THE BEASTS BENEATH THE ROUND TABLE: THE ROLE OF ANIMALS
IN MALORY'S MORTE D'ARTHUR

by

MELVIN HAROLD DAGG
B.A. University of British Columbia, 1967

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
in the Department

of

ENGLISH

We accept this thesis as conforming to the
required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
April, 1969
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and Study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the Head of my Department or by his representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of English

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver 8, Canada

Date April, 24, 1969.
This thesis explores the role of animal imagery in Malory's *Morte Darthur*. Each chapter of the thesis attempts to achieve this aim by examining the animals from different, though related perspectives.

Firstly, wherever possible, Malory's animal imagery is compared to the traditional mythological context of the animal under discussion, and to the appearance of that animal in other relevant Arthurian literature. This approach has proved most useful in Chapter Four, devoted to the dragon, where Malory's use of the dragon is initially antithetical to the traditional connotations associated with it, whereas as the *Morte* progresses the dragon reverts to its traditional meaning of evil and terror. Similarly, the subject of Chapter Three, the Questing Beast, has entailed a study of the French sources not used by Malory, simply because Malory did not include the complete story of the Questing Beast in the *Morte*. Without examining those sources, therefore, we would know neither the complete meaning, nor the complete story of this fascinating creature.

Secondly, the thesis examines the relationship of the animals in the *Morte* to Malory's characters. In Chapter One it is shown that Torre and Tristram, unlike Gawain and Pellinor, are worthy of love because of their association with the symbol and token of love, the brachet. In Chapter Two the black bulls envisioned by Gawain are associated with Arthur's entire court, with the exception of the three Grail questers, Percival, Galahad, and Bors, who are represented as white bulls.
Chapter Three attempts to show that the flawed characters of Pellinor and Palomides are mirrored in the ugly, elusive, meaningless object of their quest, the Questing Beast. Most significant of all, however, is the simultaneous association of the dragon with Arthur, his Kingdom, and his Knights in the final chapter of the thesis.

Thirdly, the thesis examines the thematic function of Malory's animal imagery. Both Gawain's vision of the black and white bulls, and the changing meaning of the dragon symbol, foreshadow and comment on the cause of the tragedy with which the Morte ends. In both Chapter Two, treating the image of the bulls, and Chapter Four, dealing with the dragon, I have strongly suggested that the image of both the bulls and the dragon implies that Arthur's entire court, Arthur included, is responsible for the ruin of the Round Table and the fellowship it represented.

Thus the thesis concludes that the animals within Malory's Morte Darthur are of extreme importance, not merely as separate entities, but as symbols of varying social and ethical significance, and as thematic devices contributing to the unity of the whole work.
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I  The Brachet</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II  The Bulls of Arthur's Court</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III  The Questing Beast</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV  Dragons of Dissension</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER V  Conclusion</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices I  Sources of the Questing Beast</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices II  Arthur's Dragon Dream</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While preparing this thesis I have been impressed by the relative scarcity of really useful critical commentary on Malory. Scholars have not ignored Malory, but many of their efforts have done little to illuminate his work. It is ironic that one of the least pretentious of English writers should be victimized by criticism that often can only be called egocentric. Though G.L. Kittredge and Edward Hicks have provided the biographical background, and Eugene Vinaver has prepared an authentic text, modern Malory scholarship has since split into two opposed groups whose vindictive volley of articles often aims not at discussing Malory, but at destroying opposing critical judgments.

The first group, led by Vinaver, claims that Malory's work must be read as eight separate tales which, when considered as a whole, have "no unity of structure or design."¹ Opposing Vinaver is a school of critics led by R.M. Lumiansky who insist that Malory's work has an organic unity of its own.² Both groups are, of course, correct. There are

narrative inconsistencies in Malory's work which render a reading of it as one unified story difficult. There are also, however, thematic threads running through the entire work which make it possible to see, at least in its broad outline, a single, cyclical story of the birth, rise, and fall of the Arthurian court. But the inability of each critical group to compromise, to recognize the valid aspects of the other's argument, to deal in actualities, rather than absolutes, has lessened the contribution of both groups to the study of Malory. For if literary criticism existed in a vacuum, such arguments would be pardonable. But it does not; and in their frenzied efforts to defend their own critical views, Malory, not opposing critics, ultimately suffers.

Faced with such contrary critical opinions, the words of C.S. Lewis are reassuring:

I do not for a moment believe that Malory had any intention either of writing a single 'work' or of writing many 'works' as we should understand the expressions. He was telling us about Arthur and the knights. Of course his matter was one -- the same king, the same court. Of course his matter was many -- they had many adventures.

The choice we try to force upon Malory is really a choice for us. It is our imagination, not his, that makes the work one or eight or fifty. We can read it either way. We can read it now one way, now another. We partly make what we read.

---

The simplicity of Lewis' statement only increases its importance. Refusing to restrict either his imagination, or his reading of Malory, by accepting either of the opposing critical arguments, Lewis instead returns to what should be the focal point of all literary criticism, the work itself. I only hope, that in a much smaller manner, that is what I too have accomplished in this study of the animal imagery in Malory's Morte.
INTRODUCTION

In Malory's time, man's close affinity with animals raised their importance to a level difficult to comprehend today. The dog was not merely a pet, rather, a hunting hound upon whose prowess an entire court depended for its livelihood -- indeed, hunting hounds were so important that Edward, Second Duke of York, commanded a boy be kennelled with the hounds at all times to care for their needs. The hart is still hunted today for sport, but to medieval man the value of its meat rendered it a vital necessity. These are animals which existed then and today. In the mind of medieval man, however, also existed creatures of a quite different nature. There, in the recesses of his mind, fabulous creatures, some half-man, half-beast, must have lurked, spawned by myth and folklore, and kept alive by the Physiologus, subsequent bestiaries, and literature. These creatures did not suddenly materialize in the mind of medieval man, but were born in sources which return "to the most distant past, to the Fathers of the Church, to Rome, to Greece, to Egypt, to mythology, ultimately to oral tradition which must have been contemporary with the caves of Cromagnon."¹

But they were still very much alive in the Middle Ages where, looming between the pages of a twelfth century bestiary, griffins, syrens, dragons, unicorns, a whole host of unlikely creatures, are

carefully described in detailed prose and illustration. There, even the more orthodox creatures, as in the literature of the time, took on human characteristics. Thus the writer of the Ancrene Riwle used animals to symbolize the Seven Deadly Sins of humans:

... go with great caution, for in this wilderness there are many evil beasts: the Lion of Pride, the Serpent of venomous Envy, the Unicorn of Wrath, the Bear of deadly Sloth, the Fox of Covetousness, the Sow of Gluttony, the Scorpion with its tail of stinging Lechery, that is, lust.2

"There is a great deal of trickery about the fox,"3 continues the writer of the Ancrene Riwle, while The Bestiary adds that the fox "never runs straight ... he is a fraudulent and ingenious animal."4 Fraudulent and ingenious he has remained to this day, but in the literature of the Middle Ages he came to be regarded not as a mere animal, but as a representative of a certain human type. Thus the fox, in Middle English Literature, is not only always cunning, devious, and sly, but as in The Fox and the Wolf and The Nun's Priest's Tale, he is gifted with the faculty of speech and is more human than animal. In the Middle Ages Reynard the Fox was as sly a villain as any human has ever been, and became the subject of a large body of literature, notably, the twenty-seven branches of the French Beast Epic, the Roman de Renard. Thus when, in Malory's Morte,

3 Ibid., p. 90.
Sir Launcelot wrote to Sir Tristram, warning him of King Mark’s villainy by referring to him as "Kynge Foxe," the unseemly appellation summoned up all the connotations of cunning and evil which the medieval mind associated with the fox.

This thesis is an examination of animals, real and unreal, in Malory’s Morte. It begins with the lowly lap dog, and proceeds to examine one of the most fantastic creatures the human imagination has ever breathed life into, the Questing Beast. In no way, however, is the thesis intended to be a comprehensive, inclusive treatment of all the animals in Malory. Rather, the thesis attempts to explore the meaning of a chosen number of animals and their implications in the larger themes of the Morte, while also, wherever possible, comparing Malory’s use of animals with that found in other Arthurian literature. I have also attempted to examine the traditional myths, legends, and beliefs associated with the beasts under discussion. I have had, however, to minimize such material, mentioning only what is relevant, not exploring extraneous material at the expense of examining the material in Malory in depth. The thesis is not, then, an exploration of archetypes, but rather, a detailed examination of the aesthetic function of a chosen number of animals within the Morte itself.

For the beasts in Malory warrant close examination. Dog or dragon, the animals in Malory have one thing in common, they exist

---

not just as animals, but attain symbolical significance extending far beyond their own being. That is to say, they are not separate entities, but rather, function as integral and important links in the thematic and narrative movement of the *Morte*. Thus each chapter of this thesis has a dual subject, a beast per se, and that beast's relationship to the *Morte* as a whole. To study the dragon, for example, is also to study Arthur and his kingdom, for, as will be shown, the dragon is a symbol of both.

The movement and ordering of the thesis is from the real to the imaginary. It begins, therefore, by examining actual animals, the common lap dog, or brachet, and the image of the bulls. Yet though the bulls are real, the shift to the imaginary has already begun, for unlike the brachet, the bulls are beheld in a dream vision. The final two chapters complete this shift, focussing fully on the fantastic, the Questing Beast and the dragon. As the thesis attempts to show, however, all the animals, real and imaginary, are of symbolic significance.

Thus, even the common brachet, with which the thesis begins, has a unique meaning. Indeed, Malory indicates that he intended the brachet to be considered in a special context by differentiating, throughout, between the brachet and the hunting hounds with which the work abounds. Thus, in the "Torre and Pellinor" episode, though there are thirty pairs of hounds, there is only one brachet:

Ryght so as they sate there com rennying inne a whyght herte into the hall, and a whyght brachet nexe hym, and thirty couple of blacke rennynge houndis com afftir with a grete cry.6

6 Ibid., p. 76.
This initial appearance of the brachet establishes a pattern recurring throughout Malory. For the appearance of the brachet precedes the entry into Arthur's court of a lady riding a white palfrey. It is this recurring link between the lady, the brachet, and the role of the brachet, sometimes as a symbol of love, sometimes as a token of love, which is examined in the first chapter.

Chapter Two deals with only one section of Malory's *Morte*, "The Tale of the Sankgreall." Yet in so doing, I have attempted to stress the relationship of Malory's treatment of the Grail Quest to the thematic movement of the *Morte* as a whole, by showing that the animal imagery in this section foreshadows the fall of Arthur's court. This has necessitated limiting my discussion to an intensive study of one passage, rather than attempting to explore the meaning of the many animals appearing in "The Tale of the Sankgreall."

The most elusive beast in Malory, both because of its nebulous meaning, and because it is never caught, the quite fantastic Questing Beast, is the subject of the third chapter. Perhaps part of the beast's mystery can be attributed to the fact that only a segment of its story is told in the *Morte*. Although I have outlined the remainder of that story by referring to other sources, I have also suggested that the Questing Beast should be considered as it appears in Malory alone.

Chapter Four is a detailed examination of the single symbol that, to me, has proved most meaningful in terms of Malory's entire work, the dragon. Symbolically representing Arthur, the dragon's meaning
changes as Arthur and his kingdom change, as king and kingdom move
towards their tragic end.

In describing that end, both in Chapter Four, and Chapter Two, I have attempted to show that Arthur's entire fellowship, himself included, was responsible for the ruin of the Round Table. It is not Iagos, but Othellos, who create tragedy. Similarly, not Mordred and Aggravayne, but Arthur, Lancelot, and Gawain, create the tragic set of circumstances from which they cannot escape.
CHAPTER I

THE BRACHET

In a fourteenth century illustration two lovers, riding on horseback, are pictured. Everything in the illustration suggests courtship -- the mood of the riders is complemented by their horses, their heads turned inward, eyeing each other favorably. But there is a third party in the picture whose presence might at first seem incongruous. Nestled in the lady's lap is a tiny white dog, indeed, the illustration is entitled "Courting on horse-back with a dog chaperone."¹ Beryl Rowland, commenting on Chaucer's Prioress's affinity for dogs such as the one in the illustration, hints at their significance when she notes that they were "popular with ladies in secular life and, it seems with romantic young ladies in particular."² Indeed, continues Mrs. Rowland, the lap dogs are a sign not only of the Prioress's disobedience and sentimentality but of "her secret romantic longings."³ Whether or not such romantic longings can be attributed to the Prioress solely on the basis of her fondness for dogs is questionable. But Mrs. Rowland's linking of the lap

---

¹ Dorothy Hartley and Margaret M. Elliot, ed. Life and Work of the People of England (4 Vols; London: Botsford, 1928), II plate 18, p. 67.
³ Ibid.
dog with love is certainly not. For throughout the Morte a certain kind of dog, approximating the lap dog, and called by Malory a "brachette" is always associated with women, and often with love.

The importance, but perhaps not the exact meaning, of the brachet in Malory can be seen by examining Book III of the Morte, "Torre and Pellinore," where the brachet not only becomes the central object of the three-part quest, but also, by implication, aids in establishing the thematic emphasis of this particular section of The Morte. In Book III the white brachet first appears in Arthur's court in the company of a white hart, thirty pairs of hounds, and significantly, a lady riding a white palefrey. The association of the lady with the brachet, and the focussing of attention on it, rather than the hart or hounds, is immediately achieved when a knight seizes the brachet and rides from Arthur's court with it. That the brachet is valued highly by the lady is indicated not only by the volume of her plea to Arthur, for "she made such a noyse," but also, by the diction in which she voices her appeal:

Right so com in the lady on a whyght palfrey and cryed alowde unto kynge Arthure and sayd, "Sir, suffir me nat to have thys despite, for the brachet ys myne that the knyght hath ladde away."

---

5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
"Suffer" and "despite" both suggest something other than an insignificant pet is represented by the brachet, indeed, the words suggest a deep loss, as if the lady's honour has been tainted, as if she has been personally insulted, if not assaulted. Arthur, however, is unmoved, and when, a moment later, an unknown knight rides into the court and abducts the lady, he is only relieved:

So whan she was gone the Kynge was gladde, for she made such a noyse.

It is however, Merlin, who realizes the importance of retrieving the brachet, hinting that unless the quest is achieved Arthur's court is doomed to dishonour:

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

Moreover, it is Merlin who assigns to Torre the task of retrieving the brachet. In doing so Merlin raises the value of the brachet above that of the white hart, which Gawain is to retrieve, to a plane equal to, and perhaps even surpassing the lady herself, the object of Pellynor's part in the quest. For the white brachet is a symbol of love, and its

7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
abduction by the unknown knight is symbolic of love defiled. By assigning to Torre the task of retrieving the brachet Merlin not only acknowledges its importance, but also puts into practice one of the most basic tenets in the Morte: that is, the pursuers of the quest are chosen for their direct relationship to the object sought, the quester must suit and complement his quest. For Merlin, gifted with the power of foreknowledge, knows at the outset what the tale itself proves, that only Torre is worthy of achieving the white brachet. Each of the three quests is a "test of the knights",\(^9\) notes Edmund Reiss, and as the tests are carried out it becomes clear that only Torre passes them, and is thus worthy of the brachet and what it symbolizes. That the brachet is symbolic of love, and of the lady, and that this is the theme of the tri-partite quest is partially confirmed by Reiss's earlier comment:

>This section thus turns from the masculine world of comradeship to what might be called the feminine world outside the fellowship.\(^{10}\)

Reiss's comment is strengthened still further if we remember that the framing device within which the three-part quest unfolds is the marriage of Arthur and Guinevere. Moreover, a close examination of the three quests, and the questers themselves, reveals not only a unified theme, but also the relationship of the white brachet to that theme.

