The Magic of Love: Love Magic in Medieval Romance

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THE MAGIC OF LOVE: LOVE MAGIC IN MEDIEVAL ROMANCE

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DISSERTATION

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Dedication

In memory of my grandpa, DG Horn, and my uncle, “Tuffy” Leland Nelson—
I love you always.

This project is dedicated to all of my wonderful family members including my parents, Jack and Wendy Fennell; my grandma, Barbara Horn; my husband, Nathan Raymond; and my parents-in law, Mark and Paulette Raymond, all of whom have supported and encouraged me in all I do.
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Finally, to my husband, Nathan Raymond—thank you for being there with me in every step of my journey, for taking a chance with me, for supporting and loving me unconditionally, and for always believing in me. Your love is my greatest strength.
THE MAGIC OF LOVE: LOVE MAGIC IN MEDIEVAL ROMANCE

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ABSTRACT

This project examines authorial representations of the morality of three functions of love magic: to induce, to disrupt, and to facilitate love in twelfth- through fifteenth-century Middle High German, Old French, and Middle English romances. Using a cultural studies approach with close textual analysis and informed by gender studies, it investigates medieval romance authors’ discomfort with love inducing magic and asserts that this discomfort is a response to the magic’s violation of free will, a central tenet of medieval theology. I find that authors condemn love inducing magic but mark specific instances acceptable through explicit clarification of divine approval. Love disrupting and facilitating magic do not inherently violate free will, and so the morality of the magical practitioner’s motivations is extended onto the love magic. This project provides an understanding of how medieval authors grappled with the morality attached to love magic and how they communicated this morality to audiences.
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Chapter 1

Setting the Stage: Love Magic’s History and Scholarship
This chapter provides a general survey of the history of love magic as it developed from antiquity and spread from the Mediterranean across the continent and to the British Isles, as well as an examination of the forms of love magic, such as spells, curses, and potions, and some of the actions and ingredients involved in the performance of love magic. In addition to the historical performance of love magic, the chapter examines the medieval reactions to love magic as recorded through court documents and other historical records of the responses to accusations of love magic. This project considers literary texts as both influenced by and influencing social conceptions, a give and take relationship which Laine E. Doggett fruitfully terms “historical dialectism.”¹ This symbiotic relationship between the development of literature and historical practice, makes it all the more important to consider the intersection of literary representations with historical practices and beliefs in order to cultivate a more sophisticated understanding of the culture in which both were developing. The chapter also surveys medieval theological beliefs about free will and traces the philosophical history of these beliefs back into their origins in antiquity.

Although medieval love magic has been studied previously, these studies have often focused on the historical evidence of magic, examining magical recipes and the responses of authorities to magic’s use. While historians of magic studies have done significant work on love magic, scholarship on love magic in medieval literature is still scarce, especially on the texts I am examining, mainly existent as part of other conversations addressing magic broadly or within literary analyses of particular texts. As with much of magic studies, scholarship on love magic is also occasionally done in the sciences, which largely focus on

scientific explanations for the recipes and rituals that were used in magic.\textsuperscript{2} Witchcraft and magic broadly have been extensively studied in medieval history, as has medieval sexuality, yet research on the intersection of magic and sex has largely dealt with the gendering of magic and its practitioners,\textsuperscript{3} rather than examining how magic was seen as influencing love itself. Within literary studies, magic has been directly considered by a handful of scholars, and scholarship on love magic is even less common despite its frequent presence in literary sources. Indirectly, scholarship on magic, specifically love magic, is most usually treated as a minor element within larger, non-magic focused arguments, often scholarship focusing on a specific text or author.\textsuperscript{4} This project approaches the topic thematically within a genre by examining love magic across a range of European high and late medieval romances. The majority of literary criticism considering love magic deals with the love potion appearing in

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the medieval romance *Tristan and Isolde*. This love potion, which will be discussed in detail later in this project, is possibly the best-known instance of magically induced love in medieval literature, and it is often discussed in *Tristan and Isolde* scholarship.

This project theorizes three functions of love magic: to induce, to disrupt, and to facilitate love and asserts that medieval romances evaluate the morality of love disrupting and facilitating magic based on the motivations of the magical practitioner; however, love inducing magic is broadly condemned as immoral except when its results are designed and/or approved by God and indicated as such within the text. I argue that medieval authors are uncomfortable with the violations of free will entailed in love inducing magic which leads them to either condemn its practice or use an explicit indication of divine approval of the specific instance of its use within their texts. The clerical training of most medieval authors discussed in this project would have offered the authors knowledge of theological conceptions of free will. In much of the scholarship the term *love magic* encompasses a wide variety of erotic magic (including magic that involves sexual or reproductive actions or ingredients, magic that is meant to lead to sexual acts, and magic meant to affect romantic emotions). This project’s overarching arguments stratify erotic magic into more specific categories and employ the phrase ‘love magic’ to refer to magic used to create, elicit, or otherwise induce love as well as to interfere with the development of natural love, either to facilitate or disrupt it. This understanding of love magic is distinct from what will be termed ‘sex magic’ which is better understood as magic utilizing sexual activity or arousal as part of its performance. Although love magic may also lead to sex between the individuals, the deliberate result of ensnaring the victim’s emotion (love) rather than only their physical desire (lust) sets it apart in a significant way. Both love magic and sex magic may involve
erotic elements in their required rituals, but, in sex magic, sexual desire is the ultimate goal of the magic. This chapter discusses both love magic and sex magic, and I have retained the term “love magic” to broadly encompass erotic magic as dictated by the scholarship I discuss.

In his book, Binding Passions: Tales of Magic, Marriage, and Power at the End of the Renaissance, Guido Ruggiero presents a selection of case studies on the use of love magic in Renaissance Italy (particularly Venice), largely focusing on the sixteenth century. Although the period he is studying in his work is later than the literary pieces addressed in this project, many of his ideas and findings about love magic inform my own work; however, the difference in timing between the events he addresses and the literary works examined in this project must of course be taken into account. Ruggiero presents many specific instances of women being charged with performing love magic—many of whom were prostitutes—going so far as to claim that “love magic was an important weapon of prostitutes and also of those who wished to accuse them of illicitly binding the passions of men.” It is not only the real power of love magic, as it was understood, that made it dangerous, but also the Holy Office’s outright condemnation of it, which established love magic as dangerous to both its victims and its users.

While cases of spouses or lovers are addressed in his book, there is a lack of distinction between magic performed to secure a person’s sexual favor (such as that which a

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5 It is worth noting that the term “sex magic” can popularly also refer to magic which, in its performance, requires the performance of a sexual act, whether or not the result of the magic has anything to do with sex or love. This type of sex magic is not the focus of this project and is a different usage from my own distinction between sex magic and love magic.


