each, there is something distinct in the treatment of reality and appearances. In the Estoire, the chronological beginning for the Arthurian tales of the Vulgate Cycle, we recognized a clearly religious and didactic tone arising out of the confusion created by the inability of a particular character to make a clear distinction between reality and the mere semblance of reality. Since the message to be conveyed to the reader must be presented simply and forcefully, we find that the author of the Estoire has made use of extensive repetition and does not rely upon some of the more frequently employed literary devices which mark other volumes of the Vulgate Cycle: the boon, characters incognito, mistaken identity, etc. As a result of the repetitive nature of the narrative technique and of the fact that behind it invariably



lies a confusion between what is real and what is only apparent, the Estoire acquires a style and structure unique in the Vulgate Cycle. This, coupled with a simplistic naiveté not evident elsewhere, would lead us to assume that this particular text reflects the efforts of an individual who was not active in creating any other sections of the larger work.

In our analysis of the Queste del Saint Graal, we discovered a much more skilful and sophisticated treatment of the material at hand.

As in the Estoire, the action of the Queste is distinctly motivated by dreams and visions revealed to the central characters of the story, not necessarily just to confuse them, to lure them into Hell as was the case in the former work, but to put them to the test to see that they are worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven or to warn them of impending doom should they fail to mend their ways. Thus, we have identified two distinct groups in the Queste: the three Knights of the Grail: Bohort, Perceval and Galahad, and the rest of the Knights of the Round Table. Galahad, the perfect knight, is never really in any danger of failing his mission, but both Perceval and Bohort are repeatedly tested by the Devil usually in the form of a beautiful woman come to win them over by deceit. In the end, both prove themselves worthy of the task which lies before them and remain totally committed to the Kingdom of God. Lancelot, on the

other hand, represents the knight who has fallen from Grace and must repent if he would return to the fold of the saved. As a result, the dreams and visions which he experiences and which are designed to warn him of the folly of his ways, motivate him to return to the straight and narrow path. Similarly, Gauvain and Hector are offered the opportunity to repent, but, unlike Lancelot, they reject it. Only in the Mort Artu are they finally redeemed. Structurally, then, the action of the story here, as in the Estoire, is directly dependent upon the dreams and visions which the central characters experience. There is, however, one essential difference between the Queste and the Estoire, which lies in the more sophisticated and intricate method in which illusion and reality are handled--a method which, by its skillful presentation, would suggest that the author of these two sections of the Vulgate Cycle were definitely not one and the same individual.

As far as the Merlin is concerned, we recognize that it would seem to have been interpolated at a later date to account for some of the earlier adventures of Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, but it, too reveals a treatment of appearances and reality which is markedly different from that used in either the Queste or the Estoire. Basically, illusion in the Vulgate Merlin as well as in the continuation assumes the form of disguise, which Merlin employs in order to further the cause of Good which he himself, in spite of

the fact that he was sired by a devil, has espoused. Gone, however, are the overtly religious and didactic tones which characterized both the Estoire and the Queste, as well as the use of the dream or vision to motivate the characters of the story to set out on new and different courses of action. Dreams and visions which do occur in the story are inevitably forewarnings of what must come to pass in the future, for, since Merlin has the power to see into the future, it is to be expected that his predictions will eventually come true. Clearly, on the basis of the treatment of appearances and reality, there would seem to be no valid objection to accepting the established belief that the Merlin and the continuation which has been integrated with it were the product of two hands--the former likely the writer responsible for the prose version of the poem by Robert de Boron, while the latter remains anonymous to this day.

Similarly, the Livre d'Artus remains as well an appendage to the whole--a pale reflection of the skill which marks the more technically perfect sections of the Vulgate Cycle. Merlin's role remains essentially the same as it is in the Vulgate Merlin and in the continuation: the disguises which he employs are again essentially used in the service of good. The quest, however, which plays such a vital role in the Lancelot Proper and the Queste, is merely a shadow of the intricate and skilful way in which the author weaves the

many aspects of his tale into a coherent whole.

In the Lancelot Proper, we discover once again a new and consistent treatment of reality and appearances as a literary device, integrating the numerous facets of the whole into a semblance of unity. With but few exceptions, it is clear that the three volumes of Sommer's text (iii - v), are all marked by a similar technique--so much so that we would have to concur with the suggestion made by Lot many years ago that this was indeed the work of a single author. Our reasons for doing so, however, are not those which he has put forth. With a consummate skill, sustained over some 1200 pages of text, the author weaves an intricate tale of chivalrous deeds linked and intertwined flawlessly with one another by means of disguise, mistaken identity, the boon, etc.--all of which are aspects of apparent reality. With but few exceptions, he maintains a remarkable consistency in his treatment of these literary devices, using them to motivate the many quests which characterize these three volumes of text and provide a framework upon which to hang the many episodes of the adventures of Lancelot and his companions of the Round Table. Such consistency precludes, in our view, any suggestion of multiple authorship, including that which would suggest the presence of a master architect who drew the plans which others transformed into reality. This section of the Vulgate Cycle remains unique, in spite of the fact that it, like the Queste, employs the search

and disguise as structural devices, for the search which motivates the action of the Queste is basically simple and straightforward and shows none of the intricacies of those of the Lancelot Proper. The overriding consideration of the search of the Queste is religious; that of the Lancelot Proper is essentially secular.

Finally, the Mort Artu, the crowning achievement of the Vulgate Cycle, represents a most sophisticated and skilful treatment of appearances and reality quite unlike anything seen in the Vulgate Cycle to this point. For this reason, this section of the work stands apart, above and beyond those texts we have discussed above, when it is considered from the point of view of the ability of the author to tell a superbly motivated tale. In his psychological approach to his characters, particularly to Arthur, he proves himself to be a master of a device considered modern by twentieth-century terms. Unity, coherence and structural integrity mark the Mort Artu as one of the real masterpieces of the Middle Ages; the consummate skill of the author elevates him and sets him apart from all of the other authors of the Vulgate Cycle.