---


\(^{10}\) Ibid., p. 53.
Gawain's quest is the first that is related, and his unworthiness of either the brachet, or the love it symbolizes, indeed, even of the white hart he is assigned to retrieve, is vividly emphasized when he returns to court not with the white hart, but instead, with the body of a lady draped across his horse, her head hanging from his neck. Gawain's failure is the result of his unwillingness to grant mercy to a knight who begs it of him. As Gawain raises his sword to slay the knight, the knight's lady throws herself upon her knight, thus yielding her head to Gawain's sword. The knight, saved at the expense of his lady's life, and because of her love, reproaches Gawain, at once emphasizing the nature of Gawain's crime, and reinforcing the recurring theme of the tripartite quest:

'Nay, nay', seyd the knyght, 'I take no forse of thy mercy now, for thou haste slayne with vilony my love and my lady that I loved beste of all erthly thynge.'

By slaying the knight's "love," the lady that he "loved beste of all erthly thynge," Gawain has not merely murdered, but sinned against love, and against women, just as the knight who stole the lady's white brachet had sinned against love and women. Significantly, it is a court of four ladies who intervene moments later, after Gawain and Gaherys have been outnumbered and overcome by four knights, and ironically grant the two knights the mercy Gawain would not give to the knight who was the

---

now dead lady's lover. But the four women grant Gawain mercy only on
the condition that he return to Arthur's court with the head of the slain
maiden slung round his neck, "and the hole body of hir before hym on hys
horse mane",12 Gawain is not to be allowed to forget easily what he has
sinned against. Significantly too, it is the ladies, not the men of
Arthur's court, who judge him upon his return. The displeasure of
Guinevere, and the specific judgment of the "queste of ladyes"13 who be­
set Gawain both clarify the nature of his crime:

Than the Kynge and the quene were gretely
displeased with sir Gawayne for the sleynge
of the lady, and there by ordynaunce of the
queene there was sette a queste of ladyes
upon sir Gawayne, and they juged hym for
ever whyle he lyved to be with all ladies
and to fyght for hir quarels; and ever that
he sholde be curteyse, and never to refuse
mercy to hym that askith mercy. Thus was
sir Gawayne sworne uppon the four Evaungel­
ystis that he sholde never be ayenste lady
ne jantillwoman but if he fyght for a lady
and hys adversary fyghtith for another.14

Both the earlier four women, and here, the ladies of Arthur's court, act
much as a court of love, finding Gawain guilty of sinning against love,
and thus, unlike Torre, unworthy of achieving the white brachet which
symbolizes love.

12 Ibid., p. 81.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
Like Gawain, Pellinor too, is unworthy, and as his quest shows, he too sins against love. Though he successfully achieves his part of the quest, the return of the lady whose brachet was stolen, in his very eagerness to achieve his immediate end, he fails in the larger purpose of the quest. Arriving in a forest Pellinor encounters a "damesell" holding a wounded knight in her arms, but because "he was so eigir in hys queste"\textsuperscript{15} that though "she cryed an hondred tymes aftir helpe"\textsuperscript{16} Pellinor would not stop to aid the wounded knight and the beseeching maid. Because Pellinor would not stop, the wounded knight died, "wherefore for pure sorow the lady slew hirselff with hys sworde."\textsuperscript{17} But the full consequences of Pellinor's unwillingness to act are not revealed until he returns to Arthur's court. Significantly, it is, again, a woman, Guinevere, who admonishes Pellinor:

'A, Kynge Pellynore," seyde quene Gwenyver, 'ye were gretly to blame that ye saved nat thys ladyes lyff.'\textsuperscript{18}

For like Gawain, Pellinor has sinned against women, and against love. But unlike Gawain, Pellinor has sinned in a manner that affects him personally, so personally that the very crime carries with it its own punishment, as Merlin reveals:

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 86
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
'Truly ye ought sore to repente hit,' seyde Merlion 'for that lady was youre owne doughtir, begotyn of the lady of the Rule, and that knyght that was dede was hir love and sholde have wedded hir, and he was a ryght good knyght, of a yonge man, and wolde a proved a good man.'

Significantly, Merlin mentions the proposed marriage of the dead pair, emphasizing that like Gawain, Pellinor too has sinned against love.

Torre alone is worthy of achieving the white brachet, and he does so only after a series of adventures so hazardous that they make it impossible to view the object of his quest, the white brachet, with anything more than the highest significance. Whatever the white brachet is, it is not a mere lap dog. It is an object covetted by women, and fought over by men. Significantly Torre finds the white brachet within the pavilion of a sleeping woman, from whom he takes it, only to be apprehended by the lady's knight shouting, "abyde and yelde my brachette that thou toke frome my lady!" That Abellus, the lady's knight, values the white brachet above even his life, is dramatically exemplified when Torre, overcoming him in battle, demands he yield, only to hear Abellus swear to die, rather than return to his lady without the white brachet:

'That woll I nat,' sayde Abelleus 'whyle lastith the lyff and the soule in my body, onles that thou wolte geff me the brachette.'

19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., p. 83.
21 Ibid., p. 84.
But Torre too knows the value of the brachet, and moreover, the meaning of his quest, and thus is prepared even to kill Abellus to return the white brachet to its rightful owner:

'That woll I nat,' sayde Sir Torre, 'for hit was my queste to brynge agayne the brachette, thee, other bothe.'\(^{22}\)

Immediately a damsel rides forth, requesting a gift from Torre. Torre agrees, only to have the damsel demand the head of Abellus, denouncing him as the "falsyste" and the "moste outerageous knyght that lyvith"\(^{23}\) and the slayer of her brother. Here Torre unlike Gawain's unnecessary slaying, is justified in taking the life of Abellus. To not do so would be to forfeit not only the object of the quest, the white brachet, but his promise to the damsel who demanded Abellus' life. That Torre is the only knight worthy of achieving the white brachet is shown as he returns to court. Unlike Gawain and Pellinor, he has not sinned against love, but has returned with the symbol, the token of love, the white brachet. Thus it is more than fitting that before arriving at Arthur's court he be rewarded with the love of the damsel whose brother he had revenged. "I pray you come and lodge with me hereby at my place,"\(^{24}\) invites the lady, while Malory adds, with characteristic brevity:

\(^{22}\) Ibid.  
\(^{23}\) Ibid.  
\(^{24}\) Ibid., p. 85.
And so he rode with her, and had passynge
good chere with her.25

Moreover, upon his return to court, Torre's conduct, unlike that of
Gawain and Pellinor, produces not reprimands, but pleasure:

And than the kynge and the quene by Merlions
advise made hym swere to tell of hys adven-
tures, and so he tolde and made prevys of
hys dedys as hit ys before reherced, where-
fore the kynge and the quene made grete joy.26

To the joy of the king and queen is added the praise of Merlin, who de-
scribes Torre as "jantyl and curteyse and of good tacchys,"27 all attri-
butes of the courtly knight which make it apparent why Torre has suc-
cceeded where Gawain and Pellinor have failed. The quester must suit the
quest, and only Torre is, as revealed by his actions, capable of return-
ing the token of love, the white brachet, to Arthur's court.

The brachet, then, is not only a token of love, but a
highly valued one. Indeed, in Book IX, Sir Dynas holds the brachet's
value above that of the love it represents, and rightly so. For while
Sir Dynas is hunting, his paramour slips from his castle for a meeting
with her secret lover, taking with her "hir two brachettis." Here, as

25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
in the tri-partite quest, the transfer of the brachets seems to imply a transfer of love. Thus, because of Sir Dynas's lady's false love, he desires only to retain her brachets. Indeed, it is the loss of the brachets, not his paramour, which angers Sir Dynas:

And when Sir Dynas cam home and myste hys paramoure and hys brachettes, than was the more wrother for hys brachettis, more than for hys lady.28

Even after confronting his false lady and her lover, and hearing her beg for mercy and pledge to return to him, Sir Dynas angrily refuses her, content instead to return to his castle with his brachets. As a symbol and remembrance of a love that once was true, but has now turned false, they hold more meaning for him than the return of a false, fickle woman.

But brachets, like Sir Dynas's paramour, are also capable of betrayal, and both King Mark's discovery of Tristram as the lover of his queen, La Beall Isode, and Tristram's ensuing ten year exile from Cornwall, are the result of a seemingly insignificant, harmless bracet. Significantly, the bracet was presented to Tristram as a love token from the King of France's daughter:

So in the meanewhyle there com a messager with lettyrs of love fro Kynge Faramon of Fraunces doughter unto Syr Trystrams that were peteuous lettyrs, but in no wyse Trystrams had no joy of hir lettyrs nor regarde

28 Ibid., p. 409.
unto hir. Also she sente hym a lytyll brac­
chet that was passynge fayre. But whan the
kynges daughter undirstooode that Trystrams
wolde nat love hir, as the booke seyth, she
dyed for sorou. And than the same squyre
that brought the lettyrs and the brachet
cam ayen unto Sir Trystrams, as aftir ye
shall here in the tale folowyng.29

Here the brachet is seen as an integral part of the love offering, accom­
ppanying the princess's letters, and although Tristram rejects the pro­
ferred love of King Faramour's daughter, it is undoubtedly his well-known
love of animals, and the hunt,30 which moves him to retain the brachet,
which ironically, contributes to his downfall at King Mark's court.

Malory here severs the thread of the brachet narrative,
splicing it with a myriad of episodes out of which the varied fabric of
"The Book of Sir Tristram De Lyones" is woven, returning to the brachet
episode only after Tristram has been reduced to madness and is found
naked in the forest by King Mark, who takes him to his court, unaware of
his identity. Tristram thus arrives at the palace of Tintagel unrecog­
nized by any human other than his lover, Queen Iseult. But it is the
token of love, the brachet, which the King of France's daughter had pre­
sented to Tristram as a sign of her affection, which through its own
show of affection, betrays the two courtly lovers who so closely parallel

29 Ibid., p. 282.
30 Ibid., p. 279.
Lancelot and Guinevere, by revealing the presence of Tristram in King Mark's court. The response of the brachet is intuitive, natural. Unfettered by human guile or restraint it revels in the joy of the physical presence of Tristram:

And anone thys lityll brachet felte a savoure of Sir Trystram. He lepte uppon hym and lycked hys learys, and hys earys, and than he whyned and quested, . . . , and she smelled at hys feete and at hys hondis and on all the partyes of hys body that she myght com to.31

Perhaps this ability of the brachet to exist in a natural state of animal affection, responding only with the senses, is the real source of the brachet as a symbol of love. For the brachet's intuitive recognition of Tristram is immediately complemented by Iseult's discovery of Tristram's presence, coupled with her fear that because of the brachet's love their own love will be endangered:

'A, my lorde, sir Trystram! Blyssed by God ye have youre lyff! And now I am sure ye shall be discoverde by thys lityll brachet, for she woll never leve you.32

Iseult's fear is well-founded, for moments later Sir Andred, who in his continual efforts to ensnare Tristram and Iseult closely resembles the attempt by Gawain's brothers, Sir Aggravayne and Sir Mordred, to betray Lancelot and Guinevere, recognizes Tristram, and reveals his presence

31 Ibid., p. 374.
32 Ibid.
to King Mark. Again it is the innocent love of the brachet which here is responsible for the separation of Tristram and Iseult, for although Iseult hastily removes herself from Tristram's company when King Mark and Andred enter, the brachet continues to cling innocently to Tristram, causing Andred to remark, "Sir, thys ys Sir Trystramy, I se well by that brachet."\(^{33}\) King Mark's reaction to Andred's discovery is immediate and Tristram is exiled, rather than executed, only at the insistence of Mark's nobles. So incensed is King Mark that he demands death, sparing his life only because "hys barownes wolde nat assente thereto."\(^{34}\)

The brachet's recognition of Tristram, and his subsequent punishment, is not unique, but rather, appears to be a variation of a relatively common, recurring *motif*. Edward, Second Duke of York, in his *Master of Game*, tells a story not unlike the Tristram episode in its broader outlines. It too, like the Tristram episode, is a story of illicit love within a king's court in which a dog aids in the discovery and persecution of the lover. Yet in its details this story varies considerably from the Tristram, Iseult tale. For the son of King Claudoneus, who falls in love with the Queen of Lyonnys, when she and her husband visit the French king's court, is, unlike Tristram, a villain who justly deserves his punishment. Unlike Iseult, the queen does not return his proffered love, and finally he is driven to murder the queen's husband.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., p. 375.

\(^{34}\) Ibid.
Nevertheless, it too is a story of an illicit love within a king's court in which a dog aids in the discovery and persecution of the lover. For it is King Lyoness's dog which is responsible not only for the discovery of his murdered master's body, but also for the resulting punishment of the king of France's son. In both this aspect and the royal setting, it is clearly connected to the Tristram-Iseult episode.\textsuperscript{35} So too is an episode in the romance entitled \textit{Sir Tryamoure}. Again the conflict is within a royal court, and again the lover is depicted as a murderous villain. Here, however, the role of the dog, obviously not a brachet, but a greyhound, is carried one step further when the dog not only identifies the king's false steward, Marrocke, but springing at his throat, kills him.\textsuperscript{36} Thus both episodes, through the common themes of illicit love, courtly setting, and identification of the false lover, have much in common with the Tristram episode.

In summary, several observations on Malory's use of the brachet should here be noted. Firstly, the appearance of a brachet is always associated with women. Thus Sir Launcelot need only follow the black brachet which he sights in a forest to a nearby castle to find


"a lady wepyng and wryngyng hir hondys." Secondly, the brachet is often associated with love, either as a token of love, as in the case of the brachet sent to Tristram, or as a symbol of love, as in the tripartite quest of Gawain, Torre and Pellinor. Finally, this association of the brachet with women, and with love, is not peculiar to Malory, but is found both in illustrations and literature of the period.

CHAPTER II

THE BULLS OF ARTHUR'S COURT

No other section of Malory's *Morte* is so permeated with symbolic beasts as The Tale of the Sankgreal. Arthur's entire court is envisioned as a herd of black bulls in the midst of which three white bulls roam. Two birds, "one whyght as a swanne,"¹ the other "merveylous black,"² tempt Bors in a dream vision. Even the handle of the Grail sword Galahad grips is compounded of the "scalis . . . of two dyverse bestis."³ Lions guard the entrance to the Castle of Corbenic in which Lancelot is granted his brief glimpse of the Grail; Bors, Percival, and Galahad follow four lions and a white hart into a hermitage;⁴ Galahad, throughout, is repeatedly referred to as a lion. Yet such animal symbolism pales before Percival's dream vision of the lady who takes him on a four day journey in less than an hour on the back of her "inkly black"⁵ charger which changes into a fiend at the sea's edge. Here lions, serpents, "wylde bestes,"⁶ and a woman who entices Percival into her bed,

² Ibid., p. 689.
³ Ibid., p. 706.
⁴ Ibid., p. 717.
⁵ Ibid., p. 663
⁶ Ibid., p. 664.
only to disappear "unto a smooke and a blak clowde," abound in the most sustained, staggering array of the fantastic found in Malory:

And when Sir Percivale cam nye the brymme he saw the watir so boysteous he doubted to passe over hit, and than he made a sygne of the crosse in hys forehed. Whan the fende felte hym so charged he shooke of Sir Percivale, and he wente into the watir cryynge and rorynge and makying grete sorowe, and hit semed unto hym that the watir brente. Than Sir Percivale perceyved hit was a fynde . . . . . . . . and anone he saw he was in a wylde mounteyne whych was closed with the se nygle all aboute, that he myght se no londe about hym whych myghte releve hym, but wylde bestes. And than he wente downe into a valey, and there he saw a serpente brynge a yonge lyon by the necke, and so he cam by Sir Percivale.