7 Ruggiero, Binding Passions, 32.
prostitute might perform on a well-paying or favored client) and magic performed to obtain, retain, or disintegrate the emotion of love (or any personal emotions toward others). Instead, Ruggiero considers all these cases as instances of “love magic,” without explicit differentiation based on these two broadly different motivations and the intended results: sexual lust, general favor, or emotional love.\textsuperscript{8} It is important though to make a distinction between love magic and sex magic, as I have previously defined the two, because the motivation, and sometimes the ritualistic elements, of the performance of the magic may be adjusted depending on the intention of the person performing or purchasing the magic.

Ruggiero reveals an awareness of the role emotional love plays in love magic when he lays out the pragmatic societal function of marriage in Renaissance Italy and its use as a social ritual which bound passion rather than encouraged it. Marriages in medieval romances, as well as medieval culture, fulfilled a social obligation and were not based on love matches but rather general compatibility with the hope that some mutual affection might develop.\textsuperscript{9} This pragmatic function of marriage is also discussed by Georges Duby, who explains the contention between two competing marriage models in twelfth-century France: aristocrats wanted to maintain the ability to force arranged marriages; yet the ecclesiastical model required the consent of the parties being married.\textsuperscript{10} The emphasis the ecclesiastical authority places on consent in rendering a marriage legal is significant, as it is a formal recognition by the church that consent is necessary for the contract of marriage to be valid and recognized;

\textsuperscript{8} For more on emotions in medieval literature, consider Frank Brandsma, Carolyne Larrington, and Corinne Saunders, eds., \textit{Emotions in Medieval Arthurian Literature: Body Mind, Voice} (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2015).

\textsuperscript{9} Ruggiero, \textit{Binding Passions}, 14.

this inherently values the free will of both parties (the wife and the husband) by allowing each of them free choice in whether or not to enter the marriage agreement.

Although historians have written extensively on the institutional responses to alleged instances of love magic in the Middle Ages, historical scholarship largely considers two types of sources: instructions for performing love magic and records of legal actions against those accused of performing love magic. My own study aims to consider the function of love magic in medieval literature and argues that, although other aspects of romantic love presented in literature contradict the medieval church’s attitudes toward love, the treatment of love magic in medieval literature suggests an authorial discomfort with its use which, while still more generous in its attitude than the medieval church, is distinct from the more accepted general romanticizing of love in these literary works. Literature seemingly has no difficulty positioning courtly love as acceptable, even to be aspired to, despite its condemnation by the Church (courtly love centered adultery and passion as key elements after all); yet love magic, which has one foot in courtly love, is not so readily accepted within romances.

The general condemnation of love inducing magic in medieval romances reflects the historical attitude toward love magic, much of which focused on forcing love (with or without accompanying lust). Within historical records, it can be difficult to parse specific functions of love magic or even to determine how and to what ends love magic was being performed in any given incidence. This is because of the generalization of magical practice, under which a person might be found with objects or ingredients suggesting the practice of various types of magic, love magic amongst them, but without any clear details about the magic practiced. In P. G. Maxwell-Stuart’s *The British Witch: The Biography*, he discusses
the church’s view of demonic involvement within magic (which was theologically the most problematic portion of the crime) that rendered specific distinctions between magical performances largely irrelevant. Maxwell-Stuart explains the ramifications of this assumption for the historical evidence that survives:

For the most part, however, our reports and records do not mention any such deliberate conjuration, but either tacitly assume that a demon has worked the magic, or ask no questions at all and simply take the operation and its effect or non-effect for granted; and in this it is likely they reflect the psychology of those involved, who probably asked for the magic and did the magic without any particular debate, internal or external, about the morality or the mechanics which might be involved therein. Witch, cunning man or woman, magician—to all intents and purposes these were the same person. Some might specialize in love or curative magic; some might be about to do only one thing…because that was the only charm they knew; some might be prepared to range over the continuum of magic and do harm as well as good; some might possess a modicum of learning, even a book, which would give them a reputation—an advantage in ordinary circumstances, a potential disadvantage in others.\textsuperscript{11}

The assumption of the demonic source of magic renders no need for further exploration of “the morality or the mechanics” of the magic performed, yet literature offers a venue in which medieval romance authors did explore these matters and through which modern scholars can enhance our study of the medieval understanding of the morality of magic in its specific applications. The reactions of medieval authors, voiced through the commentary of their narrators and their shaping of romance plots, serve to reveal their explorations with magic in the imaginary realm—the trends within these reactions lead us to understand that enough anxiety existed around love inducing magic that authors felt the need to invoke God’s will as a defense of its use when it was represented positively within a text.

The origins of love magic stretch back to the Mediterranean from where it spread geographically and was adapted by various cultures. Stephen Wilson discusses love magic in the ancient world, citing various types of love magic that survive in fourth- and fifth-century papyrus manuscripts from Egypt. Beyond love magic’s basic function as a method for effecting a love relationship, there is a variety of more nuanced functions for love magic. This magic was used for a variety of purposes, including garnering or dissuading affections as well as libido-increasing magic enacted by women on their husbands. In the love magic of antiquity, many objects from the natural world, like animals and the bones of the dead (which would later be categorized as necromantic), were incorporated, but as Christianity took hold in the medieval and Early Modern periods, love magic began to utilize Christian imagery and objects such as “holy oil and holy water” which might need to also be placed in Christian locations, such as at an altar. Although some of the objects involved in love magic seem to shift between antiquity and the medieval period, there remains a strong reliance on bodily fluids and substances associated with the genitals. The magic of the ancient world utilized pubic hairs, for example, a medieval German text called for urine, and Early Modern examples use menstrual blood and semen. Menstrual blood specifically is an important substance in love magic, and its use was particularly prominent in the love magic of the Mediterranean. It is worth noting that while the Christianization of Europe influenced

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16 Wilson, *The Magical Universe*, 143.
17 Wilson, *The Magical Universe*, 401.
magical practices, including love magic, the incorporation of some natural world objects also seems to survive into the Early Modern period, as evidenced by an early-eighteenth-century text that involved a love powder made from dried blood mixed with “two hare’s testicles and the liver of a dove.”\textsuperscript{18} While Wilson acknowledges love magic’s origins in the Mediterranean, he also highlights its geographical expansion throughout Europe, citing a variety of cases from Italy, France, and England, both in history and in literature.\textsuperscript{19}

Maxwell-Stuart provides a late example of love magic in the Mediterranean in his discussion of the case of Sulpitia de Lango, who in the early seventeenth century was investigated by the inquisition after being caught practicing love magic with three accomplices. The case provides an interesting combination of cultural concerns about magic, since it presents a woman working love magic in a church with the “alter-cloth in the Grand Masters’ crypt.”\textsuperscript{20} Here, the anxieties of women exerting power over men through magic are enacted in a holy location (the church) and using what could be seen as necromantic methods, since the cloth was from a crypt. Early Mediterranean strains of the magical practices and anxieties over them influence later European magical practices and responses authorities, like the church, have towards magic.