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## APPENDIX I

The charts which cover the following pages are intended as a guide to help unravel some of the complex adventures which the Knights of the Round Table experience during the course of the Lancelot Proper. While some of the less important names have been omitted from these pages, the reader will discover that most of the central figures, as well as a good number of the more peripheral characters have been included. We have also tried to introduce as many of the adventures of note as possible, but clearly, to include all of them would not be desirable from the point of view of clarity and simplicity.

It will be noted that the charts are arranged in such a way as to allow the reader to study the events of the three volumes of the Lancelot Proper chronologically. This should prove useful if one wishes to pursue the adventures of an individual knight from beginning to end or if one should desire to examine the intricate way in which "entrelacement" has been achieved throughout the work.

We have also tried to indicate how the action of the story is directly motivated by deceit, mistaken identity, the boon, etc., as we have done in the preceding chapters of this study, and to show that such events invariably occur at some of the most critical points in the tale itself.

Each deceit, mistaken identity, etc., gives rise to a new series of adventures which unfold as they must until a similar critical point in time is reached and the process repeats itself again.

The references which are given beside the adventures in block capitals clearly indicate these critical points and coincide, for the most part, with references given in the preceding chapters of our study.



Ban & Elaine

Claudas

Bohort and Evaine

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THESIS

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take their son  
Lancelot and  
seek Arthur's aid

(5:40ff)

- wages war on Ban
- lays siege to Trebes
- DECEPTION lures Ban's seneschal into a plot against his master

- seneschal DECEIVES Ban (8:29)
- Banin resists bravely but surrenders
- Banin demands justice of Claudas
- seneschal accused and slain for his treachery

overcome at the sight of.  
his burning castles, Ban  
dies  
Lancelot carried off by  
Lady of the Lake

Elaine takes the veil

- Claudas besieges his castle
- Evaine takes flight
- Pharien takes charge of her sons: Lionel & Bohort
- Evaine takes the veil

- background of Lady of the Lake
- she cares for Lancelot

- deceived by his wife
- CLAUDAS TOLD OF PHARIEN'S CARE FOR BOHORT'S CHILDREN (24:8-10)
- Pharien accused by Claudas' nephew

Cl. entertains ideas  
of conquering Arthur

in disguise he spies on  
Arthur

Lancelot's youth  
spent with the  
Lady of the Lake

RESEMBLANCE TO KING BAN  
BUT HIS IDENTITY UNKNOWN  
(38:4-5)

dispute with his master

two queens live pious  
lives at Royal Minster  
learn their children in  
good hands  
(to p. iii)

Arthur's Court

Arthur accused of failin  
Ban and Bohort

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Lady of the Lake decides to  
rescue Bohort's children

she accuses Claudas of wrong-  
ing them  
her accusations born by  
Saraide

(to p.iii)

(55:41) DECEPTION  
children  
become grey  
hounds

spell broken &  
children normal

introduced to Lancelot

Claudas

- Pharien's difficult-  
ies with Lionel
- Lionel assaults Claudas
- Dorin is slain
- Claudas enraged

- laments Dorin
- his palace invested  
to gain the children whom  
he no longer has
- gives up greyhounds but  
they are really dogs and  
the people think they are  
DECEIVED (66:1-4)
- gives himself up to Pharien →

accused by his  
nephew Lambegues  
Pharien's RUSE  
TO DECEIVE (76:16)

Lady of the Lake tries to win  
over Lionel and Bohort

she learns of events  
involving Claudas

Pharien impris-  
oned  
news of well-be-  
ing of Lionel &  
Bohort reaches  
court

love of Lady of the Lake for the  
sons of Ban and Bohort increases

Pharien is not  
set free as had  
been agreed

Claudas plans revenge

he goes back on his word  
Lambegues' anger  
peace is concluded

Pharien dies  
at the Lake



Death of Evaine (107:27)  
(from p. i.)

(from p. ii)

iii

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Arthur's court

Lancelot to become a knight  
told of the qualities he  
must possess (112:37 - 116:35)

Lionel, Bohort, Lady of the Lake,  
Lancelot and Saraide, etc. head for Arthur's court

they return  
to the Lake

(Lionel to p.viii)  
(Bohort to p. xvii)

- Banin arrives at court
- Arthur reproached

- knight with the 2 lance-  
heads in his body and the  
sword in his head
- meet the Lady & her com-  
panions
- she sets out the terms for  
Lancelot's entry into  
kighthood
- Lancelot takes leave of  
Lady, Lionel, Bohort, etc.
- given to Yvain's care

Lanc. request  
to be knighted

(125:39-42) introduced to  
the Queen

Lanc. withdraws  
lanceheads &  
removes sword  
from knight

(129:20-1) request to be  
allowed to aid  
Lady of Nohaut

request to be  
Queen's knight

avoids ceremony  
of the sword

accompanies messenger  
of Lady of Nohaut

Guinevere

DECEPTION (131:23)

- Lancelot defeats the big DECEPTION (139:40-41)  
knight of the pavillion
- he receives a sword from the Queen
- LANCELOT'S BELIEF THAT HE IS NOW  
A KNIGHT OF THE QUEEN (137:13-14)
- Lancelot arrives at Nohaut
- he fights Alibon at the Queen's ford —→ Alibon sent to Arthur's court
- Lancelot at the Doloreuse Garde
- Lancelot learns his name (152:37-9)

Gauvain

Gauvain & 9 knights set out for  
the Doloreuse Garde

Gauvain is told of  
Lancelot's death

Arthur and the Queen come to  
find out for themselves

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- Arthur attacked by the former lord of the Doloreuse Garde
- Arthur vainly seeks entry to the castle

GAUVAIN DECEIVED BY A  
VAVASOR (159:11-12)  
AND CAPTURED

Yvain, Galegantis,  
Casoain also taken

Lancelot hears of Gauvain's  
predicament and rides out  
to learn the truth

LANCELOT'S RUDENESS AT THE  
GATE (162:10-11)

- Arthur led to believe Gauvain & his friends are dead DECEPTION (162:42-163:5)