So with that com a grete lyon cryynge and roryng aftir the serpente. And as faste as Sir Percivale saw thys he hyghed hym thydir, but the lyon had overtake the serpente and began batayle with hym. And than Sir Percivale thought to helpe the lyon, for he was the more natural beste of the two, and therewith he drew hys sworde and sette hys shylde afore hym, and there he gaff the serpente suche a buffett that he had a dedely wounde. When the lyon saw that, he made no sembalaunte to fyght with hym but made hym all the chere that a beest mighte make a man.

. . . and the lyon wente allwey-aboute hym fawmyng as a spaynelli, and than he stroked hym on the necke and on the sholdirs and thanked God of the feliship of that beste.

And aboute noone the lyon toke hys lityll whelpe and trussed hym and bare hym there he com fro. Than was Sir Percivale alone.

---

7 Ibid., p. 669.
And when Sir Percivale slept he dreamed a
mervaylous dreme; that two ladies mette with
hym and that one sate uppon a lyon, and that
other sate uppon a serpente; and that one of
them was yonge, and that other was olde, and
the yongist, hym thought, seyde, "... for
tomorow thou muste fyght with the strongest
champion of the worlde."

... Then com forth the tothir lady, that
rode uppon the serpente, and she seyde

"... I have norysshed in thys place a grete
while a serpente whych pleased me much and
served me a grete while. And yestirday ye
slew hym as he gate hys pray."

... And so she departed fro Sir Percivale
and leffte hym slepynge ... 8

But Percival's imaginatively charged dream vision is interrupted by "an
old man ... of a strange countrey" 9 who wakens him in order to reduce
his vision to strict Christian allegory. The woman upon the lion is "the
new law of Holy Chirche," 10 informed the old man, while "she that rode
on the serpente signifieth the olde law." 11

Percival's dream, and the rigidly Christian terms in which
it is interpreted, is, in fact, typical of the manner in which the
visions of all the Grail knights are presented. Behind every tree, in

8 Ibid., pp. 663-665.
9 Ibid., p. 666.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid. The "new law" is embodied in the teachings of Christ. The
"olde law" is rejected because it seldom goes deep enough to get at
the heart of the matter. From the points of view of this "new" teach­
ing, the truly "unclean" man was the hypocrite, even though he kept
himself ritually pure.
every hut, lurks a hermit, philosopher, or old man, intent on turning each quester's vision into a detailed homiletic sermon. Perhaps the ultimate disappointment of the *Tale of the Sankgreal* is that in this, the most imaginative section of Malory, little is left to the imagination. Even the whiteness of the swan seen by Bors only belies the blackness within, warns an abbot:

> And by the whyght birde may men undirstonde the fynde, and I shall telle you how the swan ys whyght withoutefurth and blace within: hit ys irocreseye, which ys withoute yalew or pale, and semyth withouteforth the servauntis of Jesu Cryste, but they be withinfurthe so horrible of fylth and synne, and begyle the worlde so evyl.12

But the white hart which Bors, Percival and Galahad follow into "an ermytage"13 is not so beguiling, indeed, the white hart represents Christ:

> For the harte, whan he ys olde, he waxith yonge agayne in his whyght skynne. Ryght so commyth agayne oure Lorde frome deth to lyff, for He lost erthely fleysshe, that was the dedly fleyssh whych He had takyn in the wombe of the Blyssed Virgyne Mary. And for that cause appered oure Lorde as a whyghte harte withoute spot.14

Indeed, P.E. Tucker's description of the *Tale of the Sankgreal* as "a rigorously didactic work"15 not only summarizes the sentiment of the

12 Ibid., p. 697.
13 Ibid., p. 718
14 Ibid.
tale, but also, the sentiment of the passages just cited, and in so
doing, explains the tale's anomalous existence as a story separated both
thematically and in narrative, from the main movement of the Morte. For
though the rest of the Morte concerns itself with tournaments, battles,
quests, love, the Tale of the Sankgreal moves beyond these earthly con­
cerns to an ethereal realm of shadow without form, a world "of abstract
thought" in which there is a "complete indifference to physical reality." 16

Yet despite the religious sentiment of the Tale of the
Sankgreal, it does not exist as an entity entirely separated from the
whole of the Morte. Though Bors, Galahad, and Percival, three relatively
minor knights, now move into the foreground as the three successful
grail questers, the familiar figures of Lancelot and Gawain are also pre­
sent. Functioning in a manner quite in keeping with their characters,
Lancelot and Gawain infuse continuity into a tale otherwise disconnected
from the main body of Malory's work. Thus P.E. Tucker sees the Tale of
the Sankgreal not as a theological treatise, but instead, suggests "that
the Quest of the Grail in Malory's works can best be understood as part
of the story of Lancelot." 18 Thus too, the Quest can be seen not in
terms of the success of Galahad, Percival, and Bors, in attaining the
Grail, but rather, in terms of the failure of Lancelot to achieve the

16 Eugene Vinaver, The Works of Sir Thomas Malory (3 vols.; Oxford:
17 Ibid.
18 P.E. Tucker, The Place of the 'Quest of the Holy Grail' in the "Morte
Grail, and by implication, the failure of Arthur's court. Thematically, then, Lancelot's failure, and the failure of the earthly values he represents, point towards the ultimate crumbling of Arthur's kingdom in the Morte proper. Charles Moorman, perhaps exaggerating the thematic and allegorical unity in Malory,\(^1\) sees the Grail quest as an integral and vital part of the movement of the Morte towards its ultimate conclusion:

> Malory, it seems to me, having envisioned from the beginning an Arthurian cycle of growth, decay, and fall, saw in the Grail a symbol not of mankind's general failure, but of the ultimate failure of Arthur's would-be ideal secular civilization, a failure which he projected in the Lancelot-Guenevere relationship, in the prophecies of Merlin, and in the feud between the houses of Lot and Pellinor, and which was to culminate in the dissension and struggle of the last two "Tales".\(^2\)

While it is extremely dubious whether in the "beginning" Malory envisioned anything other than the French manuscript he was reading at that immediate moment,\(^3\) it is also, nevertheless, true that certain suggestions of "an Arthurian cycle of growth, decay and fall," are present in The Tale

---

1. The later reappearance of characters killed in earlier episodes (e.g. Breunis Saunz Pity, Tarquyn and Merlin) makes it difficult to accept the "unity" theory seriously, especially in the exaggerated form in which it is presented in Lumiansky's Malory's Originality.


3. Malory's numerous references to his "French Book" (e.g. "for as the Freynshe booke sethy" (p. 820), both in his text and explicit, suggests how closely Malory relied upon and followed his sources, and leads me to believe that he did not envision "from the beginning an Arthurian cycle," but rather, became aware of such a cycle as his work progressed.
of the Sankgreal. To this extent even the animal symbolism, didactic as it often is, like the Arthur-dragon symbol discussed in a later chapter, exists not only in its immediate context, but also in the wider context of Malory's whole work.

So it is that in order to connect the Grail adventure with the rest of the *Morte*, allusions to the Grail, and the Grail knights, gain in frequency as the book of *Sir Tristram de Lyones* draws to a close. Before the Grail adventure has begun, the Grail has already begun to take precedence as the more earthly concerns of the *Book of Sir Tristram* are set aside. Before the *Tale of the Sankgreal* begins, before Galahad is ever born, his birth, and the stature he will attain, over-shadowing even his father, is foreshadowed in the following golden letters Lancelot reads written on a "tombe":

'HERE SHALL COM A LYBARDE OF KYNGES BLOOD
AND HE SHALL SLE THIS SERPENTE. AND THIS
LYBARDE SHALL ENGENDIR A LYON IN THIS FOR-
AYNE CONTREY WHYCHE LYON SHALL PASSE ALL
OTHER KNYGHTES."

Thus, Lancelot, the leopard, slays the serpent plaguing king Pelles' kingdom and then, through enchantment, lies with the king's daughter, Elaine, bringing about the birth of Galahad, who here, and throughout the Grail adventure, is symbolized as a lion. Later, after the Grail

---


23 Ibid.
Quest has begun, an "ermyte" explains to Lancelot the significance of associating Galahad with a lion:

And the last was the ninth knyght, he was sygnyfyed to a lyon, for he sholde passe all maner of erthely knyghtes: that ys sir Galahad whych thou gate on Kynge Pelles daughter.

But though the figure of the lion aids in creating an image of Galahad as the knight who will "passe all maner of erthely knyghts," it also serves as part of a systematic pattern of criticism of Lancelot's character which begins in the latter part of the Book of Sir Tristram and is intensified in the Tale of the Sankgreal. Thus, before Galahad is born, Lancelot learns that his son is to surpass his own greatness, and once the Grail quest has begun, Galahad, Percival, and Bors, are eulogized, while Lancelot is rebuked by every hermit and holy man he meets. No longer "the best knyght of the worlde," Lancelot is now the best only "of ony synfull man of the worlde." Later, after a lengthy lecture, Lancelot is "lykened to an olde rottyn tre." Warned that he has no more chance of seeing the Sankgreal "than a blynde man that sholde se a bryght swerde," Lancelot is belittled and bullied into doing penance.

24 Ibid., p. 674.
25 Ibid., p. 675.
26 Ibid., p. 632.
27 Ibid., p. 633.
28 Ibid., p. 656.
29 Ibid., p. 672.
by wearing a shirt of rough hair next to his skin:

And than sir Launcelot and he went to supere.
And so leyde hem to reste, and the heyre
prycked faste sir Launcelots skynne and
greved hym sore, but he toke hyt mekely and
suffirde the payne.30

Even in his sleep he is awakened*by an "olde man" admonishing him:

'A, Launcelot, of evill, wycked fayth and
poore beleve! Wherefore ys thy wyll turned
so lyghtly toward dedly synne?'31

Previously the perfect knight, Lancelot is now seen as the imperfect re-
presentative of an imperfect world, and the source and centre of that
imperfection, both in Lancelot, and Arthur's court, is clearly captured
in the following vision granted Gawain:

Sir Gawayne hym semed he cam into a medow
full of herbis and floures, and there he saw
a rake of bullis, an hundrith and fyffty,
that were proude and black, save three of
hem was all whyght, and one had a blacke
spotte. And the othir two were so fayre and
so whyght that they myght be no whytter.
And thes three bullis which were so fayre
were tyed with two stronge cordis. And the
remnaunte of the bullis seyde among them,

'Go we hens to seke bettir pasture!' 

And so som wente and som com agayne, but they
were so megir that theymyght nat stonde up-
ryght. And of the bullys that were so whyght

---
30 Ibid., p. 676.
31 Ibid., p. 677.
that one com agayne and no mo. But whan thys whyght bulle was com agayne and amonge thes other, there rose up a grete crye for lacke of wynde that fayled them. And so they departed, one here and anothir there.32
(ital. mine)

When all the critical rhetoric is cleared away, and the religious allegory swept aside, perhaps what ultimately renders the Tale of the Sankgreal so tedious is its thematic essence, here contained in Gawain's dream vision: that is, only the chaste can succeed in what is, to Malory, "the greatest of the court's adventures and the final test of the Round Table,"33 indeed, preferably, only virgins are chosen for the quest. Thus Bors, the only non-virgin of the three successful questers, is here symbolically represented as imperfect. "The other two,"34 Percival and Galahad, "were so fayre and so whyght that they myght be no whytter,"35 but the bull symbolizing Bors is blemished by a "blacke spotte" symbolic, of his single indiscretion. For unlike the virginal Percival and Galahad, Bors, it will be remembered, "was a vergyne sauff for one, that was the daughter of Kynge Braundegorys, and on her he gate

32 Ibid., p. 680.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
a chylde whyche hyght Elayne."\(^{37}\) For this single indulgence in the pleasure of the real world, a world foreign to the ethereal upper reaches in which the Grail glides mysteriously in and out of halls and across chapels, for this single fall from such lofty height, Bors' character is marred, and he is subjected to confession and penance before being allowed to resume his search for the Grail. But Bors' blemish, or imperfection, the fact that he moves in a sphere slightly lower than Perceval and Galahad, and closer to the earthly values of the Arthurian court, is not without reason, as Edmund Reiss reveals:

... Bors must of necessity be less than Galahad and Perceval so that he may return to the world of Arthur's court and relate the adventures of the three Grail Questers. Were he as perfect as his two comrades, he would remain apart from the world as they do and be transported to Paradise with them.\(^{38}\)

Bors' return, and the removal of Perceval and Galahad from this world, are also foreshadowed in the image of the bulls -- "and of the bullys that were so whyght that one com agayne and no mo."\(^{39}\)

Little wonder then, that Lancelot, marred not by a single indiscretion, but by his unfailing devotion and love for Guenevere, moves so clumsily in the ethereal regions in which the grail, and the

\(^{37}\) Ibid., p. 589.


three Grail questers so effortlessly glide. For unlike them he grazes among the black bulls, which, as a hermit reveals, represent the entire Arthurian fellowship, with the exception of the three Grail Questers:

'And by the bullys ys undirstonde the felyshyp of the Rounde Table whych for their synne and their wyckednesse bene blacke; blackenes ys as much to sey withoute good vertues or workes.' 40

But though the words with which the hermits and holy men lecture Lancelot for loving Guenevere are as cold and inhumane as the didactic religious allegory they preach, Lancelot's own admission of his sin carries with it a genuine conviction and sense of guilt:

'My synne and my wyckednes hath brought me unto grete dishonoure! For whan I sought worldly adventures for worldely desyres I ever encheyed them and had the bettir in every place, and never was I discomfite in no quarell, were hit ryght were hit wronge. And now I take uppon me the adventures to seke of holy thynges, now I se and undirstonde that myne olde synne hyndryth me and shamyth me, that I had no power to stirre mother speke whan the holy bloode appered before me.' 41

Indeed, the sermons of the hermits who lecture Lancelot are intended not for Lancelot, but for the reader. For Lancelot himself is fully aware that, unlike his son, he is only too human, with all the frailty and

---

40 Ibid., p. 683.

41 Ibid., p. 654.
nobility that humans possess.

For the fall of Arthur's court is, despite the religious sententia of the Tale of the Sankgreal, not a religious failing, but a human one, caused not by a lack of religious faith, but by failings inherent in the human condition. If the Round Table must fail, "it will fail not because of religious condemnation, but because of a human tragedy, which rests upon the conflict of love and loyalty," writes Eugene Vinaver. Thus, though the Tale of the Sankgreal is a rigorously didactic religious allegory, and though Gawain's dream vision is an example of that allegory, his vision of Arthur's court as a herd of bulls also reveals the very human failings which eventually cause that human tragedy. Nor is it coincidental that the only two unsuccessful grail questers given extensive treatment in the Tale of the Sankgreal are the same two knights whose shifting sense of loyalty and assertion of pride ultimately shatters Arthur's kingdom -- Lancelot and Gawain. For it is Lancelot and Gawain, not Aggravayne and Mordred, who destroy Arthur's kingdom. Aggravayne and Mordred merely take advantage of situations created by Lancelot and Gawain -- Aggravayne of the love of Lancelot and Guenevere, Mordred of the quarrel between Lancelot and Gawain. It is precisely this involvement of Lancelot and Gawain, not the duplicity of Aggravayne and Mordred, which raises the death of Arthur and his kingdom to a tragedy of the highest level. For the essence of that tragedy is that the

---

Round Table is not shattered by scheming, evil men like Aggravayne and Mordred, but by basically noble, good men like Lancelot and Gawain, who only momentarily allow their pride and fragmented loyalties to lower them to the same level of destructiveness as Aggravayne and Mordred. So it is that the bulls of Gawain's vision are "proude and black," for it is the overwhelming pride of Lancelot and Gawain which destroys Lancelot and Gawain's reason, their king, and their country.