Condemnations of magical practices appear in penitential handbooks from the high Middle Ages, which reveal specific concerns over the practice of love magic. Although the official theological position of the church was that this magic had no efficacy, the penance

\textsuperscript{18} Wilson, \textit{The Magical Universe}, 144.
\textsuperscript{19} Wilson, \textit{The Magical Universe}, 145-47.
for non-effectively and effectively practiced love magic remained different. These concerns ranged from the altering of another’s emotions to the extinguishing of men’s lust and rendering them impotent. The pattern of citing specific cases involving love magic in general discussions of magic is a trend reflected in a significant amount of the scholarship on the history of magic. Usually, particular references to cases, accusations, trials, laws, or penitential records are discussed rather than the topic of love magic more generally, and this can be a useful approach when those records mention love magic. One of the influential voices from the medieval inquisition is the fourteenth-century French Dominican inquisitor Bernard Gui, who specifically lists love magic among the many potentially heretical magical practices an inquisitor might encounter during an interrogation. This inquisitorial handbook from the early 1300s demonstrates a formal concern over the practice of love magic at the

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21 John T. McNeill and Helena M. Gamer, eds., Medieval Handbooks of Penance: A Translation of the Principal libri poenitentiales and Selections from Related Documents, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), 349. This is from a penitential used by Bartholomew of Iscansus, Bishop of Exeter, fol. 32r, col. 1. Here the penance for the use of love magic is listed briefly among a far longer list of various magic-related offenses. It also includes penance for women who use magic to prevent marital consummation—whether the marriage is their own or someone else’s is unclear.

22 McNeill and Gamer, eds., Medieval Handbooks of Penance, 331. This is from a penitential used by Burchard of Worms, chapter V, question 68.

23 McNeill and Gamer, eds., Medieval Handbooks of Penance, 340. This is from a penitential used by Burchard of Worms, chapter V, question 186.


transition period between the high and late Middle Ages. Unlike theological tracts, inquisitorial and penitential handbooks do not offer lengthy explorations of the morality of human behaviors, but rather provide instructions for uncovering and addressing sins that have already been committed. These texts provide us solid insight into the types of behaviors, such as performing love magic, that were condemned, since the inclusion of these behaviors in these texts mark them as significantly problematic enough for inquisitors and clergymen to condemn them and worry over their occurrence. When the origins of these sins are explored in these texts, it is superficial, and it usually takes one of two approaches: that magical practices are not effective and are heretical because people believe they are drawing on occult sources or that magical practice is demonic in nature and requires collaboration with demonic forces. Although these perspectives reflect the cultural realities of the magic in the medieval period, they do not necessarily carry over into the treatment of magic in medieval romance literature. Although magic can be a demonic force within romances,\(^{26}\) this is not the common representation, especially of love magic. Magic in romances can be positive or negative depending on who uses it and how and why it is used; in this way, romance offers a space in which the morality of magical practice can be explored in a more nuanced way than authoritative cultural responses of the time allowed.

Some scholars have dedicated portions of their work on magic to the explicit examination of medieval love magic. In a volume dedicated to medieval magic, a section on “Trolldómr and Love” employs the Old Norse concept of *trolldómr* to avoid the

\(^{26}\) Merlin’s conception and Sir Bors’s temptation by the demonic shapehifters in the appearance of maidens are examples.
complications of the more loaded term “witchcraft” when discussing love magic.\textsuperscript{27} In this section, the authors argue that the usage of love magic in Old Norse literature is generally focused on the power dynamics involved, rather than affection; the text also observes that even as far back as the Old Norse and Scandinavian sagas, it was more frequently women associated with the exercise of love magic on a “reluctant lover” and that this association between “knowledgeable women and sexuality was a theme that recurred in later Christian literature.”\textsuperscript{28}

Furthermore, Maxwell-Stuart discusses the differences in magical practices across geography, asserting that the magic in Mexico reflected its origins from Castile, while Spanish magic differed in the north and south regions; he claims that “south witches addressed themselves rather more to controlling men through magical modification of their sexual behavior,” which was reflected by the number of “amatory spells” that existed.\textsuperscript{29} Mary O’Neil considers love magic in sixteenth-century Modena, writing broadly about the sixteenth-century church and secular Renaissance authorities’ understandings of \textit{superstition}. She explains that although intellectuals argued “for a ‘reformed and learned natural magic,’…the Church Fathers had maintained that magical effects were achieved only with the aid of the devil” and thus were inherently condemnable.\textsuperscript{30} Like other scholars, O’Neil articulates a connection between magical healing and love magic, which is perhaps

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{28} Jolly, Raudvere, and Peters, \textit{Witchcraft and Magic in Europe}, 146; 149.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Maxwell-Stuart, \textit{Witchcraft: A History}, 80.
\end{itemize}
unsurprising since the two were also the most common charges leveled in the case trials she examines from late-sixteenth-century Modena. In considering the area’s trials, O’Neil asserts that in comparison to other locations, the Inquisition records demonstrate a “moderation of its approach to magical crimes.”

The same connection between healing and love magic is explored by Laine E. Doggett in *Love Cures: Healing and Love Magic in Old French Romance*. Although she works with a selection of Old French texts that are not addressed in this project, many of her larger ideas about love magic are worth examining. She also considers two French versions, by Thomas d’Angleterre and Béroul, of the *Tristan and Iseult* narrative; my project examines, in the following chapter, the German adaptation by Gottfried von Strassburg. Doggett, through the lens of gender studies, considers the functions of women’s love as both holding “bewitching and healing” abilities. She argues that the two actions, healing and loving, as well as love magic, are deeply intertwined in medieval empirical practice, and in doing so, she pushes back on purely symbolic interpretations of love magic. Moreover, she asserts that the love magic, alongside the healing which occurs in the romances, is indicative of the everyday practices of the time period. She also claims that “their presentation is strikingly positive,” and while I agree that the instances of healing may be seen this way, I am skeptical that love magic was viewed with this same level of positive enthusiasm, particularly considering the literary attitudes toward love magic that are woven into