Lancelot must make amends by rescuing  
Gauvain and his companions

- he attacks knights who in turn were to attack Arthur
- Lancelot wounds Keu
- Lancelot gains Gauvain and his friends from Brandus but UNKNOWN TO THEM (167:19-20)

Lancelot returns to  
Doloreuse Garde

Lancelot again enthralled  
by the Queen's beauty

returns to his prisoners  
and releases them to go  
to the Doloreuse Garde

return to the Doloreuse Gard

prediction that they will  
hear of Lancelot on 1st, 2nd  
and 3rd assemblies in Logres

Gauvain sets out to look for Lancelot  
(171:6-8)

Lancelot frees a knight  
of the Queen  
Lancelot wounded and  
transported in a litter

GAUVAIN  
FAILS TO RECOG-  
NIZE LANCELOT  
(175:36ff.)

meets the Lady  
of Nohaut & King of 100 Knights



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AGAIN FAILS TO  
RECOGNIZE LANCELOT

Lancelot acquires a red shield  
fights INCOGNITO at Godosair

Lancelot wounded

Gauvain seeks to  
learn his identity

Lancelot leaves the place  
before he is discovered

Gauvain con-  
tinues his quest  
for Lancelot

Arthur and the  
Queen return home

he meets a damsel  
of the Lady of the  
Lake; she goes with  
him

(to p.vii) (to p.vi)

Lady of Nohaut recognizes  
Lancelot and takes him  
home with her

Gauvain defeats  
Brun sans Pitie

meets with the damsel ac-  
companying Gauvain  
BUT SHE MUST NOT DIS-  
CLOSE HIS IDENTITY TO HIM (184:30-1)

Gauvain taken by the  
damsel to Doloreuse  
Garde where he will  
learn Lancelot's  
name

Lanc. leaves Lady of  
Nohaut

Brun's treachery

Gauvain aids a damsel

Lancelot moves INCOGNITO (189:27-9)

learns the Queen a prisoner in  
Doloreuse Garde RUSE (192:21)

Lancelot frees castle from enchant-  
ments

Gauvain encounters his  
brother Gaheriet

they are attacked by Brun

they make their way to the  
assembly

Gauvain recognizes the object of his  
search by the prowess he shows in the  
assembly

Gauvain and the damsel follow Lancelot

Lancelot refuses to  
disclose his identity

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Gauvain returns to Carduel  
and discloses Lancelot's  
identity to Arthur

vi

Lancelot forced to  
slay his host

(from p. v)

Arthur has two dreams

Arthur moves the court  
to Camalot where they  
are interpreted

Lancelot absorbed in his  
thoughts of the Queen (203:25)

a messenger from Galehaut  
arrives claiming Arthur's  
lands

Lancelot follows a knight  
to Camalot  
Lancelot again absorbed in  
thoughts of Queen and nearly  
drowns

saved by Yvain

(204:33) "captured" by  
Daguenet

Lancelot freed but  
followed by Yvain

Lancelot defeats the  
giants and Yvain  
returns to Camalot

Gauvain realizes the knight  
Daguenet captured was Lancelot

Lanc. defeats a vavasor

Lady of Malohaut requests  
his surrender (213:1)

(to p.  
ix)

-Galehaut invades Arthur's  
territory  
-first battle

Lancelot conditionally  
released to take part  
in the fighting INCOGNITO  
(214:13-15)

-Arthur confesses his sins  
and gives gifts  
-dreams interpreted

-Galehaut's proposal for a  
one year truce

Lancelot returns to prison

-Gauvain begins the quest  
of the Red Knight with  
40 companions

Lady of Malehaut seeks to  
learn Lancelot's name (228:25-6)

Galehaut seeks  
to win Red Knight

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Lady of Malehaut appears to learn Lanc. identity

DECEPTION  
(229:27-9)

Lady of Malehaut returns to Lanc. and delivers her ultimatum  
(230:28-35)

Lanc. freed and given black arms  
INCOGNITO  
(231:21-35)

Gauvain & 40 knights return unsuccessful

Galehaut reappears

battle between Arthur's & Galehaut's troops

Gauvain seriously wounded

Lancelot heads for the battle area

Lady of Malehaut involves Lancelot in the fighting

Lancelot helps Arthur's side and then disappears still UNKNOWN

Galehaut follows Lanc. & wins him over

Galehaut does his utmost for Lancelot

Lancelot requests a BOON (244:41)

Lancelot bears Galehaut's arms

Galehaut's victory and submission to Arthur

(from p.  
v)

Lancelot's discomfort at thoughts of the Queen

Galehaut arranges a meeting with the Queen in secret

he relates his adventures to her

Lady of Malehaut watches carefully



(263:18-27)

Guinevere agrees to give Lancelot her love  
Lady of Malehaut reveals she knows all and becomes part of the conspiracy to love

Galahaut & Lancelot to Sorelois

Queen, Arthur, Gauvain  
Lady of Malehaut to Logres

Lionel

sent by  
Lady of  
the Lake  
(from  
p. iii)

all unhorsed

they proceed to  
Carlion

Arthur becomes sad because Gauvain and the 40 had failed in their quest to find Lanc. (275:8-13)

Gauvain sets out with 19 knights they separate

with:  
Sagremor  
Keu  
Iwain  
Gifflet

at the Fountain of the Pine

Gauvain pursues the dwarf who misused the knight

he meets Hector and hears of the problem with Segurades

Gauvain does not reveal his name  
INCOGNITO (285:23)

Hector is refused permission to fight

Gauvain fights Segurades and defeats him (295:10)

Gauvain rides off after his victory

Hector searches for Gauvain in vain  
he and Lady of Roestoc, Segurades, dwarf, etc. go to Arthur for information about Gauvain

Gauvain knights  
Helain de Tanguis

BOON  
(299:23-8)

the Queen prevails upon the lady to allow Hector to seek Gauvain



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ix

BOON given to  
allow Hector to go  
(302:8-9)

arrival of damsel of the  
Lady of the Lake with  
the Marvellous Shield  
and the sword