But the loss of Lancelot's, Gawain's, and Arthur's reason, and the manner in which it is supplanted by petty, personal pride, is not a sudden, but a gradual process. Both Gawain, and Arthur, for example, are fully aware that without Lancelot the kingdom is lost. Thus when Aggravayne and Mordred approach their brother Gawain with their plan to confront Arthur with the fact of Lancelot and Guenevere's love, Gawain adamantly refuses to take part in their plot, "for," says Gawain, "I know what will fall of hit." For Gawain foresees that from the minor dissent of his two brothers may evolve a major breach involving the entire kingdom in civil war:


Ibid., p. 818.

Ibid., p. 818-819.
Mordred and Aggravayne, determined to implement their plan, ignore Gawain's warning, and the significance of their refusal to heed that warning is fully understood by Gawain, who, with frightening clarity foresees the realm destroyed, the Round Table shattered:

'Alas!' seyde sir Gawayne and sir Gareth, 'now ys thys realme holy destroyed and myscheved, and the noble felshyp of the Round Table shall be disparbeled.'

Even after Lancelot slays Gawain's brother, Aggravayne, Gawain refuses to allow family fealty to take precedence over loyalty to the Round Table. Arthur, head of that fellowship, already plotting Lancelot's death and Guenevere's burning, cannot comprehend Gawain's refusal to demand revenge for Lancelot's killing of Aggravayne:

'Why say you so?' seyde king Arthur. "For, perde, ye have no cause to love hym! For thys nyght last past he (Lancelot) slew youre brothir sir Aggravayne, a full good knyght, and allmoste he had slayne youre othir brother, sir Mordred, ... and also remembir you, sir Gawayne, he slew two sunnes of youres, sir Florens and sir Lovell.'

But Gawain refuses his king's overt invitation to take part in a quarrel he knows will destroy the kingdom, refuses even to be present at the burning of Guenevere. Nevertheless, at Arthur's insistence, Gawain's

---

46 Ibid.
47 Ibid., p. 830.
younger brothers, Gaheris and Gareth, though unwilling, are among the knights who lead Guenevere to the fire -- it is their presence and consequent death which draws Gawain to the centre of a struggle from which he had striven to remain aloof. For in the foray that follows Guenevere's rescue from the fire, Lancelot, though he saves Guenevere, slays Gareth and Gaheris. Hearing of his brothers' deaths Gawain faints, weeps, and in a fit of remorseful rage hurls aside his former reservations and foresight to demand the death of Lancelot:

'My kynge, my lorde, and myne uncle, 'seyde sir Gawayne, 'whyte you well, now I shall make you a promyse whych I shall holde be my knyghthode, that frome thys day forwarde I shall never fayle sir Launcelot untyll that one of us have slayne that othir. And therefore I requyre you, my lorde and kynge, dresse you unto the warre, for wyte you well, I woll be revenged uppon sir Launcelot; and therefore, as ye woll have my servyse and my love, now haste you thereto and assay your frendis. For I promyse unto God,' seyde sir Gawayn, 'for the deth of my brothir, sir Gareth, I shall seke sir Launcelot thorowoute seven kyngs realmys, but I shall sle hym,other ellis he shall sle me.' 48

Pride and fragmented family loyalties have replaced loyalty to the larger fellowship of the Round Table. Yet it is only on his death-bed, after the breach between Lancelot and Arthur has been irreconcilably widened by the wars waged against Lancelot, that Gawain realizes that his own pride drew him to the centre of the ever-increasing circle of dissent which ultimately engulfed the entire kingdom:

48 Ibid., p. 835.
And thorow me and my pryde ye have all thys shame and disease, for had that noble knyght, sir Launcelot, ben with you, as he was and wolde have ben, thys unhappy warre had never ben begunne; for he, thorow hys noble knyght-hode and hys noble bloode, hylde all youre cankyrde enemyes in subjeccion and daungere. And now,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'ye shall mysse sir Launcelot. But alas that I wolde nat accorde with hym!' 49 (Ital. mine)

Only as he dies, and as the kingdom dies, does Gawain realize that his proud assertion of family loyalty led to the alienation of Lancelot from the realm, and the consequent seizing of power by Mordred. It is thus more than fitting that of all the Arthurian knights, Gawain should be granted the vision of Arthur's court as a herd of proud black bulls.

But is not only Gawain, but Arthur's entire court that is symbolized as a herd of proud black bulls, and as head of that court Arthur himself is a victim of the pride that destroys his kingdom. One of the most revealing passages pertaining to the Arthur-Lancelot-Guenevere triangle suggests that Arthur was well aware of the love of Lancelot and Guenevere before Aggravayne and Mordred ever confronted him with their accusation of the couple's adultery. For as Arthur listens to Aggravayne and Mordred's charge, and their plan to ensnare and incriminate Lancelot and Guenevere, Malory makes the following comment:

49 Ibid., p. 863.
For, as the Freynshe booke seyth, the kynge was full lothe that such a noyse shulde be upon sir Launcelot and his quene; for the kynge had a demyng of hit, but he wold nat here thereoff, for sir Launcelot had done so much for hym and for the quene so many tymes that wyte you well the kynge loved hym passyngly well.50 (Ital. mine)

Publicly confronted with what he had privately known, what he had "a demyng of",51 Arthur is forced to initiate the series of disasters which seal his doom. Thus Aggravayne and Mordred's charge is not news to Arthur, it only confirms what he had suspected, even known. Nevertheless, the charge has the desired effect upon Arthur, for though it reveals nothing not known to him, it forces him to act. For implicit in the charge of Aggravayne and Mordred is a threat. Though the charge of adultery is levelled at Lancelot and Guenevere, the threat implicit in that charge is directed at Arthur -- that he is a cuckold. Already aware that he is being cuckolded, but now aware that others share his knowledge, he is forced to send Guenevere to the flames in a desperate attempt to regain his pride and restore his image. Thus, prior even to the involvement of the still neutral Gawain, the usually impartial Arthur allows his pride to take precedence, and in so doing becomes partially responsible for setting into motion the tragedy from which none will escape.

Of the principals caught in this tragedy it is Lancelot, however, who is the least culpable, and most capable of exercising

50 Ibid., p. 820.
51 Ibid.
restraint. Insulted by Gawain, and attacked by Arthur, Lancelot withdraws within the walls of Joyous Garde, refusing to engage Arthur's forces, "for to ryde oute of thys castell and to do batayle I am full lothe," Lancelot tells his knights. Even after the increasing insistence of Gawain and Arthur's insults has forced him onto the field, he goes unwillingly, instructing "all hys knyghtes in ony wyse to save Kynge Arthure and Sir Gawayne." Fleeing to France rather than attacking again the fellowship he more than any of Arthur's knights embodied, Lancelot, "full lothe to ryde oute . . . for shedynge of Crysten blood," but "dryvyn thereto as beste tylle a bay," is forced to accept Gawain's challenge to individual combat.

Yet Lancelot too must be counted among the proud black bulls envisioned by Gawain. For though Lancelot practices restraint once the court conflict is underway, his initial actions are governed by his own pride, and a blinding sense of loyalty, not to the Round Table, but to Guenevere. Indeed, it is Lancelot's avowal to fight for his queen "in right othir in wronge" which is partially responsible for the ruin of the Round Table. For it is Lancelot's misfortune to love, and therefore feel forced to defend Guenevere against charges which he

52 Ibid., p. 839.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid., p. 852.
55 Ibid., p. 855.
56 Ibid., p. 755.
knows she is guilty of. Only after the death of Arthur and Guenevere, and the destruction of the kingdom, does Lancelot realize the part his own pride played in the tragedy from which he alone survived:


So whan I sawe his corps and hir corps so lye togyders, truly myn herte wold not serve to systeyne my careful body. Also when I remembere me how my defeute and myn orqule and my pryde that they were bothe layed ful lowe, that were pereles that ever was lyvyng of Cristen people, wyt you wel,' sayd syr Launcelot, 'this remembred, of their kyndenes and myn unkyndenes, sanke so to myn herte that I myght not susteyne myself.'57 (Ital. mine)

Only here, at the tomb of his king and queen, does Lancelot see that his own pride was responsible for their death -- like Gawain and Arthur, Lancelot learns too late that he also was among the proud black bulls envisioned by the knight he slew.

Finally, the actual actions of the black bulls envisioned by Gawain suggest the shifting sense of fragmented loyalties, the instability, and the mutability of the men who made up, and then destroyed Arthur's kingdom. Unlike the "three bullis which were so fayre,"58 the black bulls symbolizing Arthur's knights betray their instability in their dissatisfied cry, "Go we hens to seke bettir pasture!"59 Moreover,

57 Ibid., p. 880
58 Ibid., p. 680
59 Ibid.
their inability to "stonde upryght,"\(^60\) and their disorderly dispersal as "they departed one here an anothir there"\(^61\) foreshadows not only the break-up of the Round Table, but also, captures, in the physical movement of the bulls, the essence of the instability and disloyalty of the men who enabled Mordred to seize power. For the actions of these black bulls epitomize the fickle infidelity of Arthur's knights, an infidelity which, as the tragedy enacted in "The Day of Destiny" draws to a close, moves Malory to make the following comment:

\[\ldots\] For than was the comyn voyce amonche them that with kynge Arthur was never othir lyff but warre and stryff, and with sir Mordrede was grete joy and blysse. Thus was kynge Arthur depraved, and evyll seyde off; and many there were that kynge Arthur had brought up of nought, and gyffyn them londis, that myght nat than say hym a good worde.

Lo, ye all Englysshemen, se ye nat what a myschyff here was? For he that was the moste kynge and nobelyst knyght of the worlde, and moste loved the felyshyp of noble knyghtes, and by hym they all were upholdyn, and yet myght nat thes Englyshemen holde them contente with hym. Lo thus was the olde custom and usayges of thys londe, and men say that we of thys londe have nat yet loste that custom. Alas! thys ys a greate defaughte of us Englysshemen, for there may no thynge us please no terme.\(^62\)

"Go we hens to seke bettir pasture,"\(^63\) cry the black bulls, foreshadowing the fall of Arthur's court, and once that fall has taken place,

\(^{60}\) Ibid.
\(^{61}\) Ibid.
\(^{62}\) Ibid., p. 861-62.
\(^{63}\) Ibid., p. 862.
Malory comments, "there may no thynge us please no terme."\textsuperscript{64} Both statements reveal the basic instability, infidelity, and mutability of the men who destroyed the Round Table. Thus, in an image essentially devised for a rigorously didactic religious sermon, the human weaknesses of pride and instability, not the religious failings, are revealed as the causes of the fall of the Round Table.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., p. 862.
CHAPTER III

THE QUESTING BEAST

"Perhaps the most extravagant of all Arthurian fancies," wrote J.D. Bruce, "is that of la beste glatissante"¹ or, in Malory, the Questing Beast. Appearing throughout Arthurian romance, the Questing Beast is as varied in appearance and meaning as it is ubiquitous. In the Perlesvaus and Gerbert de Montreul's Continuation of the Conte del Graal, for example, it is small and white, resembling a pregnant bitch in appearance, while its meaning is strict Christian allegory.² In Malory, however, the Questing Beast is more awesome in appearance, having the head of a serpent, the body of a leopard, the buttocks of a lion, and the feet of a hart. Moreover, in Malory, its meaning complements the complexity of its appearance -- indeed, is as elusive as the beast itself, for it is never caught, only seen and chased. Yet in its very recurring appearance and disappearance it provides a thread of unity through the diverse and sometimes seemingly disconnected narratives which comprise Malory's Morte.

² See Appendix II for a comparison of both passages.
The first appearance of the Questing Beast in *The Tale of Arthur* is preceded by a number of supernatural signs signalling the complete departure from the realm of reality which the Questing Beast represents. Arthur dreams of "gryffens and serpentes," and after awakening, a "grete harte" appears which Arthur chases until his horse falls dead. Even more than the dream, then, the chase of the hart, and the dying horse, seem to be a sequence of devices for the transition from the real to the unreal. Yet no sequence of devices or signs can prepare either the reader, or Arthur, for the visual sight of the Questing Beast drinking from the well, nor the sounds which issue from within that beast--such sights and sounds must be recounted as they were written:

*...he sette him downe by a fowntayne, and there he felle downe in grete thought. And as he sate so hym thought he herde a noyse of howundis to the som of thirty, and with that the kynge saw com towarde hym the strongeste beste that ever he saw or herde of. So thyd beste wente to the welle and dranke, and the noyse was in the bestes bealy (lyke unto the questyng of thirty coupyl houndes, but alle the whyle the beest dranke there was no noyse in the bestes bealy). And therewith the beeste departed with a grete noyse, whereof the kynge had grete mervayle. And so he was in a grete thought, and therewith he felle on slepe.*

---


4 Ibid.

5 Both the chase of the hart and the dying horse are repeated in identical form immediately prior to the appearance of the supernatural ship which materializes before Arthur, under the direction of Morgan Le Fay, in the later "Arthur and Accolon" episode (Malory, p. 98).

6 Ibid., p. 33.
In several of its most predominant features, Arthur's encounter with the Questing Beast bears a remarkable resemblance to a passage from William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum*, which William Nitze believes may have been one of the ultimate sources from which the Questing Beast was derived. King, hunt, and dream are common to both episodes in an ordering of detail which makes such recurring motifs seem more than coincidental. Malory's immediate source, was however, the *Suite du Merlin*. There, as in Malory's first description of the Questing Beast, and William of Malmesbury's account of the beast envisioned by King Eadgar, the beast itself is far more correctly termed *la beste glatissante* ('the barking beast') than the Questing Beast proper. That is, it is more correctly thought of as resembling a female hound, or, as William of Malmesbury would have it, "... a bitch, of the hunting breed, pregnant," than the Questing Beast later appearing throughout Malory's *Book of Sir Tristram De Lyones*, having a serpent's head, leopard's body, and lion's buttocks. In the *Perlesvaus* too, the beast is more suggestive of a small, white pregnant dog, than the awesome creature chased by Palomides throughout Malory's *Book of Sir Tristram*. Indeed, the account of the birth of the *beste glatissante*, paraphrased from the Post-Vulgate *Queste* (M. S. B. N. fr. 112, *Livre IV*)

---

7 See Appendix I for passage referred to.


by Fanni Bogdanow clearly aids in explaining the identification of La best
glatissante with dogs:

There was once ... a king named Hypomenes who had a beautiful daughter well versed in the seven arts, but in particular in nigromance, who fell in love with her brother. The latter repulsed her, and as the damsel was about to kill herself in despair, the devil appeared to her in the form of a handsome man and promised to help if she would do his will. She did so, and then on the devil's advice accused her brother of having done violence to her. Hypomenes had his son imprisoned, and after the barons had condemned him to death, the damsel urged that he be given alive to dogs 'en jeusnes deset jours'. But before his death the brother warned his sister that God would take vengeance and that she would be delivered of a devil in the form of 'une beste la plus diverse qui oncques fust veue.' 'Et pur ce que tu a chiens as livree ma char, avra ceste beste dedens son ventre chiens que toutes voiez yront glastissant en memoire et en reproche des bestes a qui tu me faiz livrer.' All happened as the brother predicted, and as soon as the beste was born it ran away 'qu'il n'eust homme au chastel ne au palaiz qui retenir la peust, mais toutes voiez entendoient il bien le glatissement qu'elle demenoit'.