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34 Doggett, *Love Cures*, 3; 5.
romances. Doggett also states, in reference to the five Old French romances from the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries that she examines, that “composed with entertainment as the goal, the romances never take on accusatory tones toward practices that theologians or jurists might condemn. They do not concern themselves with moral assessments of the empirical activities shown or depict other characters who take such an interest.” While her conclusion is specific to the selection of texts she examines, several texts which will be included in this project, including Gottfried von Strassburg’s *Tristan und Isold* and *The Vulgate Cycle*, emerged within the same time frame, and *The Vulgate Cycle* is derived from the same Old French context, and they do demonstrate moral concerns over the practice of love magic. Romance authors, using plot and narratorial commentary, weigh in on the morality of characters’ behaviors, including empirical practices of magic. Furthermore, the characters within romances also take interest and make these evaluations, particularly the characters who are victimized through magic and then condemn its practice and practitioner. These concerns are woven into the text in subtle ways, not in explicit condemnations or “accusatory tones”; nonetheless, the criticism of and discomfort with the practice of love magic exist in the authorial attitude and tone of the text. Michelle Sweeney asserts that “magic used as a literary tool enables an imaginative link between the world of the audience and the text under discussion…This imaginative link functions by allowing the author to create a desensitized space in which the discussion of difficult or provocative topics is achieved without alienating the audience.” In this way, the audience would be allowed to emotionally associate themselves with characters and problems within the narrative and benefit from the

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opportunity to grapple with “difficult or provocative topics” without ever assuming the same risk that the characters do. Bart Besamusca provides insight into who would be reading these romances by examining the patronage of medieval romance authors and to whom the romances were being sold. He argues that until the middle of the fourteenth century, the readership for Arthurian romances is largely aristocrats and nobility, but after this point, interest in Arthurian romances tapers off, except in England. English interest expands, and the readership grows, developing from the aristocracy into the mercantile class. The moral assessments made within romances offer a cultural function of the genre beyond mere entertainment—romance offers instruction to the reader as well as a venue for exploring potentially dangerous topics in an imaginative realm that exists outside of the cultural constraints of the author’s reality.

Ruggiero also employs a microhistory methodology, telling the narratives of a variety of specific love magic cases brought against Venetians in the sixteenth century, in order to sketch a broader picture of the role of love magic in the society at this time. The narratives are preserved in the records of the Holy Office of Venice, and Ruggiero draws on these cases to make the argument for “an illicit world where often passions were bound in a number of ways that clearly drew on the form of licit society and culture, and at times even in the name of the pleasers of the body and passion itself.” Set to the backdrop of Ruggiero’s opening example of two men’s violent actions against a higher-end prostitute and her companions during Carnival in 1571, this assertion is the summation of Ruggiero’s argument, which is

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that passions, specifically bodily passions, were understood as immoral or leading to immorality and thus in need of regulation. This is something the Church at this time was intent on doing through their Inquisition, as well as other less prominent channels. He argues that in the illicit counter-culture world in which passions were embraced (in the forms of prostitution, love magic, violence and other passion-driven actions), passions at times were still subject to regulation and constraint. Ruggiero characterized the late sixteenth century in Italy as a transition time between the society’s Carnival and its Lent, suggesting a time of greater restriction and attempted regulation of passions, even within the spaces which were designated for passion’s freedom. The cases which Ruggiero draws upon demonstrate the ways in which love magic was utilized to bind passions but also to inflame them and how love magic and accusations of its performance could be weaponized.

Love magic became one of the most common charges during the Early Modern witch hunts, alongside physically harmful magic. Joseph Klaits, writing about the witch hunts, explains that older, solitary women were often the targets of witchcraft accusations and that love magic was one of the two most common charges leveled against these women. The interrogators’ understandings about the magic allegedly performed are especially intriguing since they blend concepts of popular and learned magic. David Gentilcore observes that although love magic was a part of popular magic, which was “a primarily female occupation” along with healing magic, it was also a part of learned magic, even though it tended to take

41 Ruggiero, Binding Passions, 9.
43 Klaits, Servants of Satan, 40.
on the form of love charms as opposed to the love philters used in popular magic. As will be discussed in the following chapter, in literature, the ability to create a love philter can become connected to, and a marker of, learning and knowledge, and the philter’s creation blends the lines between popular and learned magic, such as in the case of Queen Isolde’s potion-making in *Tristan and Isolde*.

On the one hand, instances of magical healing were viewed as problematic for the competition the remedies offered the church’s practices in addition to the potential theological deviations from approved church doctrine, love magic is problematic purely on a theological level since it was strictly considered magic; on the other hand, healing could be presented as natural uses or adaptations of religious rituals. O’Neil sums up the theological issues with love magic saying, “in addition to their implicitly (when not explicitly) diabolical source, the express goal of love charms was coercion to sin through the subversion of free will.” Theologians believed that love magic did not have efficacy; it was instead an issue because of the practice’s inherent heretical beliefs. The laity, however, clearly did consider love magic as having real effects, as evidenced both by the practice of love magic and the use of the testimony from love magic victims in the trials. In popular imagination, love magic

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45 O’Neil, “Magical Healing, Love Magic and the Inquisition,” 90; 98. O’Neil also offers the Inquisition’s Latin phrase for love magic—*maleficia ad amorem* (magic for love), and informs that the accusations of love magic in late-sixteenth-century Modena garnered the most extreme punishments for practicing magic, suggesting that this type of magic was viewed as more threatening and diabolical than others such as divination or healing.
offered both the possibility of love and a form of protective explanation for love affairs that might otherwise be “socially inappropriate.”

Looking at one of the best known forces behind the persecution of accused witches, María Helena Sánchez Ortega studies the Spanish Inquisition and Spain in the Early Modern period and how the love magic was treated. Sánchez Ortega classifies love magic as a third type of magic (along with feminine healing magic and masculine divinatory and monetary enrichment magic) that was prosecuted by the Spanish Inquisition. Unlike many scholars who focus on the Inquisition’s reactions and attitudes toward love magic, Sánchez Ortega analyzes the magical practices and the traditions from which they developed, positing that the “the rituals practiced by the Catalan, Valencian, Andalusian, and Castilian sorceresses…[were] transmitted orally, and slowly elaborated over an undetermined period of time, they were probably originated in the early Middle Ages.” Furthermore, she argues that love magic not only intended to produce or dissuade romantic affections, but often involved the erotic in its practice. Sánchez Ortega classifies the women’s love magic into