Hector sets out in search of Gauvain

Gauvain and  
the damsel with  
the sword

sick knight who  
needs the blood of  
two best knights  
in the world

Agravain's story

Gauvain must con-  
tinue the quest for  
Lancelot to heal  
Agravain (314:4-315:1)

attacked by the Red Knight

Hector guided by a damsel  
fights Guinas de Blakestan  
the Lord of La Falerne

Hector aids Sinados de Windesores

Hector at the Castel Lestroite Marche  
he learns Iwain and Sagremor had been  
defeated by Marganor

(from p.  
vi)

Marganor defeated by Hector and Sagre-  
mor and Iwain are freed

Hector and the  
damsel of the  
Estrait Marche

Hector

Iwain

Sagremor

seeks to know  
the reason  
for mourning

follows a  
damsel  
being carried off

aids a knight in distress

(355:3-4) DECEIVED into  
following a  
squire to Les  
Mares

Lancelot pines  
for the Queen

Lionel sent to her

Gauvain accompanies a  
priest to a hermitage

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Gauvain at  
Leverzerp  
meets with  
Gifflet -  
steal away  
secretly -  
each follows  
a damsel

Gauvain defends  
a vavasor against  
Gloadain

Lionel meets  
maiden who  
saved him from  
Claudas

Gauvain rides after  
the knight who stole  
Lionel's horse

Gauvain fails to  
get information about  
Lanc. from Lionel

meets Sagremor  
Sagremor in need of  
nourishment

Gauvain goes to the  
daughter of the King  
of Norgales

Sagremor, Gauvain & Sag-  
remor's damsel escape

Gauvain heads for Sorelois

Sagremor for Agravain  
(to p. xvii)

Hector  
set free and  
aids Helaine the  
Fearless

Queen sends for Lanc  
& Galehaut secretly

Lionel reaches the Queen  
with Lancelot's request

Gauvain conquers Pont Norgalois

fights Gauvain a  
Pont Norgalois  
MISTAKE (398:41)

Lanc. & Gale.  
to Ille Perdue

Hector and Gauvain  
seek Lancelot at Ille Perdue

the four  
fight but  
Lanc. flees when  
Lionel arrives

(to p.  
xiii) reconciled - Lanc. bled for Agravain (405:30)

Find Arthur at Arestuel  
Saxons & Irish routed

→ Arthur DECEIVED by Camille (410:29)

Lanc. & Gale lie with  
Queen and Lady of Malo.  
shield becomes whole



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follow the damsel to  
save Arthur

all four are captured

Lancelot loses his reason  
and is finally  
released by Camille

Lancelot nursed by the Queen

miraculous shield has the  
power to heal him

Lady of the Lake appears  
and gives the Queen in-  
structions how to cure Lancelot

Lancelot's aid is required  
against the Saxons & Irish

Lancelot defeats Hardogabran

Yvain steps in to prevent Lancelot  
from pursuing the foe any further

Lancelot storms the castle to free  
the prisoners

he frees Arthur, Guerrehes  
Galehaut and Gauvain

Camille throws herself from a high rock (427:6)

Lancelot publically accepted by the Queen

all the knights return except Sagremor

Lancelot, Galehaut & Hector  
become knights of the Round  
Table

Lancelot and Galehaut  
take their leave to  
return at Christmas

Arthur and his court  
remain at Camalot

THE END OF THE LANCELOT PROPER PT. I (Sommer: Volume 3)

GalehautLancelot

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Arthur and his court

Galehaut's dreams

collapse of Lorgue-  
leuse Empriserequest for three of  
Arthur's wisest clerksGalehaut's messengers sent to fetch  
the clerks at Arthur's courtarrival of damsel of  
Lady of LeodeganTHE FALSE LETTER  
(11:9-10)Galehaut's messengers return with the  
clerks and bring the news of the Queen's  
predicamentinterpretation of the  
dreams by HelyesGALEHAUT CONCEALS  
TRUTH OF HELYES'PREDICTION FROM  
LANCELOT (34:36)decision to return to  
Arthur's court  
Baudemagus put in  
charge

all meet at Camalot

jousting at Camalot

growing conflict between  
Meleagant & Lancelotthe false Guinevere re-  
peats the chargesRUSE TO TRAP ARTHUR (46:39)ARTHUR DRUGGED (50:8-10)ARTHUR BELIEVED DEAD (49:32-33)Arthur's return now in power  
of False Guineveretrial & Guinevere's banishment  
in Galehaut's careLancelot & Galehaut return to  
Sorelois with GuinevereArthur retains the  
False Guinevereproblems with the  
PopeFalse Guinevere &  
Bertholai fall ill

752 475

truth of False  
Guinevere episode revealed

Guinevere returns to  
Arthur's court

Lancelot & Galehaut return  
RUSE TO KEEP LANCELOT AT  
COURT (84:39-41)

celebration in honour of  
the dubbing of Lionel

Gauvain carried off by  
Carados

(to p.  
xiv) Galehaut re-  
appears at  
Doloreuse Tour

(to p. xvi)

(1) Lancelot

(2) Yvain

(3) Galeschin

(from p.  
x)

meets his cousin and learns  
Gauvain in the Doloreuse  
Tour  
sets out to rescue Gauvain

fails to lift  
wounded knight  
from the coffer

succeeds in lifting the  
wounded knight from the  
coffer

meets Trahans and his sons

aids a squire against  
robbers

frees the damsel hanging  
by her hair from a tree  
and helps Sagremor

arrives to assist Iwain in  
his attempts to free Sagremor

aids a damsel and  
meets Lady of Briestoc

conquers Pintadol  
fails at the church

Lionel  
begins his  
quest for  
Lancelot

(from p.  
x)

Arthur sets out  
to find Gauvain



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Lancelot and Yvain  
at Escalon li Tenebreux  
Lancelot frees the  
church from darkness

Gauvain  
mistreated  
in the  
Dol. Tower

aided by  
a damsel

arrives in the Val sans  
Retour

Iwain captured  
Val sans Retour

Lancelot successful  
as a result of a  
RUSE (120:37)

MORGAN DRUGS LANCELOT  
AND CARRIES HIM OFF  
(123:29-31)