Thus the dogs which bark incessantly within the beast's womb are symbolic of the hounds which Hypomene's daughter had devour her brother, and the beast, in its ugliness, is symbolic of the devil which entered into her.

---

10 Fanni Bogdanow, The Romance of the Grail (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966) p. 126. Translation: ... to dogs which had been fasting for seven days ... in the form of the most strange beast which had ever been seen. And because you gave up my flesh to dogs this beast will have in its belly dogs which will go barking in all directions in memory and in reproach to the beasts to which you had me delivered ... it ran away because there wasn't a man in the castle who could restrain it, they heard, in all directions, the barking which it made.
In Malory, however, the meaning of the Questing Beast is as amorphous as the beast itself. It is a "full wondirfull beyste and a grete syfnyfycasion," writes Malory, while neglecting to impart that "sygnyfycasion." Instead, Malory increases the mystery of the beast's meaning by stating that "Merlyon prophesyed munche of that byeste," while again, never divulging what Merlin prophesied. But Malory's reticence was, in all likelihood, not a deliberate literary device designed to surround the Questing Beast with enigma, but rather, the result of a genuine ignorance of the beast's complete history. Although conjecture, it seems logical to assume that Malory did not divulge the Questing Beast's "syfnyfycasion," quite simply, because he did not know it. Only by examining the French Arthurian cycle in its vast totality could Malory have known the full story of the Questing Beast, for as Eugene Vinaver has noted, what is contained therein is not a series of stories, but the many branches of one story:

The French Arthurian Prose cycle with its various ramifications was not an 'assemblage of stories', but a singularly perfect example of thirteenth-century narrative art, subordinate to a well-defined principle of composition and maintaining in all its branches a remarkable sense of cohesion. It was an elaborate fabric woven out of a number of themes which alternated with one another like the threads of a tapestry:

---


12 Ibid.
a fabric whose growth and development had been achieved not by a process of indiscriminate expansion, but by means of a consistent lengthening of each thread.\textsuperscript{13}

The modern scholar can spread this fabric before him and examine each of its threads. Doing so he sees that the Questing Beast is alluded to in the \textit{Suite du Merlin}, where Pellinor hunts it; that it reappears in the First Version of the prose \textit{Tristan}, where Palomides is the "Chevalier a la beste glatissant;"\textsuperscript{14} and finally, after Palomides has hunted it for fourteen years, in the Poste-Vulgate \textit{Queste}, Palomides, Perceval, and Galahad together slay the beast. Only in the Post-Vulgate \textit{Queste}, after the beast has been slain, is the story of its birth revealed by King Pellean, who relates the narrative of Hypomenes' daughter.

Malory, however, was unable to examine this entire fabric, only some of its threads, which he then rewove into his own pattern. For he wrote and died in prison, and though the \textit{Suite du Merlin} and the prose \textit{Tristan} were two of his sources, the key Post-Vulgate \textit{Queste}, containing the narrative of the birth of the Questing Beast, was unavailable to him. That Malory himself was aware of his limited sources is revealed at the end of \textit{The Tale of King Arthur}, where, in a painfully personal passage, he also reveals his plight as a knight-prisoner:

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. viii.

And this booke endyth whereas Sir Launcelot and Sir Trystrams com to courte. Who that woll make ony more lette hym seke other bookis of Kynge Arthure or of Sir Launcelot or Sir Trystrams; for this was drawyn by a knyght presoner, Sir Thomas Malloreor, that God Sende hym good recover. Amen.15

"Very seldom does Malory indulge in reflections not to be found in the original romances from which he worked," wrote Edward Hicks, adding, "this is one of those rare passages, and it is natural to see in it the impelling force of bitter personal experience."16 Hicks was commenting on Malory's closing address to the reader with which the Morte ends, but Hicks' comment is equally applicable to the words with which Malory closes The Tale of King Arthur, which I have here quoted. For if Hicks' detailed and thoroughly researched biographical study is correct in assuming that the Sir Thomas Malory imprisoned in Newgate Gaol is the same Sir Thomas who wrote the Morte, then implicit in this passage is not only the frustration of an imprisoned man, but also, the frustration Malory must have felt on finding that London's Grey Friars Library (located next to Newgate Gaol, and from which, says Hicks, Malory was allowed to borrow manuscripts) contained segments of, but not the complete cycle of French Arthurian literature. "Who that woll make ony more lette hym seke other bookis of Kynge Arthure or of Sir Launcelot or Sir Trystrams; for this was drawyn by a knyght presoner."17 -- others

will have to render the complete French Arthurian cycle into English, for I, by my very confinement, have been confined to those sources immediately available to me, Malory surely implies. That he was able to rework those sources, fashioning them into what Eugene Vinaver has called "the one work of real poetic value in the whole field of Arthurian fiction" is indicative not only of his genius and originality, but also of the way in which, ultimately at least, he overcame the confinement imposed on him as a "knyght presoner."

Malory's treatment of the Questing Beast is a very specific example of the way in which Malory overcame this artistic "confinement," or inability to gain access to the complete French Arthurian cycles. Shut off from the complete history of the Questing Beast, and therefore, unaware of its complete meaning, Malory thus uses the Questing Beast in a new and original manner, so that within the Morte the beast assumes an existence related to, yet separated from its sources. Within the Morte it becomes a new and separate entity with a new and separate meaning.

The Suite du Merlin, for example, from which Malory derived his first description of the Questing Beast, forms part of a larger work which Fanni Bogdanow entitled "the Roman du Graal." Thus,

18 Ibid., vii.
in the *Suite*, Merlin tells Arthur that the Questing Beast is "'une des aventures dou Graal' and that he will not know the truth about it until Perceval li Galois, Pellinor's son, will tell him."\(^{20}\) Here Merlin is alluding to and anticipating the killing of the Questing Beast in the Post-Vultage *Queste*, the final segment of what Bogdanow calls the "larger work" of which both the *Suite* and the Post-Vulgate *Queste* are a part. In Malory, however, the Questing Beast is neither "une des aventures dou Graal," nor is it ever linked with Perceval, but rather, it later becomes the quest of Palomides in the *Book of Sir Tristram De Lyones*. Ignorant of, or ignoring the complete history of the Questing Beast, only a part of which was contained in the *Suite*, but already seeing his own work, the *Morte*, as an at least partially unified larger whole, Malory deleted Merlin's allusion in the *Suite* to the later adventures of Perceval and the Questing Beast in the Post-Vulgate *Queste*, and in its place wrote the following interpolation foreshadowing Palomides pursuit of the beast in Malory's later *The Book of Sir Tristram*.\(^{21}\)

Whos name was kynge Pellynor that tyme folowed the questynge beste, and afftir hys dethe Sir Palomydies folowed hit.\(^{22}\)

---


\(^{21}\) Thomas L. Wright, "The Tale of King Arthur: Beginnings and Foreshadowings:" in *Malory's Originality*, ed., R. M. Lumiansky (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1964), p. 49. This is one of many examples of what Wright calls "Malory's use of allusion to correlate widely separate episodes in *Le Morte Darthur*" allusions which, says Wright, have no source, and are original to Malory.

In the Roman du Graal, which contains the Suite du Merlin from which Malory drew his Tale of King Arthur, the Questing Beast is chased first by Pellinor, then Palomides, and finally is tracked down and slain by Perceval, Palomides, and Galahad. In Malory, however, it is hunted only by Pellinor and Palomides. Thus Malory, though working from the Suite, has here rewritten his source so that the above passage alludes only to those knights who chase the Questing Beast within his own work, the Morte, rather than his source. The question of Malory's originality has created critical reputations and innumerable articles. As already stated, however, Malory's original treatment of the Questing Beast may well have been the result of his ignorance of, or inability to gain access to the complete story of the Questing Beast, so much of which was contained in one of the final segments of the Roman du Graal, the Post-Vulgate Queste. Thus, in the Morte, the Questing Beast achieves an existence and a meaning at least partially separated from that of its sources. The remainder of this chapter, therefore, is an attempt to explore the meaning of the Questing Beast as it exists in Malory alone, by analyzing its relationship to the two knights who quest after it, Pellinor and Palomides. For Pellinor and Palomides, by their very imperfection, are suited to the imperfection of the object of their quest, the ugly, elusive Questing Beast.

In Chapter One it was seen that the conduct of Pellinor was antithetical to that of the virtuous Torre in the tri-partite quest of the "Torre and Pellinor" episode. For unlike Torre, Pellinor, it was shown, sinned against love by causing the death of his own daughter
and the knight to whom she was betrothed. Here, however, I wish to dwell not upon the nature of Pellinor's sin, but the cause of it. For in two separate passages what is emphasized is the eagerness of Pellinor to achieve his quest at the expense of human life, of the chivalric code, of all that the quest itself stands for. Pellinor refuses to answer the "damesell's" plea for help, quite simply, because she is not an assigned part of his quest, and therefore he sees her not as a human in need of aid, but as a mere obstacle standing between him and the achievement of his quest:

"Helpe me, knyght, for Jesuys sake!" But king Pellynore wolde nat tarry, he was so egir in hys queste; and ever she cryed an hondred tymes aftir helpe. When she saw he wolde nat abyde, she prayed unto God to sende hym as much nede of helpe as she had, and that he myght feele hit or he deyed. So, as the booke tellith, the knyght there dyed that was wounded, wherefore for pure sorow the lady slew hirselff with hys swerde.23 (Ital. mine)

Because Pellinor "was so egir" he achieves the lady who was the object of his quest, but it is only upon his return to court that he discovers that he did so at the expense of his own daughter's life. There, his error of eagerness is emphasized still further through self-recriminations:

"Alas! hir lyff myght I have saved, but I was ferse in my queste that I wolde nat abyde."24 (Ital. mine)

24 Ibid., p. 90.
Without a chivalric code, without a sense of humanity, the quest, pursued as an end in itself, is meaningless. The Questing Beast, as opposed to the grail, symbolizes that meaninglessness of a quest for the mere sake of a quest, and Pellinor has shown by his action and inaction that he is worthy only of pursuing the Questing Beast, a beast, as I have already suggested which symbolizes the meaninglessness of quests pursued for no moral or chivalric code or purpose, other than the pursuit itself. The evil of Pellinor is mirrored in the ugliness of the beast he pursues. The quester suits and complements the object of his quest. Just as Galahad, Perceval, and Bors, because of their flawless character, are chosen to achieve the quest of the Holy Grail, so too, Pellinor and Palomides are destined to pursue the Questing Beast because of their flawed characters.

An analysis of Palomide's character and its relationship to the Questing Beast, is, however, more complex than that, for it involves us in the weighty matter which comprises one third of Malory's entire work, the lengthy Book of Sir Tristram De Lyonnes. Vinaver has described this book as Malory's "longest and least attractive,"25 while E.K. Chambers has concluded that Malory" ... would have done better to have left the Tristan alone."26 Indeed, critics have consistently agreed


that Malory's Book of Sir Tristram De Lyones is a "seemingly haphazard array of adventures"\textsuperscript{27} a book which Malory failed to give "a ... meaning ... capable of supporting its complex and delicate narrative frame."\textsuperscript{28} In summary, the book is usually seen as a seemingly disjointed series of adventures which fail to fit together into a single, unified whole, either within the Tristram story, or within the larger structure of the entire Morte. Yet such adverse criticism is only partially justified. For while it is true that Malory ignores the tragic death of Tristram and Iseult, merely mentioning it in a debased and highly condensed form in the later Book of Sir Launcelot and Queen Gwenevere, and while it is also true that much of The Book of Sir Tristram is concerned with the detailed recounting of a series of tournaments totally divorced from the narrative within which they appear, it is also, nevertheless, true, that certain recurring narrative threads run through the total fabric, giving the book some of the unity, some of the entrelacement, which critics claim it so severely lacks. One such thread is the figure of Palomides, who throughout appears as the rival of Tristram for the love of Iseult, and as the hunter of the Questing Beast. Before examining the figure of Palomides, however, I must repeat, and then set aside, my basic premise -- that the Questing Beast symbolizes a meaningless, purposeless quest, and that the pursuer of it is, by his very pursuit of it, therefore, a man whose life lacks meaning.


Edmund Reiss, in one of the most illuminating books ever written on Malory, dismisses Palomides as "flawed by an envy of Tristram."\(^{29}\) It is my intention, however, to show that Palomides' character is much more complex -- indeed, as complex as the book itself, - and that his character is not merely that of the hopeless lover whose passion for Iseult is never returned, all of which implies an immutability of character, but rather, that Palomides' character develops and changes as the Book of Sir Tristram itself develops. His position as the unrequited lover of Iseult may remain unchanged, but during the course of the book his character changes from that of the jealous enemy of Tristram to a noble man of almost heroic, but also, tragic stature. If, as Reiss suggest, Palomides is "flawed by an envy of Tristram," it is, indeed, a tragic flaw.

Initially the relationship between Tristram and Palomides and their conflicting love for Iseult is quite literally one of black and white. In their initial confrontation Palomides wears a black shield; Tristram rides a white horse, wears white armour -- in direct opposition to Palomides he enters the field appearing as a "bryght angell."\(^{30}\) The connotations of the two conflicting colours are too simple to warrant explication, and it need hardly be noted that Tristram soundly defeats Palomides, sparing his life only on the following condition:

\[ ... \text{that ye forsake my lady, La Beale Isode, and in no manner of wyse that ye draw no more to hir} \ldots\] \(^{31}\)


\(^{30}\) Malory, Works, ed. Eugene Vinaver, p. 290

\(^{31}\) Ibid., p. 291.
This, however, is the one condition that Palomides, despite his oath to do so, cannot fulfill. For it is his misfortune and his tragic downfall to remain the constant but unreciprocated admirer of Iseult. Consequently he suffers in true courtly fashion. Preparing to fling himself into a well after having "wayled and wrange hys hondys," he is saved from drowning his sorrows and himself, ironically, by the restraining hand of Tristram; sitting at the same table as Iseult he is speechless, and loses his appetite, for food at least --" he was so ravysshed that he myght unnethe speke ... they wente unto mete, but Sir Palomydes might nat ete," in "The Tournament at Loneszep," while Arthur, Tristram, and Launcelot slumber blissfully, Palomides spends a sleepless night during which he "wayled and wepte oute of mesure;" and looking at himself reflected in the water of a well he sees that he has become "... discoloured and defaded, a nothynge lyke as he was ..." as he laments a love he knows he can never attain.