51 Sánchez Ortega, “Sorcery and Eroticism in Love Magic,” 59. More discussion of the rituals performed can be found in Sánchez Ortega’s book La Inquisición y los gitanos (Madrid: Taurus, 1988). This book examines the recipe books of women more fully, while the specific essay mentioned above focuses on key examples and major argumentative threads about love magic specifically.
52 Sánchez Ortega, “Sorcery and Eroticism in Love Magic,” 59. This conclusion is logical not only from the numerous examples provided, but also from the theory of sympathetic magic in which actions or objects are used in magical practice to represent the magical act, practitioner, or recipient of the magic’s action (such as binding a wax statue) or are used for their inherent magical properties connected to their nature (such as use of a person’s pubic hair in a potion to induce lust).
three general groups: spells for uncovering a man’s intentions (divinatory), rites to gain erotic contact (often physical mixtures requiring consumption, but also certain prayers), and incantations of spirits (verbal conjurations and prayers) to please a suitor. Along with this, she lays out three goals of love magic: “a) determining a man’s amorous intentions; b) obtaining a man’s love; c) recovering and retaining the love of a scornful man.” The majority of Sánchez Ortega’s analysis is of various Spanish love magic recipes and rituals to illustrate these categories and goals of love magic, but she also discusses the lack of marriage in love magic, which makes it “extramarital magic, one in which erotic relations always carried a sinful, condemnable connotation for the zealous priests and inquisitors,” a point also noted by O’Neil.

Wilson claims that “love magic was also practiced extensively in early modern Britain by both men and women.” While it does seem likely that both genders practiced this type of magic, Wilson argues that love magic remained predominately the domain of women, despite the occasional allegations against or prosecution of a man for its practice. Maxwell-Stuart expounds upon the association between women and love magic, explaining that the connection between women and their “insatiable sexual appetites” led to beliefs that they could use their sexuality and “excessive emotionalism,” which were apparently tied to each other, to “sway men’s minds…render men impotent, and even trick them into thinking they have lost their genitals altogether.” Maxwell-Stuart also expounds upon the belief that

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57 Wilson, The Magical Universe, 144.
women would engage in intercourse with demons called *incubi* who would appear as women and steal men’s semen to use when later having sex with women. Although the actions ascribed to these medieval women are not strictly love magic (in the sense of using magic to garner affections), they do demonstrate the threatening nature of magic that was involved with sex. The impotency and stealing of genitals are a form of malevolent love magic which could be used to interfere with the relationships of others. Although women are usually the ones accused of practicing love magic, instances of men accused of love magic are also sprinkled across history.\textsuperscript{59} Jacqueline Murray highlights the stakes of male impotence, explaining that because male impotence was grounds for an annulment, accusations of magic could act as an explanation for a man’s inability to sexually engage himself. She states, “sexual dysfunction was also attributed to witchcraft…impotence caused by witchcraft could also be either permanent or temporary in nature.”\textsuperscript{60}

Frequently, historians will cite cases involving love magic accusations even when examining witch persecutions and trials more broadly because of the prominence of love magic charges within these trials (along with magical healing). Those who do discuss love magic specifically, tend to focus on theological understandings of love magic’s origins and efficacy within the Catholic orthodox framework, but a few works, including Jules Michelet’s early book on the history of witchcraft and María Helena Sánchez Ortega’s essay on Early Modern Spanish love magic, focus more on the magical practices involved in love magic.

\textsuperscript{59} Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe*, 155. Here Flint discusses the case of a young man accused of using demonic magic to attain the affections of a young woman.
In his mid-nineteenth-century book *Satanism and Witchcraft: A Study in Medieval Superstition*, Jules Michelet blames the medieval church for creating the sorceress and discounts the importance of connections between the sorceresses of the medieval period and antiquity. He acknowledges that while the connections exist, they are not significant in the same way the medieval church is in the development of attitudes toward sorcery and the blame for its persecution. Although the book has many scholarly shortcomings, it is unique both in its time of publication and for its tone, which is sensitive to the suffering of accused witches. Michelet includes a full chapter on charms and love potions, in which he specifically lists various abilities of witches and emphasizes love charms as being particularly dangerous: “qui guérit, prédit, devine, évoque les âmes des morts, qui peut vous jeter un sort, vous changer en livre, en loup, vous faire trouver un trésor, et, bien plus, vous faire aimer! Épouvantable pouvoir qui réunit tous les autres!” [...she can heal, prophesy, predict, conjure up the spirits of the dead, can spell-bind you, turn you into a hare or a wolf, make you find a treasure, and most fatal gift of all, cast a love charm over you there is no escaping! Awful attribute, more terrible than all the rest put together!]. Despite the deficits of his book as a whole, the insights provided about the social role of the witch in a community are still relevant. Michelet paints the witch as a woman to whom others divulge their secrets as they seek help, but one who has no religious obligation to keep the confidence of these non-religious, non-orthodox confessions. Included in his discussion in the chapter is that of literary characters and their love relationships, but he omits any discussion of characters who

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63 Michelet, *La Sorcière*, 126.
actually engage in love magic. Much as Sánchez Ortega does a hundred and thirty years later, Michelet simplifies love philtres into fulfilling one of three functions:

[Ces philtres étaient fort différents. Plusieurs étaient d’excitation, et devaient troubler les sens, comme ces stimulants dont abusent tant les Orientaux. D’autres étaient de dangereux (et souvent perfides) breuvages d’illusion qui pouvaient livrer la personne sans la volonté. Certains enfin furent des épreuves où l’on défiait la passion, où l’on voulait voir jusqu’où le désir avide pourrait transposer les sens, leur faire accepter, comme faveur suprême et comme communion, les choses les moins agréables qui viendraient de l’objet aimé.]

[Philters were of many and very different sorts. Some were intended to excite and trouble the senses, like the aphrodisiacs so freely abused to the present day by Eastern peoples. Others were dangerous, and often treacherous, drugs administered to cloud the wits and deprive the victim of all power of self-control. Some, again, were tests or proofs of passion, defiances to try how far the greediness of desire was capable of carrying the senses, making lovers accept as the most supreme of favours, as a sort of mystic communication, the least agreeable of matters coming from the loved one’s person.] ⁶⁴

The three functions discussed here—erotic aphrodisiac, control over free will, and testing of a lover—roughly correspond to the love magic functions discussed by Sánchez Ortega.⁶⁵

This second function of love magic can be seen played out in the literary work *Tristan and Isolde* when the love potion removes the free will of the two titular characters and is used as a plot device to justify the lovers’ adulterous affair.