THE SEARCH FOR LANCELOT BEGINS:

to the Do Loreuse Tour

Keu

Yvain

Galeschin

-refuses to give Morgan  
the Queen's ring

-freed to go to the Doloreuse (127:5-7)  
Tower on condition he return

-tested by Morgan's damsel

-lifts the bodies from the  
water

-arrival at the Doloreuse Tour where they all meet

set out to free Gauvain according  
to their oath

sets out after Carados

both are  
imprisoned

meets Arthur, Galehaut (to p. xv)  
and Lionel attacking  
Carados

kills Carados and is reunited  
with Gauvain

both are  
freed by Lancelot

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Lancelot must follow Morgan's damsel

returns to Morgan's prison (139:39-40)

LANCELOT DRUGGED & QUEEN'S RING TAKEN FROM HIM (140:9)  
AND SENT TO ARTHUR'S COURT

Receipt of the ring leads to another search for Lancelot by:

Gauvain Lionel Galehaut

—they meet up with Iwain and Morgan's damsel who eludes them

—they separate

finds Lancelot's shield

Gauvain treacherously defeated by a knight

Gauvain aided by Iwain

recognizes Galehaut who is wounded but does not disclose his identity to him

a damsel tells him Lancelot is dead  
DECEIVED (151:1-2)

MORGAN CONFUSES LANCELOT BY CAUSING HIM TO DREAM (151:36)

Lancelot again freed conditionally

Lionel meets Galehaut and both go to Sorelois

Gauvain & Iwain meet Lancelot and then return to court

—Lancelot seeks Galehaut but  
IWAIN FAILS TO TELL HIM GALEHAUT IS LOOKING FOR HIM (154:17)

—LANCELOT PRESUMED DEAD BY MANY PEOPLE (154:26-9)

—Lancelot cured by Lady of the Lake

Galehaut's death

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Money to  
court  
(to p. xviii)

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Arthur's Court

Lancelot feared dead

Meleagant's challenge to Lancelot

Keu's threats to leave the court

THE QUEEN'S BOON TO KEU  
(158:35)

they set out after Meleagant

Keu defeated by Meleagant

(to p.  
xxi)

- Lancelot tries  
vainly to res-  
cue the Queen

imprisoned by Meleagant

Lancelot in  
the cart

APPEARANCES  
DECEIVE

142:39

- GAUVAIN FAILS TO RECOGNIZE  
LANCELOT (163:16-17)

the miracu-  
lous bed

- Gauvain recognizes Lancelot

- the search for the Queen begins

- Lancelot heads for the  
Pont Despee

- Gauvain heads for the  
Pont Perdu

- Lancelot and a damsel HIS IDENTITY UNKNOWN  
his identity unknown  
Lancelot's fidelity tested

- Lancelot sees the comb full  
of the Queen's hair

- raises the stone on the tomb  
of Galahad of Hocelice

- fails at Symeu's grave

- at the vavasor's

- at Pas des Perrons

- aids a damsel who then accompanies him

- fights Meloos and Supinables

- Fergus hospitality and death (192:13)

- at the Pont Perdu he defeats Sephar

- fights and gives his opponent's  
head to the damsel

- at the Pont Despee he fights Meleagant

- QUEEN REJECTS LANCELOT (206:19-21)



mistakenly taken prisoner  
by Baudemagus' people (207:26)

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freed and pardoned by Queen

Lancelot goes to meet the Queen  
clandestinely

BLOOD STAINS MISTAKEN

(210:20-8)

defeats Meleagant and  
frees all the exiles

Lancelot BETRAYED by  
Meleagant and captured

(212:41-2)

QUEEN RECEIVES MELEAGANT'S  
FALSE LETTER (214:8-10)  
accompanies Gauvain to Camalot

At Court.

(from p. iii)

the carted knight arrives  
and Gauvain dines with him  
IDENTITY UNKNOWN

attacked by: Sagremor  
Bedoier  
Lucan  
Gifflet  
Keu

Bohort welcomed by Queen

Lady of the Lake gives  
news of Lancelot's well-  
being

freed by seneschal's  
wife but conditionally  
BOON (219:19)

tournament at Pomeglay

Lancelot returns to prison

Meleagant goes to Arthur and demands his  
battle for the possession of the Queen

Lancelot freed by Meleagant's step-  
sister (223:19-34)

Lancelot goes to court and kills Meleagant

reunion at  
court

new challenge to  
Lancelot for having  
killed Meleagant

(Gauvain to p. xx)

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on the way to answer the challenge  
he meets Margondes

defeats Melyadus

at the Chastel as  
Puceles

meets Lionel and  
Hector and does  
battle with them

(235:15-16)

UNWITTINGLY

Hector and Lionel go to court where Bohort then decides  
to try to find Lancelot

(to p. xix)

(from p. xvi)

(to p. xxii)

(to p. xx)

-sisters of Hongr-  
fort

-defeats seneschal  
of Galindes

-defeats Galindes'  
nephew

-defeats Galindes'  
knights

-defeats Galindes

-follows Saraide,  
damsel of the Lady  
of the Lake

Lady of Hongrefort seeks Bohort

-King Agrippe's  
daughter & the iron  
bands (257:31-6)

-wounds Agravain,  
brother of Gauvain  
at Castel de la  
Marche

(266:11ff.)