Conversely, while Palomides suffers in the true courtly fashion, Tristram revels in the pleasures of courtly love. It is Tristram's task to deliver Iseult to her future husband, King Mark, but before they ever reach Cornwall they have drunk from the golden flask the heady wine which binds them together in a knot tighter than any marriage ceremony:

---

32 Ibid., p. 394.
33 Ibid., p. 536.
34 Ibid., p. 563.
Than they lowghe and made good chere and eyther dranke to other frely, and they thought never drynke that ever they dranke so swete nother so good to them. But by that drynke was in their bodyes they loved aythir other so well that never hir love departed, for well nother for woo. And thus hit happed fyrst, the love betwyxte sir Trystames and La Beale Isode, the whyche love never departed dayes of their lyff.36

Within Mark's own castle "they lyved with joy and play a longe whyle,"37 and at the Castle of the Joyous Gard they "made joy togydrys dayly with all maner of myrthis that they coude devyse."38 While Palomides suffered, Tristram and Iseult loved, with a freshness, an innocence, that was never attained in the parallel relationship of Lancelot and Guinevere.

One would expect, then, Palomides and Tristram to be mortal enemies, and indeed, at the outset they are. Theirs is clearly an enmity founded on a love for the same woman. In the opening book, after Palomides has momentarily achieved success by abducting Iseult in Tristram's absence, Governayle rushes towards Palomides with the following warning:

'Sir Palomydes, make the redy, for wete thou welle Sir Trystrames hoyvth yondir and sendyth the worde he is thy mortall foo.'39 (Ital. mine.)

36 Ibid., p. 312.
37 Ibid., p. 323.
38 Ibid., p. 506.
39 Ibid., p. 322.
And as the fight begins, its cause, and the source of the ardour which impels both knights, is again stressed:

And there began stronge batayle on both partyes, for bothe they fought for the love of one lady.\(^{40}\)

And so too, they continue to fight through the entire Book of Sir Tristram, and it is not my purpose to relate here those continual encounters from which Tristram always emerges victorious.

But the supposed object of Palomides' questings, the Questing Beast itself, is noticeably absent from this and Palomides' numerous other encounters with Tristram and Iseult. Palomides' pursuit of Iseult has taken precedence over his pursuit of the Questing Beast. But as in all encounters with Tristram, Palomides is here soundly defeated, forced shamefully from the field, and from the woman he loves --" and so sir Palomydes departed with grete hevynesse."\(^{41}\)

Significantly, however, he is soon seen once again pursuing the Questing Beast. Unsuccessful in his first attempt to win the favour of Iseult, he hopelessly attempts to sublimate his desire for her in his futile pursuit of the meaningless, ugly, Questing Beast:

\begin{quote}
And thys meanewhyle com sir Palomydes, the good knyght, folowyng the questyng beste that had in shap lyke a serpentis hede and a body lyke a lybud, buttocked lyke a lyon and footed lyke an harte. And in hys body there was such
\end{quote}

\(^{40}\) Ibid.  
\(^{41}\) Ibid., p. 323.
But though the Questing Beast is here "called hys quest", Palomides is not yet ready to accept it as such. Not until the end of the Book of Sir Tristram, when Iseult's continued rejections have rendered his hope of attaining her love an impossibility, does Palomides resign himself to his fate as the alienated and only participant in the most meaningless quest in Malory's Morte.

The initial image of the Palomides who appears in black armour opposing the angelic whiteness of Tristram is thus a deceptive and damaging one. Unsuccessful lover he is, saracen he is, villain he is not -- rather, a man whose nobility increases until his inability to attain the favour of Iseult, coupled with his futile search for the Questing Beast, reaches near tragic proportions. Palomides is not consistently evil, but rather, a knight whose chivalric code develops as the book itself develops. P. E. Tucker describes Palomides in the following manner:

Palomides is given an important role in Malory's version. At first he and Tristram meet and fight for the love of Isode, but as Palomides comes under the influence of Tristram's courtesy he gives up his love.43 (Ital. mine.)

42 Ibid., pp. 358-359.
Despite Tucker's description, Palomides is not merely a foil for Tristram, nor does he ever 'give up his love of Isode.' Rather, Palomides is a complex, fully developed character whose nobility and love increase as the Book of Sir Tristram unfolds.

Palomides, though it is true he moves closer to and finally reconciles himself with Tristram, develops as an individual, not as someone "under the influence of Tristram." In the episode entitled by Vinaver "The Red City," Palomides is seen successfully accomplishing his own quest, and moreover, a clear indication of his resolve to become a chivalric knight, totally unaided by the "influence of Tristram," is given in the following key passage:

... he belyved in the bestemane and was full faythefull and trew of his promyse, and well condyssonde; and bycause he made his avow that he wolde never be crystynde unto the tyme that he had enchyeved the beste glatysaunte, the whyche was a full wondirfull beyste and a grete syngnyfycasion; for Merlyon prophesyed muche of that byeste. And also sir Palomydes avowed never to take full Crystyndom untyll that he had done seven batayles within lystys.44 (Ital. mine).

The key word in this entire passage, repeated once in the present, and once in the past tense, is "avow." Palomides is very much his own man, operating under the influence of no one but himself, certainly not under the influence of Tristram. It is his intention to

conquer the Questing Beast; his intention to fight seven battles before being christened -- all he has in common with Tristram is his love for Iseult. Moreover, his triumph in rescuing the besieged Red City is attained solely through his own defeat of Sir Helyus, unaided by Tristram or anyone else, and though the newly freed city offers him "the thirde parte of their goodis,"\(^\text{45}\) he refused in order to resume his own clearly defined plans, plans which, despite their noble quality, appear to have been little influenced by Tristram -- they are his avowals. Significantly, the "Red City" episode closes with Palomides returning to Joyus Garde, where he is rendered speechless and unable to eat by the appearance of Iseult.\(^\text{46}\) At least at this point Tucker's statement that Palomides "gives up his love" is certainly not true. Any knight who has just suffered one hundred blows in a two hour struggle with Sir Helyus, and is now unable to eat because of the sight of Iseult is still very much under her spell.

The opening of "The Tournament at Lonezep," however, seemingly confirms Tucker's statement, for here Tristram, Palomides, and Iseult are seen riding together towards the castle of Lonezep. Together, Tristram and Palomides decide to fight against Arthur's retinue, not out of enmity, but to counter-balance the power of Lancelot in the field. All seems to support Tucker's statement, and indeed, during the actual

\(^{45}\) Ibid., p. 533.

\(^{46}\) Ibid., p. 536.
battle Tristram remounts Palomides to renew the attack on Arthur's party. However, a closer examination of the battle reveals several significant incidents which completely refute Tucker's statement. For during the battle, while Palomides ostensibly fights alongside Tristram, his heart and mind are still separated from Tristram and attached to Iseult:

And in his harte, as the booke saythe, sir Palomydes wysshed that wyth his worshyp he myght have ado with sir Trystram before all men, bycause of La Beall Isode.  

Such a statement hardly needs comment. Moreover, later in the tournament Palomides disguises himself with a silver shield and attacks Tristram -- the old enmity, the old jealousy, contrary to Tucker's view, remains, and the source of it all, Iseult, watching the joust, later warns Tristram:

... ye were betrayed ... in youre presence suche a felonne and traytoure as ys sir Palomydes ...  

Palomides claims that in the myriad of disguises he did not recognize Tristram, and again they seem brothers in arms, a relationship which again supports Tucker's statement. But the sleepless night of Palomides, which immediately follows, already quoted, refutes Tucker's view. Despite the reconciliation between Tristram and Palomides in the final episode of the Book of Sir Tristram, entitled by Vinaver, simply, "Conclusion," Palomides, though he finally loves and respects Tristram,  

---

47 Ibid., p. 545.

48 Ibid., p. 560.
also, still loves Iseult. On the last page of the last episode of
The Book of Sir Tristram de Lyones, Palomides still thinks of her as
"... pyerles of all othir ladies..." Despite Palomides' confession
and baptism, which immediately follows, he clearly still loves Iseult,
but he now knows that his love is a hopeless one -- he is left with
nothing.

... ... Nothing except the Questing Beast. Demonic in origin and
grotesque in appearance, it is symbolic of the evil woman out of whose
womb it was born, a woman antithetical to "Iseult the Fair." In its very
elusiveness it symbolizes a meaningless quest, for in Malory it is never
captured, only quested after. Thus the final line of Malory's Book of Sir
Tristram captures the fate of both Palomides and Tristram in striking
apposition. Tristram is to return to the Joyus Garde and to Iseult,
but the rejected Palomides, his life rendered void without Iseult, is
doomed to follow the meaningless trail of the Questing Beast:

And than sir Trystram returned unto Joyus Garde,
and sir Palomydes folowed aftir the Questynge Beste. 50

In view of the heroic stature attained by Palomides, especially in
"The Red City" episode, and in view of my earlier stated theory that

49 Ibid., p. 622.

50 Ibid., p. 623.
the Questing Beast is symbolic of a purposeless quest, Palomides' fated search for it is in itself tragic. For unlike Pellynor, whose ugly character is mirrored in the Questing Beast he seeks, Palomides is worthy of more. Unlike Pellynor, his character is not flawed throughout, but rather, contains a tragic flaw. Though the Questing Beast intensifies the evil of Pellynor, it only heightens the tragedy of Palomides.
CHAPTER IV  

DRAGONS OF DISSENSION

In the mind of any man, of any culture, the dragon summons up a conditioned response of evil in all its many-scaled, serpentine manifestations. To the Christian writers of The Bestiary the dragon is the devil.\(^1\) The Chinese associate the dragon with drought, and consequent desolation of the land.\(^2\) In Indian myth, too, the demons of drought are dragons who vindictively imprison the rains.\(^3\) J.G. Frazer, commenting on the universality of this belief, summarizes its many variants in the following manner:

A certain country is infested by a many-headed serpent, dragon, or other monster, which would destroy the whole people if a human victim, generally a virgin, were not delivered up to him periodically.\(^4\)

In summary, not only is the dragon evil, but invariably it is associated with a blighted infertile land. Either through drought or destruction, unless appeased, or slain, it reduces the country to a barren wasteland.

---


Nor is the association of the dragon with the wasteland merely confined to the more torrid areas of the earth's surface, where drought is a common occurrence. The English homily *De Festo Sancti Johannis Baptistae*, as quoted by John Brand, alludes not only to dragons, but to the desolation sickness, and death they wreaked upon the country and its inhabitants:

Then as these dragons flew in th'ayre they shed down to that water froth of thir kynde, and so envenymed the waters, and caused moche people for to take theyr deth therby, and many dyverse sykenesse.  

Moreover, "The Story of Lludd and Llevelys" in *The Mabinogion* clearly associates the dragon with the series of plagues which threaten to destroy Lludd's kingdom, rendering it into a barren wasteland:

. . . men lost their hue and their strength and the women their children, and the young men and the maidens lost their senses, and all the animals and trees and the earth and the waters, were left barren.

Here is a wasteland as barren as any associated with the Grail romances, yet its cause is not a wounded King, but a dragon, as Llevelys, Lludd's brother, reveals:


And the second plague," said he, "that is in thy dominion, behold it is a dragon."7

And in Beowulf, too, it is the disturbance of the dragon's lair by an innocent wanderer which augments the fiery reign of terror and destruction which descends upon the Geats.

In Malory, however, the dragon is initially associated not with evil, pestilence, death -- the wasteland, but rather, with Arthur himself. In three separate, lengthy passages in Malory, Arthur is clearly symbolized as a dragon. How can the image of Arthur, "the once and future king," the heroic leader of the Celts in their victories over the Saxons, how can this figure be reconciled with the evil traditionally associated with the dragon? It is the purpose of this chapter to provide, if not an answer, at least an explanation for the existence of two such diverse connotations connected with the dragon symbol. For while the evil evoked by the dragon is antithetical to its initial association with Arthur, that evil, nevertheless, develops as the evil within Arthur's court develops, until finally the dragon fully evokes its traditional terror in the tragic fall of Arthur and his court.

Malory's first direct association between Arthur and a dragon occurs in Arthur's dream vision, prior to his defeat of Lucius in "The Noble Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius." Because of the

7 Ibid., p. 92.
dream's importance, and because its meaning shifts as it progresses, it is quoted here in its entirety. In the words of Malory, then, "Here Fowwyth The Dreme of Kynge Arthure":

As the Kynge was in his cog and lay in his caban, he felle in a slumberyng and dremed how a dredfull dragon dud drenche much of his peple and com fleyng one wynge oute of the waste partyes. And his hede, hym semed, was enamyled with asure, and his shuldyrs shone as the golde, and his wombe was lyke mayles of a merveylous hew, and his tayle was fulle of tatyrs, and his feete were florysshed as hit were fyne sable. And his clawys were lyke clene golde, and an hyde-ouse flame of fyre there flowe oute of his mowth, lyke as the londe and the watir had flowed all on fyre.

Than hym semed there com oute of the Oryent a grymly beare, all blak, in a clowde, and his pawys were as byg as a poste. He was all torangeeled with lugerande lokys, and he was the fowlyst beste that ever ony man sye. He romed and rored so rudely that merveyle hit were to telle.

Than the dredfull dragon dressyd him ayenste hym and come in the wynde lyke a faucon, and freyshely strykis the beare. And agayne the gresly beare kuttis with his gysly tuskes, that his breste and his brayle was bloode, and the reed blood rayled all over the see. Than the worme wyndis away and fleis uppon hyght and com downe with such a sowghe, and towched the beare on the rydge that fro the toppe to the tayle was ten foote large. And so rentyth the beare and brennys hym up clene that all felle on pouder, both the flysh and the bonys, and so hit flotered abrode on the sea.

---

Despite the "dredfull" appearance of the dragon, despite the "hydeouse" flames flying from his mouth, the dragon is here associated not with evil, nor the wasteland, but with Arthur himself, as the "phylozopher" who interprets Arthur's dream reveals. Here not the dragon, but the bear "betokyns som tyrante that turmentis thy peple." Arthur is told. Arthur, then, in the form of a dragon, is seen as the conqueror of what the dragon traditionally symbolizes, evil.

Dismissing, for the moment, the "phylozopher's" reassurance to Arthur that as the dragon he symbolizes the conquering force of good, and turning to the dream vision itself, certain physical features of the dragon evoke neither terror nor evil. The bright blue azure hue of his enamelled head, his armoured womb of "merveylour hew," and above all, his shining shoulders of flaming gold extending to the tips of his claws, where it must have ended in a finely wrought pattern, suggest not only a monarchical, but a magnificent figure. But the figure of Arthur as a golden dragon is original neither to Malory, nor the the French romances -- indeed, not even to Arthur himself, but is the legacy of Arthur's father, Uther Pendragon, passed on to Arthur by that most imaginative of executors, forger of documents, falsifier of history, Geoffrey of Monmouth:

And the crown of the kingdom was put upon his head, and then came back to Ythr memory of what Merddin had said to him, and Ythr commanded to be made two dragons of gold, of marvellous craftwork, in likeness of

9 Ibid., p. 143.
that he had seen heading the shaft of light.
And one of these images Ythr gave to the
chief Church at Kaer Wynt; the other he had
carried before him when he went to battle.
And from that time on he was called Ythr
ben dragwn. 10

So it is that the golden dragon becomes a symbol carried into battle by
Arthur, sometimes appearing on his helmet,

and on his head was a golden helmet with
the likeness of a dragon of fire on it . . 11

sometimes seen on his shield,

And before him was the image of a golden
dragon, the sign of refuge for all wounded
men . . . 12

and finally, in Malory, Arthur and the golden dragon become one through
a dream vision in which his victory over both the giant of Saint Michael's
Mount, and his defeat of the emperor Lucius, are foreshadowed by the
golden dragon's defeat of the giant bear. 13 In summary, the golden dra-
gon is an omen of goodness, and of victory, specifically of victory over
evil, and Arthur's association with it is symbolic of his own victory
over evil. Thus far, then, the dragon, in Malory, bears none of the

10 Geoffrey of Monmouth, The Historia Regum Britannia, eds. Acton Gris-
11 Ibid., p. 438.
12 Ibid., p. 483.
13 Arthur's dragon-bear dream also appears in Geoffrey's Historia (see
Appendix), but, as will later be shown, Geoffrey's Arthur-dragon is,
unlike Malory's, not golden.
traditional associations of evil, and of the wasteland, but rather, is a symbol of Arthur and Arthur's realm, at the height of his, and its glory.¹⁴

"The dragon during the middle ages seemed quite as much an actuality as the elephant or camel,"¹⁵ begins J.S.P. Tatlock in an article entitled "The Dragons of Wessex and Wales," which then goes on to partially dispel the dragon's "actuality" by explaining its existence only as an ensign born into battle by a host of British kings,¹⁶ who, Tatlock implies, were inspired to do so by Arthur, through Geoffrey of Monmouth:

At Hastings Harold's estandart was a rallying point and a resort for the wounded. Just so in Geoffrey of Monmouth's highly contemporary picture of Arthur's great victory over the Romans, the king's post is at the rear, with his dragon vexillum to which in case of need the wounded and weary might betake themselves.¹⁷

Tatlock's article, and the passages from Geoffrey's Historia, aid in understanding the link between the golden dragon ensign of Geoffrey's

¹⁴ In Geoffrey's Historia, Wace's Roman de Brut, Layamon's Brut, and Malory's immediate source, the alliterative Morte Arthur, this was indeed the height of Arthur's realm, followed immediately by his betrayal by Modred. Malory, however departed from his source, reserving Arthur's fall and Mordred's betrayal for his final tale, so that he might gain a sense of continuity, and also, incorporate the later French romances into his expanded story.