**Literature as Lens into Medieval Mentalities**

In conjunction with the historical realities of magic, literature also integrated magic into its various narratives and settings. The question of how medieval readers interpreted magic is one that is also discussed more broadly by literary scholars and historians. To what extent did medieval people believe in the efficacy of magic? Would they view magic in

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⁶⁵ See note 53.
medieval literature as symbolic or as a real, usable object? Although scholarship specifically on the topic of magic in medieval literature is limited, the works of Corinne Saunders, Michelle Sweeney, and Catherine Rider each provide some interesting insight into the question. Catherine Rider, a historian, has written on sexual magic, specifically its connection to impotence. In her preface, Rider notes that her interest in sex and magic first developed when studying Gottfried’s *Tristan*, offering a nice example of how magic studies provides a prime opportunity for interdisciplinary study. The plethora of historical sources dealing with impotence-magic reveals that the fear of magic-caused impotence was a genuine concern within medieval culture. Rider explains that the anxiety over this type of magical harm increased in late medieval Western Europe due to the topic’s emergence “in three university disciplines: canon law, theology, and medicine” during the twelfth century.

Although Rider examines what instances of magically caused impotence can tell us about the connection between popular and learned magic, she also points to a few literary pieces that include impotence magic. She characterizes these literary sources as focusing more on the “circumstances behind accusations of impotence magic, and about ways of causing or curing the problem” rather than the various legal, theological, or medicinal approaches in historical documents. Literature itself, particularly texts which might take on

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the topic of impotence, is often a place in which popular and learned cultures converge. The fabliaux genre, for example, requires literacy to compose, yet deals with crude matter and often characters of the lower classes. Looking first at antiquity, Rider clarifies that “literary texts did not always distinguish impotence magic clearly from love magic,” which seems logical considering that love magic included the binding of a lover to oneself that might naturally involve the prevention of their sexual activity with anyone else. Rider cites a case from the fifteenth century that provides “an early reference to causing impotence by tying knots, a process known as tying the aiguillette.” Although the intent in the case is to cause impotence, the action of knot-tying is also a literary trope in medieval romances, such as in Marie de France’s Briton lai “Guigemar” (discussed in chapter three) when both lovers agree to tie love-knots in each other’s garments, as a way of ensuring their fidelity (a consensual form of mutual impotence with anyone else).

Rider’s historical examination of sex and magic provides the answer that medieval people, at most social levels, did believe in the efficacy of love magic (including impotence magic), but it is Saunders and Sweeney who examine the role of magic in the literature. Saunders also speaks about impotency magic, and cites Hincmar, a ninth-century Archbishop of Reims who wrote that magically-caused impotence could be cured through its spiritual opposite: marriage, which is referred to as ‘ecclesiastical medicine.’ This reveals several important aspects of the Church’s understandings of, and attitudes toward, forms of love

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70 Rider, *Magic and Impotence in the Middle Ages*, 16.
magic: it was real and effective in the physical world; magic was not doctrinally acceptable, nor were magical cures; and spiritual remedies were stronger than magical harms.

Like Rider, Saunders recognizes the church’s doctrinal problems with love magic and says that “the most problematic form of ‘magyk natureel’ is love magic… [it] was taken very seriously by the Church. Romance is more forgiving, emphasizing the relation between love-magic and medicine, but the dangers remain apparent, and can provide powerful narrative tensions.”

Here, Saunders is highlighting the difference in literary and historical attitudes toward love magic, but acknowledges that love magic was not an unquestionably accepted device in literature. This is particularly important since fin’amor, or courtly love, which had adulterous and passionate love as one of its main tenets, was similarly disapproved of by the Church, but was held up as an ideal form of love in medieval romances. Love magic then straddles the line of courtly love and maleficarum, which appeared from time to time in romances as well. In discussing healing magic, Saunders claims that natural magic is viewed as having “dubious origins” and “the distinction is often blurred” between its positive and negative applications. She applies this same logic then to love magic, which, she explains, can employ “natural forces to bind the beloved but strays into the forbidden area of changing destiny.”

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74 The church at times attempted to suppress romance as a genre, partly due to its elevation of concepts like fin’amor and partly due to the genre’s perceived frivolity, a perception that was largely formed because its prominent readership was female.
75 Although fin’amor is prevalent within medieval literature, its historical practice is a point of scholarly contention. Although no solid evidence exists confirming it cultural practice, some non-fiction literary texts, such as conduct books and, most notably Andreas Capellanus’s *De Amore*. Capellanus’s work, even if it can be taken as an potential evidence of the historical practice of fin’amor, is also about the literary conventions of fin’amor.
Saunders also addresses the *Tristan and Isolde* narrative, arguing that it is Isolde’s mother’s position as a physician rather than a sorceress that “allows romance writers to portray the love of Tristan and Yseut in more positive terms, as a tragic consequence of misdirected natural magic.” While I agree that Tristan and Yseut’s love receives sympathy in the narrative because of the lovers’ blamelessness in bringing about their situation, the magic itself does not get such an innocuous reception in the text. Blame and condemnation must be placed somewhere, and the text gives a pitying admonishment about Isolde’s mother (who brews the love potion) but mainly acknowledges her good intentions gone wrong. It is upon the magic itself that the moral condemnation falls—the narrator personifies and vilifies the potion in passionate terms. Unstated, but implied, in Saunders’s claim is the premise that literature, unlike Church officials, was still distinguishing natural and healing magic from more malevolent forms of magic. This is not to say that literature does not consider love magic (or other forms of magic for that matter) to be potentially dangerous; in fact, Saunders argues that the Tristan romance “engages with the kind of magic forbidden across secular and theological writings, but it does not defend it.” As my analysis of *Tristan and Isolde* in chapter two shows, Gottfried’s version of the text actively critiques the love magic utilized, going beyond a simple lack of defense for it. This suggests that literature provides an exploratory space where tension-filled topics like magic can be safely deployed and authors can adapt and adjust (as many did to the Tristan and Isolde legend) in order to explore new angles of the situation. Romance, although scorned by the church as a frivolous genre of entertainment, provides the perfect venue for medieval authors to engage in these types of

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intellectual exercises.\textsuperscript{80} Since the content of romances was not taken to be of any serious matter, this may have provided authors with a level of intellectual distancing for any offenses caused by the content of what they wrote.\textsuperscript{81}

Saunders speaks to the difficulties of including magic in literature because of its potential to be used either positively or negatively. She points out that love itself involves a certain risk and violence, which is amplified when magic is involved and one or both lovers may be forced to submit to the power of magic over their free will.\textsuperscript{82} Providing an assortment of contemporary cliché phrases of love, Saunders argues that our own modern colloquial phrases position love linguistically as a positive thing but with an edge of uncertainty, “recognition of the fear and fascination of violent and inexplicable desire, so vividly expressed in the ancient notions of the wound or illness or madness of love.”\textsuperscript{83}

Michelle Sweeney looks at later medieval literature and the role of magic within it in 

\textit{Magic in Medieval Romance from Chrétien de Troyes to Geoffrey Chaucer}. Sweeney begins with her basic argument that the use of magic in medieval romances is to “explore issues of interest and concern to their audiences” such as “ideas of love, the nature of free will, how

\textsuperscript{80} Despite their denigration of the genre, the church authorities seemingly still felt the need to take a stance on romance suggesting that they may have still felt threatened by it, whether because of its context and ideas or because of its popularity.