-BOONS OFFERED BY  
12 KNIGHTS INCL.  
BOHORT'S TO BRAN-  
GOIRE'S DAUGHTER

(270:1-2)

-DECEPTION OF BO-  
HORT AND CONCEP-  
TION OF HELAIN LE  
BLANC

-aids the maid of  
Gloceдон

meets and fails to rec-  
ognize Bohort

-finds Galehaut's tomb

-rescues Meleagant's sister  
at Florega

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pursues the red knight

INCOGNITO BECAUSE HE WEARS  
THE ARMOUR OF THE BLACK KNIGHT (283:33-4)  
THE BOON

defeats the red knight, cousin of  
 Melians li Gais

meets Banin who is seeking revenge  
 for supposed death of Lancelot (289:15-18)

defeats Argondras who accused him of  
 treachery in Meleagant's death

meets with one of the knights of the  
 Castel de la Marche as he carries out  
 his foolish promises

has tomb made for Galehaut at Joyeuse  
 Garde

returns to court at Camelot

(from p.  
 xviii)

welcomed by  
 Arthur, the Queen  
 and barons

(to p. xx)

Arthur and the court  
 hunting:

{ the Queen  
 Keu  
 Dodinel  
 Sagremor  
 Lancelot

Lancelot is forced to  
 follow the old damsel

THE RESULT OF A  
BOON (303:1-2)

Sagremor

Dodinel

go to fetch food

fights with a knight

escorts a damsel

regains a dog for a  
 huntsman

damsel & the dwarf

defies the red knight

rescues a damsel

meets Duke Tanningues

- rescues Lambegues

- reconciled with  
 Lady of Hongre-  
 fort

- continues to seek  
 Lancelot

- claims Queen as  
 his prisoner in  
 accordance with  
 his foolish pro-  
 mise at Castel de  
 la Marche

- defeats all but  
 Lancelot

- wounded and take  
 to la Fontaine a  
 Fees



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captured when he demands food of Mathamas  
saved by Mathamas' daughter

— defeats Malruc li Rous

yields up his arms to the black knight (Griffon del Malx Pas)

GRIFFON NOW THOUGHT TO BE LANCELOT (317:3)

— he defeats Kex & kills Malruc

QUEEN THINKS SHE SEES LANC. HEAD (317:6)

Queen grieves & tells Bohort Lancelot is dead

continues to follow the old damsel without his arms

— falls into the river  
— captured

— returns to Camelot with Bohort

Arthur's court

(from p. xix)

LANCELOT BELIEVED DEAD & QUEST ORGANIZED (320:31-2) (from p. xvii)

Gauvain sets out in search of Lancelot with nine companions

(from p. xviii) (to p. xxii)  
Li lais hardis | Gosenain | Hector | Yvain | Guerrehes | Caheriet | Mordret | Agloval | Brandeleis

— Gauvain & the knight with 2 swords  
— fails the miracle of the sword  
— history of the Holy Grail repeated here

— meets Elyzer, son of Pelles

— Agloval defeats Griffon  
— meets Keu who had been captured and Keu joins search

— defeats Mathemas freeing Sagremor  
— he joins them

— discovers Dodinel  
— frees him and he joins the search

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AGLOVAL

(now number 13 with addition of Keu

Sagremor  
Dodinel)

all meet at the Black Cross  
as they had arranged earlier  
then they separate again

- Gauvain learns of  
a tournament at  
Castel del Molin
- aids a damsel against  
Marboar
- red knight arrives &  
Gauvain challenges him  
(Hector) UNKNOWN (339:1-2)
- adventure of burning tomb  
both fail
- separate again
- damsel in the marble tub
- Gauvain in the Adventurous  
Palace
- HAD EYES ONLY FOR  
THE BEAUTIFUL  
MAIDEN (344:10-11)  
Gauvain shamed
- hermit interprets Gauvain's  
experiences