¹⁶ Richard I, John, and Henry III, are several who used the dragon ensign, says Tatlock.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 227.
Arthur and Arthur's golden dragon dream in Malory. But neither explains the source of Malory's golden dragon. For though Geoffrey, like Malory, included Arthur's dream vision in which the dragon defeats the giant bear, at no time does Geoffrey refer to the fact, as Malory does, that the dragon is golden. Moreover, a reading of the alliterative Morte Arthur, Malory's immediate source for "The Tale of the Noble King Arthure," reveals that although the dream vision of the dragon and bear is again repeated, the dragon, again, unlike Malory's version, but as in Geoffrey's, is not golden. In fact, the golden dragon has no known previous literary source other than the imaginatively original mind of Malory himself. I have belaboured this point because too often critics of Malory do quite the opposite -- ferreting out Malory's sources at the expense of Malory's own originality. Here, however, a study of the sources only shows how Malory, in a flash of imaginative insight, by changing a single line from the alliterative Morte Arthur,

\[
\text{His schoulders ware schalyde all in clene sylver,}\]

\[
to
\]

\[
\text{and his shuldyrs shone as the golde} . . .\]

fuses all the good connotations of the golden dragon emblem of Geoffrey's

---

18 See appendix for the text of all three dragon-bear dreams.


20 Malory, p. 142.
Arthur, which is "honorable to carry," with all the traditional evil connotations of the dragon, producing a symbol containing both elements, the good and the evil. Thus, though Arthur is here at the height of his power, Malory, by creating a dual symbol, has already prepared for the later peeling off of the gold to reveal Arthur's kingdom crumbling, and the dragon which symbolizes it, and its ruler, in all the evil and ugliness with which the dragon is traditionally associated.

For the glittering gold shining from the shoulders of the dragon symbolic of Arthur is gilding, a thin plating that crumbles away as realm and ruler move towards the tragedy which ends Malory's *Morte*. For the dragon that appears before Bors in the concluding tale of the lengthy book of Tristram, though the letters "kynge Arthur" are written in gold upon its forehead, foreshadows, in the ugliness of its appearance and actions, the ultimate fate of Arthur and his kingdom. Placing the tale of "Lancelot and Elaine," the tale in which Sir Bors beholds this, the second Arthur-dragon, within the context of Malory's movement towards Arthur's final fate, Edmund Reiss makes the following statement:

Not yet ready for the final disasters, he still shows the world of the Round Tale as developing; . . .

Developing it is, and as Reiss rightly points out, the quest for the Holy Grail is the final stage of its development. But it is also

---


disintegrating, and Bors' vision becomes, for Malory, a brilliant fore-shadowing not only of that disintegration, but the manner in which it will take place:

Ryght so furthwythall he sawe a dragon in the courte, passynge parelous and orryble, and there semyd to hym that there were lettyrs off golde wryttyyn in hys fordede, and sir Bors thought that the lettyrs made a sygnyfycacion of 'kynge Arthure.' And ryght so there cam an orryble lybarde and an olde, and there they faught longe and ded grete batayle togydryrs. And at the laste the dragon spytte oute of hys mowthe as hit had bene an hondred dragons; and lyghtly all the smeale dragons slew the olde dragon and tore hym all to pecys.23

(Ital. mine)

The hideous vision of the parent dragon spewing a hundred of its own kind out of its mouth, only to have them turn on it, tearing it to shreds, is paralleled by the equally tragic end of Arthur, "father," if not through birth, then as founder of the fellowship of the Round Table, which, turning on him, tears its parent to pieces on the battlefield, and in so doing destroys not only Arthur, but the fellowship he founded, and which his knights, ironically, were supposed to have represented. It seems almost superfluous to here mention the obvious, that Mordred, bastard son of King Arthur and Queen Margawse, delivers the fatal wound that kills Arthur. For though inflicted by Mordred, it is the re-opening of an old wound that has festered in Arthur's kingdom since its birth, and to which all his knights, with the possible exception of the three Grail Questers, Galahad, Perceval and Bors, have contributed. Gawain's

23 Malory, Works, p. 590.
breach with Lancelot, brought about by the jealous scheming of Gawain's brothers, Aggravayne and Mordred, using the illicit love of Lancelot and Guinevere as the centre from which to spread dissension that grows like a festering wound, until all are involved, the wound bursts, and Arthur's kingdom is torn asunder -- these are the principal players in the tragedy that is "The Tale of the Death of Arthur." These are the dragons spewing from the mouth of their parent, viciously turning on him in a childish fit of rage, destroying him, and, so too, destroying themselves, destroying their source of nourishment, of inspiration.

All this, then, is foreshadowed in Bors' vision in which the parent dragon, now "olde" and "orryble," operates as a double symbol, at once representing both the condition to which Arthur's kingdom will fall, while also representing the fall of Arthur himself. Wilfred L. Guerin summarizes that fall, succinctly suggesting its depth, in the following manner:

The essence of the eighth large division of Le Morte Darthur, which Malory himself may have entitled the "Deth of Arthur," is tragedy. It is the fall of an ideal society, the collapse of a dream much greater than the members of the Round Table themselves; it is a contrast between what the God-like man can aspire to, and what his baser self can do.24

And Malory, in a moment of foreshadowing, suggests that the fall is even further, descending below the "baser self" to reveal animals devouring themselves. Perhaps this is the larger tragedy, the nightmare of our own existence. The gold is gone, man is gone, only a hoard of hungry reptiles remain, gorging themselves on their parent.

Arthur himself experiences the full horror of that nightmare the evening before his battle with Mordred:

So uppon Trynyte Sunday at nyght kynge Arthure dremed a wondirfull dreme, and in hys dreme hym semed that he saw uppon a chafflet a chayre, and the chayre was faste to a whele, and there uppon sate kynge Arthure in the rychest clothe of golde that myght be made. And the kyng thought there was undir hym, farre from hym, an hydeous depe blak watir, and therein was all maner of serpentis and wormes and wylde bestis fowle and orryble. And suddenly the kyng thought that the whyle turned up-so-downe, and he felle amonge the serpentis, and every beste toke hym by a lymme. And than the kyng cryed as he lay in hys bed, 'Helpe! helpe!'

And so Arthur awakes screaming, only to relive the reality of what he has just dreamed, to be slain by Mordred. Clearly a variation of Bors' Arthur-dragon dream, Arthur here, however, appears not as a dragon, but as the king, as if to add finality to the fate that awaits him. For the smaller dragons of Bors' dream, now "serpentis and wormes and wylde bestis fowle and orryble", are already gathering on the battlefield to conclude the final chapter of Arthur's fate, so fittingly entitled "The Day of

---

Thus the dragon, through its changing cycle of metamorphosis, is like the wheel on which the fortunes of Arthur, and his realm, turn and change. At Arthur's height, while the forces of Rome fearfully gather to meet the onslaught of his knights, he dreams of a golden dragon overcoming a giant bear, foreshadowing his own victory over the giant of Saint Michael's Mount, and the emperor Lucius. But the vision of Sir Bors, before the quest of the Holy Grail has ever begun, already looks ahead to the crumbling of Arthur's kingdom, and Arthur's death. No longer golden, nor victorious, now "olde" and "orryble," the dragon is devoured by its own brood, foreshadowing Arthur's defeat by his own court. Finally, the evening before his battle with Mordred, Arthur awakes screaming, having looked into the pool of reptiles from which no one, not even Gawain or Lancelot, can save him. In summary, the dragon, through its changing appearance and actions, is a double symbol, at once representing Arthur, and Arthur's kingdom, and his and its changing fortunes.

Finally, then, I wish to close this chapter by coming full circle, as Malory's Arthur-dragon does, to comment on the traditional mythological meaning of the dragon, and its aptness as a symbol of Arthur and his court.

Dragons, despite all notions to the contrary, have probably never existed, except in the imagination. Instead, they seem to be an allegorical mode of expressing the evil, disaster, or calamity, ravaging
a country or kingdom. Drought, in Indian myth, is a dragon slain by a thunderbolt thrown by Indra -- a complex explanation which produced a wealth of literature, the Rigveda,\(^{26}\) in order to explain a very natural phenomenon. China too has its variant of the dragon drought.\(^{27}\) Similarly, the dragons of the legend of "Lludd and Llevelys," which appears both in The Mabinogion and in Geoffrey's Historia Regum Britanniae, attesting to its popularity, are, it will be remembered, associated with plague. Even more relevant, and certainly more Arthurian, are the dragons discovered by Merlin, dwelling beneath the castle of Vortigern in Geoffrey's Historia. Vortigern, in Geoffrey's lengthy legendary genealogy, is the treacherous king who invites Hengist and his fellow "Saxons" to Britain, only to have them slay the Britons and seize his kingdom. Vortigern, however, flees to Wales where he attempts to build the castle beneath which Merlin discovers two sleeping dragons, whose presence, Merlin explains, causes the mortar of the castle to crumble, making its completion impossible. Clearly, the dragons, and the crumbling mortar, are allegorical manifestations of Vortigern's misrule of such significance that they prompt Merlin to make his famous prophecies. The dragons are, Merlin tells Vortigern's magicians, "what lies hidden under the foundation... which is preventing it from holding firm."\(^{28}\) Excavation continues until two dragons, one white, and one red, are revealed. In the prophecies that


\(^{28}\) Geoffrey of Monmouth, Historia, trans. Lewis Thrope (Baltimore: Penguin), p. 169. (Prophecies are missing from Giscom's manuscript.)
follow, Merlin makes it clear that the red dragon represents the Britons, while the white dragon, the Saxons. But the implication throughout is that together they represent the fighting between the two races, the dissension which causes Vortigern's castle, like his kingdom, to crumble. The dragons, then, are an omen of misrule, of dissension -- their presence represents the warring factions which split Geoffrey's beloved island asunder. Moreover, Geoffrey's fear of the wars which plague Britain is not confined merely to Merlin's prophecies, but is a recurring motif. After Geoffrey relates Mordred's slaying of Arthur, for example, Geoffrey berates the Britons in a passage that parallels his prophecies, and in meaning, remarkably resembles the allegorical implications of Vortigern's crumbling castle:

... O unhappy race of ynys brydain, that you were thus humbled. For before this your ancestors conquered other peoples through the ages, and now are you bitterly repaying, until you can not defend your own land from the hands of the alien nation. Poor ynys brydain, accept penance as you have deserved, and recognize the words of god in the gospel, "Every kingdom which is divided and separated within itself there the houses shall fall upon another." For it is the disunion of the bryttaniait and their jealousy that have destroyed this island, and therefore it is that cruel pagans overcome the inheritors of this island.

These then are the dragons, the dragons of dissension which plague Geoffrey's island. Indeed it is this very plague, the plague of dissension, and these two very same dragons, which Llud, at the advice of his

---

29 See appendix for prophecies.

brother Llevelys, buried, and which are later uncovered by Merlin. Noted mythologist Lewis Spence ascertains they are the same two dragons, at the exact site where Llud had had them buried, and, moreover, this is supported by Geoffrey's account of Llud's success at easing them into a drunken slumber:

"The second plage of your kingdom is the island dragon and another dragon of the alien nation seeking to conquer her; and your dragon from rage and anguish gives that shriek which you hear. And this is the way," said he, "in which you may know this. When you go home, measure the island, its length and its breadth, and in the place where you find the centre of the island, there order a pit to be dug in the earth, and let a large cauldron of mead, the very best you can get, be set in the pit, and cover the cauldron with a satin cloth. And do you keep watch over these things yourself, and you will hear the dragons furiously fighting in the air. And when they are worn out with fighting, taking the form of two pigs they will settle down on the cloth, drink the mead, and pull the cloth with them to the bottom of the cauldron, and there fall asleep. And then wrap the cloth about them and bury them deep in the earth in the strongest place that can be found in your kingdom; and, whilst they are there, no plague will come to ynys Brydain from anywhere.32

And so the dragons, omens of dissension, slumber beneath British soil, buried by Llud, uncovered by Merlin beneath Vortigern's castle, and revealed in Merlin's prophecies. But they also lurk beneath Arthur's

31 Lewis Spence, The Minor Traditions of British Mythology (London: Rider, 1948), p. 120.
castle in Camelot, where, beheld by Bors, re-emerging in Arthur's night-
mare, they rise to the surface on the battle-field, rallying around
Mordred to ruin the kingdom and ravage their parent dragon, Arthur.
CONCLUSION

Of the four beasts in the Morte which this thesis has basically concentrated upon, only one can be termed natural. For though the bull is an actual animal, those that materialize before Gawain do so in a dream vision, they are not of this world. Only the lowly lap dog, or brachet, can be termed an actual animal of the natural world, and significantly, it symbolizes the most natural of instincts, love. Sought in the tri-partite quest, the brachet's attainment by Torre distinguishes him as the single knight worthy of the love the brachet symbolizes. Not merely part of the social setting, the brachet, though a part of the world of reality, has here entered into the world of romance as the object of the quest. But as the token of love in King Mark's court, the brachet returns to its natural role, intuitively responding to Tristram, totally innocent of the effect of that response.

Although essentially still in the world of real animals, the fact that the bulls beheld by Gawain appear in a dream vision places them further still from the natural world of the brachets. Simultaneously, their symbolical significance is also enhanced. Here is an image suggesting not a mere love token, but an image that embodies Arthur's entire court, and moreover, reveals the weaknesses and strengths of that court. For as has already been shown, the black bulls, through their proud and unstable actions, foreshadow and symbolize the assertion of pride and shifting sense of loyalties of Arthur's knights which ultimately cause Arthur's kingdom to crumble, while the white bulls suggest the purity,
chastity, and moral strength of the three Grail questers.