\textsuperscript{81} This is a common tactic employed in other medieval literary genres, including Chaucer’s \textit{Canterbury Tales}, which provide a sharp social critique in the form of an entertaining text. Medieval authors also commonly employed tactics to distance themselves from the more sensitive subjects of their texts by claiming (accurately or not) older sources from which the content supposedly was created, positioning the author as a mere middleman between the original source and the contemporary reader.


\textsuperscript{83} Saunders, “Erotic Magic,” 38.
communities are structures, and the claims of loyalty.”\textsuperscript{84} Considering what has previously been said about love magic, all four of these included cultural concerns seem to get addressed when literature includes love magic in its narratives. Sweeney uses her introduction to present a profile of magic in romances, which usually appears in “the same forms…throughout several generations of texts—for example, rings, potions, swords, and certain types of illusions.”\textsuperscript{85} This repetition of magical tropes was not for lack of imagination, but rather to draw on a framework of pre-existing reference the reader would have about magic. Sweeney explains that “if the romance is to achieve maximum impact, the audience must already be conversant with magical motifs,”\textsuperscript{86} a statement which, although true, focuses on the symbolic meaning of magic at the expense of considering medieval readers’ literal understanding of it.

Magic within romances can and does hold symbolic meanings, drawing on the motif traditions Sweeney references here; however, historical evidence, such as magical recipes and spells, demonstrate that for medieval people, magic was also a reality, believed to have tangible effects on their lives.\textsuperscript{87} Medieval readers would not only come to a text able to apply their familiarity with the symbolism ingrained in magical motifs, but also their actual experiences and shared stories about magic and its effects. Potions have already been discussed above in regard to the narrative of Tristan and Isolde, but other magical objects,

\textsuperscript{84} Sweeney, \textit{Magic in Medieval Romance}, 11.  
\textsuperscript{85} Sweeney, \textit{Magic in Medieval Romance}, 18.  
\textsuperscript{86} Sweeney, \textit{Magic in Medieval Romance}, 47.  
frequently rings, are involved in other instances of love magic. Historically, physical objects were often imbued with power over love through image magic, in which inscriptions and drawn representations were used. A medieval reader who encounters love magic in a text might understand the symbolic role of magic in the narrative while simultaneously connecting that magic to real cases of love magic within their community, perhaps even with a practice in which they themselves engaged.

Sweeney argues that “magic is used to achieve a similar purpose across the range of texts under discussion, that is, evaluation of the characters’ values, identities or moral beliefs.” Providing the example of Lancelot crossing the sword bridge in Chrétien de Troyes’s Knight of the Cart, Sweeney explains that magic is used as a test for characters, and those who fail against or with magic are revealed to have moral flaws or failings, while those who are successful can be understood as good and morally upright. What is not considered by Sweeney in this thesis is the complication presented when the magical aspect of objects is disguised from those interacting with it, such as for Tristan and Isolde who unknowingly consume the potion or Sir Accolon in Le Morte Darthur who does not know

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88 In addition to magically induced love caused by potions or charms, love magic can also involve love tokens which are given to assist one’s lover in a task and/or to ensure the success of the relationship. On the other hand, magic can be used to disrupt love relationships (as seen in the discussion of impotence magic), such as the efforts of the dwarf in Tristan and Isolde who uses his divinatory abilities to trick and manipulate King Mark into causing problems for the two lovers.

89 Sweeney, Magic in Medieval Romance, 19.

90 Knights are frequently pitted against magic in romances, as I demonstrate in chapter three. Using magic for a moral test of a knight without the dynamic of him fighting against the magic is less common. Gawain’s failure with the green girdle in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is an excellent example of this type of test, as is Ywain’s moral failing involving the magic ring given to him as a love-token by his wife in Chrétien’s Yvain ou le Chevalier au Lion and the Middle English version, Ywain and Gawain.

91 This references an episode in Malory’s Le Morte Darthur in which Morgan le Fay gives her lover Sir Accolon the magical sword of King Arthur while providing a fake duplicate to
the true source of the magical sword he wields. In both of these situations, the characters are manipulated (accidentally or purposefully) by others into using the magical objects, yet these characters are the ones who suffer the consequences despite their own innocence in the matter. For interaction with magic to function as a moral test, a character must have the agency to make decisions that reflect their morality. Awareness that one is being tested or even that one is engaging with magic is not a requisite for a morality test by magic; however, a valid test does require the individual(s) to possess agency in making choices upon which their morality is evaluated. When characters have been manipulated into or during their engagement with magic, then the choices they make are not properly reflective of their moral values. Moral evaluations are predicated on characters being able to freely make conscious decisions, when this ability is inhibited through their ignorance or a third-party’s interference, the test cannot validly reflect the character’s moral state. Innocence in magical interactions does not guarantee lack of consequences though and characters who are innocent of moral failings can still suffer because of their encounters with magic.

Speaking in more detail about the function of magic, Sweeney first lays out how the Church views it, namely that magic is used “to confer power upon an individual in that society” and claims that its function in romance is similar. She states that in the romance, magic is about “achievement of a balance between private needs and public obligations” and of the sword to Arthur and then setting the two men up to fight each other. For more on this episode and Morgan’s role as villain in Le Morte Darthur, see my previous work Dalicia Raymond, “Motives, Means, and a Malevolent Mantel: The Case of Morgan le Fay’s Transgressions in Sir Thomas Malory’s Le Morte Darthur,” in Magic and Magicians in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Time: The Occult in Pre-Modern Sciences, Medicine, Literature, Religion, and Astrology, Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture 20, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2017), 547-64.  

92 Sweeney, Magic in Medieval Romance, 45.
that magic in romances reveals a character’s weaknesses that, once improved upon, will create the necessary aforementioned balance and rid the character of their need for magic.\textsuperscript{93} This fits with the definition for magic Sweeney offers from Susan Crane: “the manifestation of powers that are not directly attributable to Christian faith, yet are so far beyond the ordinary course of nature as to be inexplicable according to its laws.”\textsuperscript{94} This definition works particularly well for describing magic because it focuses on explaining what magic is not (the spiritual powers of the Church or natural occurring powers in the world) rather than attempting to encompass all that magic is.