Hector

- meets Marigart le Rous
- frees lady guarded by  
the lions
- resumes his quest

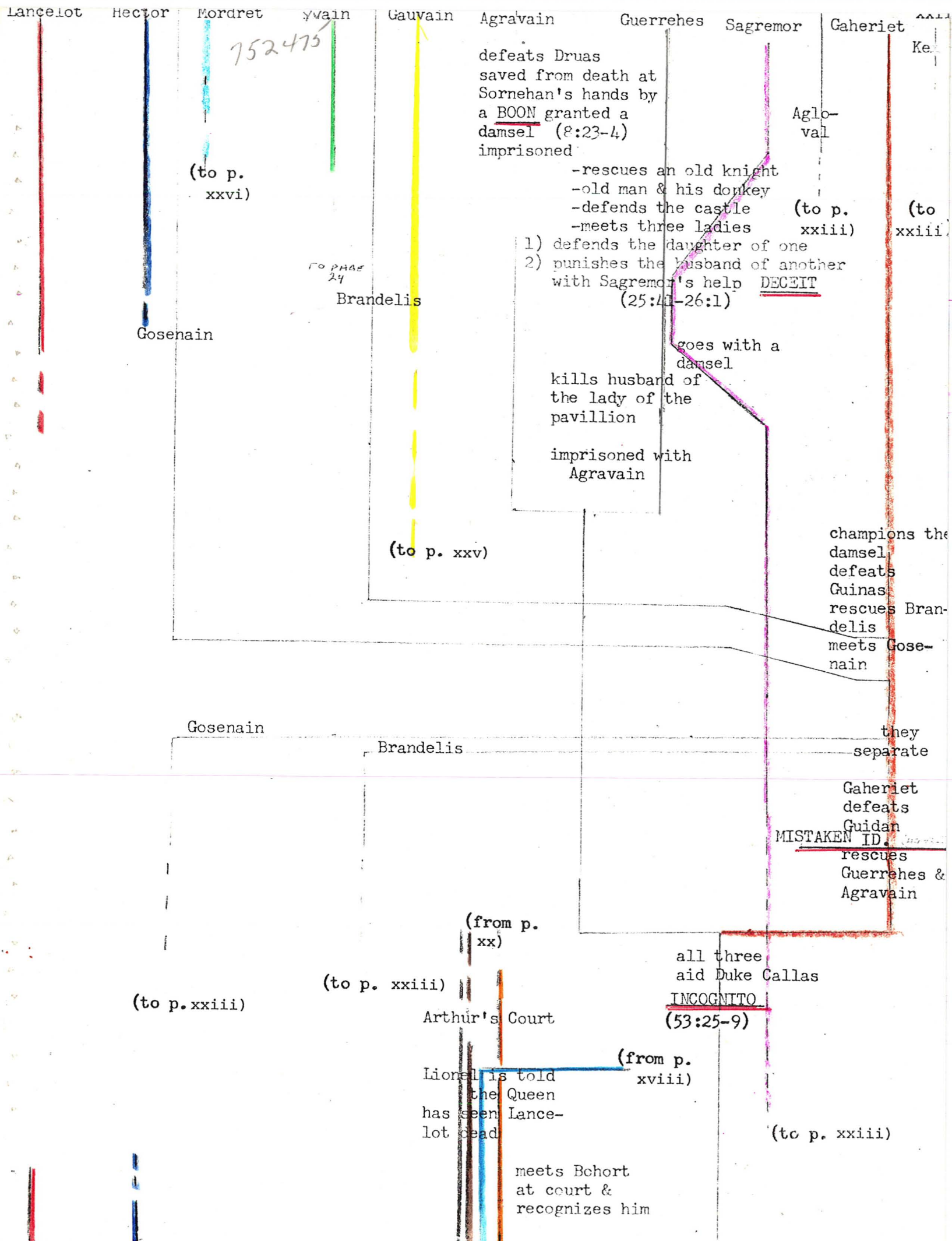
Yvain

- meets a knight from  
Castel de la Marche
- wounded returning a  
hawk to a damsel

Mordret

- digression to tell his  
background
- a dwarf kills his horse
- challenged by a knight  
whom he slays
- sleeps with a damsel, sweet-  
heart of his host
- Mordret defeats him

Keu





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Lionel goes  
to find Lancelot

Bohort ultimately to  
Lady of Galvoie but  
first to Lancelot

DREAM &  
VISION of  
Queen

(63:32-

65:2)

sends a message  
to Lady of Lake

Lancelot with old damsel:  
court learns he is  
still alive

drinks poisoned  
water  
meets Lionel &  
Bohort

Lionel returns to Camalot  
with Lancelot's hair

Bohort goes to Galvoie

only Queen  
knows Lancelot.  
has contacted

Lionel brings news of tournament Queen

promises to be damsel's  
knight if she can heal  
him

Lionel returns to Camalot

Lancelot gives her the  
Queen's girdle

to Duke Callas where  
they are DECEIVED  
(85:2-3)

at the castle  
of Duke Callas

Lancelot recognizes them → Guerrehes } captured  
& leaves with Agravain }  
Lionel INCOGNITO } captured

(87:6- they FAIL TO RECOG-  
12) NIZE Lancelot (87:30-2)

Hector fails  
in attempt to  
rescue Lionel  
& other R.T.  
knights

Terican captures  
Lionel

(to p.  
xxiv)

(from p.  
xxii)

(from  
xxiii)

imprisoned with: Agloval  
Sagremor  
Keu  
Gosenain  
Brandelis

(from p.  
xxii)

xxiv

- discovered by  
Morgan, Sebile  
Queen of Sorestan  
NOT RECOGNIZED (93:28-9)  
captive then freed  
by a damsel

Guerrehes  
Agravain  
Gaheriet

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Bohort

- aids Baudemagus  
fighting against  
Mordret

- Lancelot taken to  
Corbenic

- lifts lady from the tub  
on the way

- BRISANE'S DECEIT &  
conception of Galahad  
(109:16-17)

(to p. xxvii)

- horse taken from him

- saves damsel who had  
healed him after poi-  
soned water episode

- learns Hector his brother

- fights against Hector's  
uncle NOT RECOGNIZED  
(118:35-6)

- in the Forêt Perdue  
ENCHANTMENT OF CAROLERS  
(123:30-1)

Yvain fights  
Bohort NOT  
RECOGNIZED (125:38-9)

rescues a dwarf  
BOON promises to  
kiss old woman  
(127:29-30)

TRICKED into free-  
ing Mauduit (129:2-4)

captured

Bohort at the Lady  
of Galvoie's castle

Mariales overcome

at Corbenic

at the hermitage



Lancelot

Yvain

Bohort

heads for tourna-  
ment in Camalot

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xxv

Gauvain  
accompanies  
damsel to  
Camalot

wears his  
father's  
crown and  
ends enchant-  
ments  
sends chessboard  
to Camalot

(to p.  
xxvi)

(from p.  
xxiii)

Queen plays at  
chess

tricked and  
thrown into the  
vilest well (155:38-40)

rescues the dam-  
sel who saves him  
from the well

a knight kills a  
damsel

sent to Camalot

rescues a damsel about  
to be burned alive

helps damsel of the  
castel de la charrete

Morgan fails to recognize  
Lancelot at wedding feast  
(166:38)

sends a message to Queen

Bohort returns to  
Camalot

Gauvain returns  
to Camalot

message from Queen  
to Lancel telling of  
RUSE to humble R.T.  
knights (170:17-18)

Tournament  
FAIL TO REC-  
OGNIZE LANCELOT  
(173:39)  
(exc. Queen)

Lanc.  
wounded

Queen reveals Lanc.  
identity to Bohort

sent with message to  
Lancelot

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(APPEARANCES  
DECEIVE  
178:39ff)

Queen  
interrogates  
damsel  
with her  
girdle

Lanc. &  
Bohort to  
Queen

Queen meets  
with Lanc.

(from p. xxiv)

spend a second  
night together

DECEPTION  
(185:13-14)

Lanc. given  
white and Bo.  
given red  
arms by Queen

second day of  
tournament

Gaheriet also  
present

Lancelot's identity  
disclosed

retells his adventures

Lanc. given ring by  
Queen to dispell en-  
chantments

Baudemagus made knight  
of Round Table

Lanc. sets out to  
find Hector & Lionel

## THE SEARCH

Baudemagus  
Bohort  
Gaheriet  
Lancelot

(from p.  
xxv)

(to p. xxvii)

they rescue Mordret  
from Maten at castel  
de la blanche espine

Yvain rescued

BOON allows Bohort  
to fight Maudit (200:38-40)

Maudit DECEIVED (201:40-42)  
and slain

they separate to meet at castel del trespas

Bohort

Gaheriet

Yvain

Baudemagus

Mordret

captured  
by  
Terrican

frees Terrican's  
prisoners & slays Terr.