Totally removed from the world of animals, and indeed, from any world other than the imagination, is the Questing Beast. Certainly the most fantastic creature in Malory, it is also the most nebulous in meaning, and as the thesis has shown, it is symbolic of a meaningless quest, and is moreover, a significant comment on the purposeless life of the knights who pursue it. Although not revealed in Malory, an examination of the sources surrounding the beast has shown that it is demonic in origin.

Although less fabulous than the Questing Beast, the dragon, nevertheless, is the most meaningful symbol in this study, indeed, perhaps in Malory's entire Morte. Mythologically evil, it nevertheless initially emerges as a symbol of goodness which then reverts to its traditional meaning of evil and terror. Simultaneously symbolizing Arthur and his kingdom, the dragon's metamorphosis from the monarchical symbol of Arthur to the ugly monster spewing up its own brood, only to be devoured by them, complements perfectly the movement of the Morte towards its tragic conclusion, and in so doing, provides powerful comment on the knights who initiated and concluded that tragedy.

The pattern in which this thesis has studied these beasts, here summarized, is a movement from the natural to the unnatural. Paralleling this movement from the natural to the unnatural is a movement from good to evil. Thus the brachet, the most natural of the beasts, is
also the most virtuous, symbolizing love. The bulls, though natural animals, are presented in the unnatural context of Gawain's dream vision. Significantly, then, Gawain's vision contains both good and evil, the proud black bulls of Arthur's court, and the three white bulls, the Grail questers. The Questing Beast, however, represents a shift to the far end of this scale of values, it epitomizes evil. For, it will be remembered, the Questing Beast was sired by Satan (see page 42 of thesis). Finally, this evil extends to its ultimate end in the image of a hoard of hungry dragons devouring their parent dragon (see pages 71-72 of thesis). It need hardly be noted that the fall of Arthur's court from an ideal society to its bestial depths follows precisely the same pattern of movement from good to evil outlined here.

Thus not only the presence, but also the importance of the animals in Malory's *Morte Darthur* is seen. They provide insight into both the characters and the themes of the *Morte*. Moreover, their very existence aids in imbuing the *Morte* with the aura and atmosphere of a world extending back beyond even the Middle Ages, beyond any age -- the timeless world of the imagination.

But the animals within Malory's *Morte Darthur* are immortal. Spenser's serpentine Errore, "a thousand yong ones issuing from her,"¹

which, after Errore is slain, "sucked up their dying mother's blood,"\(^2\) bears a remarkable resemblance to Malory's description of the dead parent dragon devoured by its own offspring. Despite the strict allegorical significance of both Errore and Spenser's dragon, the reader of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* is never far from the world of Malory's romance, nor the beasts that lived in that world.

Similarly, Milton's figure of Sin is seen to be a combination of Homer's Scylla, Spenser's Errore, and Malory's dragon, the horror of which is increased still further by the incessant barking of dogs, reminiscent of the ugly Questing Beast:

```
Before the gates there sat  
On either side a formidable shape;  
The one seemed woman to the waist, and fair,  
But ended foul in many a scaly fold'  
Voluminous and vast, a serpent armed  
With mortal sting. About her middle round  
A cry of Hellhounds never-ceasing barked  
With wide Cerebraen mouths full loud, and rung  
A hideous peal; yet when they list, would creep,  
If aught disturbed their noise, into her womb,  
And kennel there, yet there still barked and howled  
Within unseen.\(^3\)
```

Within the womb of Milton's serpentine figure of Sin the barking hounds of the Questing Beast live on.

---

\(^2\) Ibid., 25.

Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, too, is riddled with beast imagery, and in this century Malory's *Morte* has given birth to T.H. White's *The Once and Future King*. There Arthur and his knights once again live, even if it is in a sometimes facetiously farcical context. But though the tone is modern, the past has been preserved in the host of beasts, real and mythical, running through its pages. Griffins and unicorns have wandered out of White's translation of *The Bestiary* and into his modernized retelling of Malory's story. Percival's vision of the lion and serpent is preserved, and once again Palomides and Pellinor pursue the Questing Beast. Early in White's work a badger, gifted with speech, prepares to read to the unwilling young Arthur a "treatise" he has been preparing. The subject of that treatise would have fascinated Malory, for in many ways it, and the advice the badger offers his unwilling listener, is the essence of Malory's *Morte Darthur*:

"It will be good for you, dear boy. It is just the thing to top off an education. Study birds and fish and animals: then finish off with Man."7

---

5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., p. 193
7 Ibid.
And here I deem it not irrelevant to commit to writing what was supernaturally shown to the king. He had entered a wood abundant in game, and, as usually happens, while his associates were dispersed in the thicket for the purpose of hunting, he was left alone. Pursuing his course, he came to the outlet of the wood, and stopping there waited for his companions. Shortly after, seized with an irresistible desire to sleep, he alighted from his horse, that the enjoyment of a short repose might assuage the fatigue of the past day. He lay down, therefore, under a wild apple-tree, where the clustering branches had formed a shady canopy all around. A river, flowing softly beside him, adding to his drowsiness, by its gentle murmur soothed him to sleep; when a bitch, of the hunting breed, pregnant, and lying down at his feet, terrified him in his slumber. Though the mother was silent yet the whelps within her womb barked in various sonorous tones, incited, as it were, by a singular delight in the place of their confinement.
I am indebted to William A. Nitze for the following paraphrases from the Perlesvaus and Gerbert de Montreuil's Continuation of the Conte del graal in Perlesvaus (2 vols.; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1937), II, pp. T34-T36.

**P**

5486: Perlesvaus enters the Solitary Forest. In the midst of a clearing he sees a red cross. He also sees a knight and a damsel, seated at opposite ends of the clearing, clad in white and holding gold vessels.

5528: Two priests approach the cross; one begins to worship and the other to weep and beat it with rods. Perlesvaus asks why, if he is a priest, he does so shameful a thing. The priest replies that he will not tell, and Perlesvaus goes on his way.

5494: A small beast, as white as snow, comes running, frightened by the twelve whelps within her, baying like hounds in the chase. Perlesvaus stops to look with pity, for the beast is beautiful, with eyes like emeralds. It runs first toward the knight, and then toward the damsel, but it cannot stop because of the baying of the whelps. It then turns to Perlesvaus, but the knight tells him not to interfere. The beast takes refuge at the cross. Then the whelps can no longer

**G**

8296: After meeting a number of people who have been burned, Perceval enters upon a path which no knight ever traveled without death or injury. In the midst of a clearing he sees a beautiful cross.

At the cross are two hermits, one making great outcry and beating it with a handful of rods, the other worshiping it. Perceval thinks that he will ask why one of them beats the cross, though he does not wonder why the other prays to it.

8376: Perceval's attention is now interrupted...A beast, grant a merveille, leaps from a clump of bush and runs past Perceval. She is filled with young, which bay within her unceasingly. After running for a long time, the beast at last breaks in two, and the whelps emerge and devour her. They then go mad and kill each other.
stay within. They issue forth. The beast crouches on the ground as if begging for mercy. The whelps tear the beast to pieces but are unable to eat its flesh, nor can they pull the body away from the cross. Then they flee into the forest.

5520: The knight and the damsel gather the flesh and blood in their vessels, kiss the ground, worship the cross, and depart. Perlesvaus dismounts and worships the cross.

5528: Two priests come up and order him to leave the cross and allow them to approach...(see above).

8427: Perceval later arrives at the castle of the thirteen hermits, where he receives the shield destined for the Grail hero. The chief hermit turns out to be Elyas Anais en sornon: Li Rois Hermites aa non.

8623: The hermit beats the cross because it is the physical instrument of the Passion.

5984-6026: The Hermit King explains that the beast is the Creator and the hounds are the twelve tribes of Israel. One priest beats the cross because it is the physical instrument of the Passion.

8674: Perceval is told that the beast he saw was the church, and the whelps were the people who disturb the sacred service by talking and complaining of hunger.
Arthur's dragon-bear dream

i. Geoffrey of Monmouth (Griscom p. 468)

And when he had reached the middle of the ocean, a sleep as of the dead held him much of the night, and he saw a dream. He saw flying from the south a sort of monster, with a terrible voice, alighting on the shore of ffraink; and he saw a dragon coming from the west, and by the glare of its eyes the sea was lighted up. And he saw the dragon and the Bear engaging; and when they had fought for a long time, he saw the dragon spitting out gleaming flames of fire upon the Bear, and burning him up completely. And perplexing was the dream to Arthyr. And then he awoke and told his comrades of the vision; and thus did they make interpretation; "Thou, Lord, shalt fight some monster of a giant and conquer him, for the dragon signifies thyself."

ii. Morte Arthure (ed. John Finlayson, p. 38)

The kynge was in a gret cogge with knyghtez full many,
In a cabane enclosede, clenlyche arayede,
Within on a ryche bedde rystys a littyll,
And with the swoche of the see in swefnynge he fell.

Hym dremyd of a dragon, dredfull to beholde,
Come dryfande over the depe to drenschen hys pople,
Ewen walkande owte of the weste landez,
Wanderande unworthyly overe the wale ythez;
Bothe his hede and hys hals ware halely all over
Oundyde of azure, enamelde full faire:
His schoulders ware schalyde all in clene sylvere,
Schreede over all the schrympe with schrinkande poynzte;
Hys wombe and hys wenges of wondyrfull hewes,
His tayle was toterd with tongues ful huge,
In mervaylous maylys he mountede full hye;
Whaym that he touchede he was tynt for ever.

A blake bustous bere abwen in the clowdes
With yche a pawe as a poste and paumes full huge,
With pykes full perilous, all plyande tham semyde;
Lothen and lothely, lokkes, and other,
All with lutterde legges, lokered unfaire,
Filtyrde unfrely, wyth fomaunde lyppez,
The foullest of fegure, that formede was ever,
He baltyrde, he bleryde, he braundyschte therafter;
To bataile he bounnez hym with bustous clowez:
He romede, he rarede, that roggede all the erthe,
So ruydly he rappyd at to ryot hym selven.
Thane the dragon on dreghe dressede hym agaynez,
And with hys dinttez hym drafe one dreghe by the walkyn:
He fares as a fawcon, frekly he strykez;
Bothe with feete and with fyre he feghtys at ones.
The bere in the bataile the bygger hym semyde
And byttes hym boldlye wyth balefull tuskez;
Syche buffetez he hym rechez with hys brode klokes,
Hys brest and his brayell whas blodye all over.
He rawmpyde so ruydly, that all the erthe ryfez,
Rynnande on reede blode as rayne of the heven.
He hade weryede the worme by wyghtnesse of strenghte,
Ne ware it fore the wylde fyre, that he hym wyth defendez.
Thane wandyr the worme awaye to hys heghttez,
Commes glydande fro the clowddez and cowpez full even,
Towchez hym wyth his talounez and terez hys rigge
Betwyx the taile and the toppe ten fote large.
Thus he brittenyd the bere and broghte hym o lyfe,
Lette hym fall in the flode, fleete whare hym lykes!
So they thrynge the bolde kyng bynne the schippe-burde,
That nere he bristez for bale on bede whare he lyggez.
Than waknez the wyse kynge, wery foretravaillede,
Takes hym two phylozopirs, that folowede hym ever,
In the sevyn scyence the sutelest fonden,
The conyngeste of clergye undyre Criste knowen;
He tolde them of hys tourmente, that tym that he slepede--
'Drechede with a dragon, and syche a derfe beste,
Has mad me full wery; ye tell me my swefen,
Ore I mons welte as swythe, as wysse me oure Lorde!' 'Sir,' said they son thane, theis sagge philosopherse,
'The dragon that thow dremyde of, so dredfull to schewe,
That come dryfande over the deepe, to drynchen they pople,
Sothely and certayne thy selven it es,
That thus saillez over the see with they sekyre knyghtez.


As the kynge was in his cog and lay in his caban,
he felle in a slumberynge and dremed how a dredfull
dragon dud drenche muche of his peple and com fleyng
one wynge oute of the weste partyes. And his hede,
hym semed, was enamyled with asure, and his shuldyrs
shone as the golde, and his wombe was lyke mayles of
a merveylous hew, and his taile was fulle of tatyrs, and
his feete were floryssed as hit were fyne sable. And
his clawys were lyke clene golde, and an hydeouse flame of fyre there flowe oute of his mouth, lyke as the londe and the watir had flawmed all on fyre. Than hym semed there com oute of the Oryent a grymly beare, all blak, in a clowde, and his pawys were as byg as a poste, He was all to-rongeled with lurgerande lokys, and he was the fowlyst beste that ever ony man sye. He romed and rored so rudely that merveyle hit were to telle. Than the dredfull dragon dressyd hym ayenste hym and come in the wynde lyke a faucon, and freyshely strykis the beare. And agayne the gresly beare kuttis with his grisly tuskes, that his breste and his brayle was bloode, and the reed blood rayled all over the see. Than the worme wyndis away and fleis uppon hyght and com downe with such a sowgne, and towched the beare on the rydge that fro the toppe to the tayle was ten foote large. And so he rentyth the beare and brenys hym up clene that all felle on pouder, both the fleysh and the bonys, and so hit flotered abrode on the sea. Anone the kynge waked and was sore abasshed of his dreme, and in all haste he sente for a philozopher and charged hym to telle what sygnyfyed his dreme. 'Sir,' seyde the phylozopher, 'the dragon thou dremyste of betokyns thyne owne persone that thus here sayles with thy syker knyghtes; and the colour of his wyngys is thy kyngdomes that thou hast with thy knyghtes wonne. And his tayle that was all to-tatered sygnyfyed your noble knyghtes of the Rounde Table.


While Vortigern, King of the Britons, was still sitting on the bank of the pool which had been drained of its water, there emerged two Dragons, one white, one red. As soon as they were near enough to each other, they fought bitterly, breathing out fire as they panted. The White Dragon began to have the upper hand and to force the Red One back to the edge of the pool. The Red Dragon bewailed the fact that it was being driven out and then turned upon the White One and forced it backwards in its turn. As they struggled on in this way, the King ordered Ambrosius Merlin to explain just what this battle of the Dragons meant. Merlin immediately burst into tears. He went into a prophetic trance and then spoke as follows

...
'Alas for the Red Dragon, for its end is near. Its cavernous dens shall be occupied by the White Dragon, which stand for the Saxons whom you have invited over. The Red Dragon represents the people of Britain, who will be overrun by the White One: for Britain's mountains and valleys shall be levelled, and the streams in its valleys shall run with blood.

'The cult of religion shall be destroyed completely and the ruin of the churches shall be clear for all to see.

'The race that is oppressed shall prevail in the end, for it will resist the savagery of the invaders.
'Alas for the Red Dragon, for its end is near. Its cavernous dens shall be occupied by the White Dragon, which stand for the Saxons whom you have invited over. The Red Dragon represents the people of Britain, who will be overrun by the White One: for Britain's mountains and valleys shall be levelled, and the streams in its valleys shall run with blood.

'The cult of religion shall be destroyed completely and the ruin of the churches shall be clear for all to see.

'The race that is oppressed shall prevail in the end, for it will resist the savagery of the invaders.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources.


Secondary Sources.


Guerin, Wilfred L. "Malory's Morte Darthur, Book VIII. "Explicator, vol. XX, No. 8 (April, 1962), Item 64.


Nutt, Alfred. Popular Studies in Mythology, Romance and Folklore Vol. II


Stuart, D.M. A Rock of Birds and Beast. London: Methuen, 1957

Tatlock, J.S.P. "The Dragons of Wessex and Wales." Speculum, 1933, p. 223


_____________. *The Once and Future King*, New York: Putnam, 1958