Bohort

Yvain

Baudemagus

Mordret

xxvii

Lanc. must follow  
old damsel before  
he sees the pris-  
oners he frees

( Agloval  
Sagremor (cont. p. xxix)  
Keu (cont. p. xxix)  
Gosenain  
Brandelis  
Hector  
Lionel (cont p. xxix)  
Gaheriet (cont p. xxix)

(to p. xxviii)

QUEST FOR LANCELOT  
BEGINS & ALL SEPARATE  
TO MEET AT CASTEL DEL  
TRESPAS ON ALL SAINTS

with the old  
damsel he con-  
tinues to seek  
Hector UNKNOWN  
(211:38)

kills the giants

DECEIVED by one of  
Morgan's damsels  
(215:35-9)  
drugged

paints his life-story  
while a prison of Morgan

Gauvain seeks  
Lancelot  
meets Baudemagus

ALL MEET AT CASTEL DEL TRESPAS  
EXCEPT LANCELOT AND BOHORT &  
SET OUT AGAIN

Only Mordret, Agloval & Baudemagus  
arrive on that appointed day  
set out once again

Lanc. escapes from  
Morgan

meets knight with the  
arrow in his thigh

meets Baudemagus  
wounded  
rescues Lionel from  
Marabron

Lionel taken to la  
petite aumosne

Lanc. to the Tertre devee

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UNKNOWNLY fights

Bohort

(239: 33-6)

frees { Gauvain  
Iwain  
Hector, etc

Lanc. dream and  
his disappearance into  
Perilous Forest

Lionel misses Lancelot

at his grandfather's  
tomb

LOSES HIS WAY & sees  
lions and stag. De-  
cides to seek them out  
(248:34)

(to p. xxix)

birth of Galahad

Lancelot defeats Belias

Queen's cousin on the way to  
Lady of the Lake captured by  
Claudas

Lancelot defeats  
Belias' brother

discovers Mordret in  
prison

sends a message to le tertre  
devee telling companions to  
meet him at court on Whit-  
sunday

Bohort, Gauvain,  
Iwain, Hector,  
INCOGNITO

Agloval pursued  
through town

Lanc. & Mordret  
in the Perilous  
Forest  
on the way  
to Peningue

welcomed by  
Galehodin  
all go to the tourn-  
ament in Peningue

Mordret hears fatal  
prophecy and slays  
priest  
Truth withheld  
(284:11-15)

Lancelot refrains  
from slaying  
Mordret

Closes his eyes L. INCOGNITO

at the tournament:

truth (285:32-38)

Hector, Bohort,  
Keu, Agloval,  
Gauvain, Lionel,  
Yvain, Dodinel,  
Guerrehes, Gaheriet,

Lancelot & Bohort  
reunited

Mordret wounded and taken  
by companions to Camalot

Bohort rescues  
Maranz & Landoine

separate

Lanc.  
continues  
alone

Bohort now must  
search for Lanc.

(to p. xxx)

fights Brunout

at Corbenic  
and in the  
Perilous Palace

heads for Camalot

meets daughter of  
of the King of the  
Hundred Knights  
fights the two  
brothers

continues his search  
for Bohort

rescues Keu

MISTAKES Keu's arms  
for his own  
(307:27)

defeats four knights  
who think he is Keu

(from p. xxvii)

unhorsing Gauvain  
Yvain  
Hector  
Sagremor  
who think he is Keu

meets damsel who  
remains chaste for  
him

meets Bohort's son

Gauvain Yvain  
Hector Sagremor  
take the wrong  
road in search for  
Lancelot

return to Camalot

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Mordret returns  
to Camelot

Lionel and  
Bohort re-  
turn with  
remaining  
companions

Keu arrives  
MISTAKEN  
(315:5-6)

Lancelot returns

Brumant sits  
in Perilous  
Seat

learns of Claudas'  
treachery from Queen

war is declared  
upon Claudas

Claudas learns  
of war plans

raises an army

all companions  
of R.T. relate  
their adventures

LANC DOES NOT  
TELL QUEEN ALL  
DETAILS OF MORD-  
RET'S BACKGROUND  
(334:35-9)

army sent against  
Claudas

Lancelot remains

Arthur remains

battles with  
Claudas' men

goes to  
find Lancelot

Elaine arrives  
Lady of the Lake  
arrives  
both seek Lancelot.

Romans succour Cl.  
but Lady of Lake  
warns Arthur's knights

battle with the Romans

squire takes news of  
dire situation to Lancelot



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Arthur and  
Lancelot  
invade Gaul

Arthur defeats  
Frolle in single  
combat

Claudas flees

Arthur & Lanc.  
arrive in Gannes

Elaine meets Lanc.

all return to  
Camalot

Helaine with Brisane  
and Galahad arrive  
in Camalot

LANCELOT AVOIDS HER; SHE  
MISUNDERSTANDS WHY HE DOES  
(378:34-5)

BRISANE'S RUSE (379:18-20)

QUEEN MISUNDERSTANDS &  
REJECTS LANCELOT (380:15-16)

Lancelot alone

Bohort  
Hector  
Lionel set  
out to find  
Lancelot

Search joined by:

Gauvain	Gaheriet
Yvain	Guerrehes
Agloval	Agravain
Sagremor	and others

Agloval seeks his mother  
whom he has not seen for  
some time  
brother Perceval joins him  
knighted by Arthur

all have returned to  
Camalot except Bohort  
Hector  
Lionel

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Perceval goaded into  
seeking adventures by  
Keu

sets out from Camelot  
seeking Lancelot

rescues Patrides

fights with Hector  
DOES NOT RECOGNIZE HIM  
(390:39-42)

wounded, but healed  
by the Grail

both search for Lanc.  
together

Lanc. wanders  
alone, mad

Eliant tries to  
heal him

Lanc. defends  
Eliant

Lanc. wounded by  
a boar

arrives at Corbenic

recognized by Helaine  
and they go to an  
island castle

as the chevalier mesfait  
IDENTITY UNKNOWN  
(403:36)

Perceval and Hector arrive  
Perceval and Lancelot joust

recognize each other  
and throw down their  
arms

Lancelot meets Galahad

reunited with: Lionel  
Arthur  
Bohort  
Queen

Galahad's coming announced