The Church, generally, did not look favorably on powers that challenged its authority, and magic falls squarely into that category, as is evidenced by the numerous historical records of the Church’s writings against magic of all types. Sweeney posits that there existed an “unwritten and perhaps unacknowledged code among the romance writers which limited the use of black magic in order to retain, in general, the Church’s tolerance of the literature and, in particular, other forms of acceptable magic which appeared in the literature.”\textsuperscript{95} Although little additional evidence is provided to support this theory, it does address the interesting and otherwise undiscussed question of why the church, which was so against magic, did not more aggressively attempt to censor these romances and their use of magic, particularly since they proved so popular.

\textsuperscript{93} Sweeney, \textit{Magic in Medieval Romance}, 46.
\textsuperscript{95} Sweeney, \textit{Magic in Medieval Romance}, 46.
Free Will, Theology, and Emotion

Branching off from the work that scholars have done on literature’s employment of magic to explore narrative themes, including free will, I assert that the conflict between free will and the use of love magic is the cause for medieval romances’ discomfort with love magic. I argue that of the three functions of love magic, it is the use of magic to induce love which is viewed as immoral because of its violation of free will, but love disrupting and facilitating functions of love magic do not violate free will and so their morality is determined on the circumstances of their enactment. To understand and examine accurately the role free will had in medieval representations of love magic, it is important to consider first the medieval notions surrounding free will and its role in the natural world and spiritual order. Looking even further back into the understandings of free will demonstrated by classical philosophers provides a grounding for the concepts of free will that emerge and are prominent in the medieval period. Having a solidly grounded understanding of medieval theological nuances of free will is vital for examining how specific functions of love magic interfere or not with a person’s free will, and how that interference would be received culturally.

Understandings of free will and emotion in the later medieval period were heavily influenced by earlier theological beliefs and writings. The early English understanding of thoughts was not strictly distinct from feelings. Leslie Lockett’s concept of the hydraulic model argues that emotions were considered to be physical and have physiological reactions that affect the body.96 A person’s mental state was positioned in the breast/heart, where both

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emotions and thoughts were believed to occur. Lockett argues that this connection is supported through the way that emotions are described in physical terms (like “welling-up” in the chest and temperature-based descriptions). These emotions take place in the mod (mind) which is understood as being located in the chest. Lockett explains that “the distinction between the cognitive and the emotional is a conceptual opposition that the Anglo-Saxons invoked very rarely.”

This is significant to keep in mind when considering the Boethian approach to free will, a prominent early medieval philosophy, and its influence on later medieval theologians’ ideas because, in some instances of the love magic that appear in later medieval texts, the victim remains in control of their thoughts, but not their emotions, a distinction that wouldn’t have been readily made in early English culture, but that does appear in later medieval culture.

In the early medieval period, the philosophy of Boethius was highly influential as evidenced by its prime position in the major translation project of the Wessex King Alfred, a project in which Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy* was translated from Latin into the vernacular language of Old English and later translated by Geoffrey Chaucer into Middle English under the title *Boece*. The theological conflict between the omniscient foreknowledge of God and the free will of humans lies at the center of Boethius’s philosophies about free will. The philosophical problem in question is thus: If it is true that God knows everything that will happen, then how is it possible for humans to have free will and make their own choices. If humans truly have free will, then they could choose to take an action that was not pre-determined, and thus, how could God know for certain what choice individuals will make if they have genuine free will? Boethius addresses this issue in the fifth

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book of the *Consolation of Philosophy*, claiming that the atemporal nature of God means that there is no actual conflict between God’s omnipotence and human free will, and again in his commentary on Aristotle’s ninth chapter in *de Interpretatione*. Aristotle’s text and Boethius’s response both grapple with the concept of determinism.

Aristotle uses the example of a sea-battle to explain the problem of future determinism, that when a truth about the future exists, such as “a sea-battle will not be fought tomorrow,” that was the truth in the past as well, and any statement that told that future was necessarily true and any statement that was the opposite, “a sea-battle will be fought tomorrow,” was necessarily false. This arrangement, called the law of bivalence, relies on the future being pre-determined which disallows for human free will. When free will is considered, it is impossible for either statement, “a sea-battle will not be fought tomorrow” or “a sea-battle will be fought tomorrow” to be necessarily true until the future (tomorrow) has come to pass. This uncertainty is the concept of future contingents, or the idea that a statement about the future has the possibility of being true or false and we cannot know what it is until that time, yet the dichotomy of the options must be true—in other words it must be true that a sea-battle tomorrow will or will not be fought. Aristotle uses the concept of future contingents to modify the law of bivalence to allow for free will.

Boethius, responding to *de Interpretatione* 9, claims that definite truth and falsity exist for past and present, but that propositions about the future are fundamentally different. In defending his anti-determinism position, and the argument Aristotle makes against the Stoics’ perspective, Boethius clarifies that Aristotle’s future contingency does not negate the

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true-or-false dichotomy of statements about the future, but rather suspends that determination of truth or falsity until that future point has come to pass into human present/past:

Putaverunt autem quidam, quorum Sotici quoque sunt, Aristotelem dicere in futuro contingentes nec veras esse nec falsas...Sed fals. Non enim hoc Aristoteles dicit, quod utraque nec verae nec falsae sunt, sed quod una quidem ipsarum quaelibet aut vera aut falsa est, non tamen quemadmodum in praeteritis definite nec quemadmodum in praesentibus, sed enuntiatiivarum vocum duplicem quodammodo esse naturam, quorum quedam essent non modo in quibus verum et falsum inveniretur, sed in quibus una etiam esset definite vera, falsa altera definite, in aliis vero una quidem vera, altera fasla, sed indefinite et commutabiliter et hoc per suam naturam, non ad nostrum ignorantiam atque notitiam.

[Now some people—the Stoics among them—thought that Aristotle says that future contingents are neither true nor false...but falsely. For Aristotle does not say that both are neither true nor false, but, of course, that each of them is either true or false—not, however, definitely, as with those having to do with past matters or those having to do with present matters. [He says] instead that there is in a way a dual nature of statement-making utterances: some of them are not only such that the true and the false is found in them, but also such that one of them is definitely true [and] the other definitely false; of the other [statement-making utterances], however, one is true [and] the other false, but indefinitely and mutably—and this as a result of their own nature, not relative to our ignorance or knowledge.]

It is the final line in this passage that solidifies the anti-deterministic position of Boethius’s commentary since it emphasizes that the “indefinite et commutabiliter” nature of statements about the future is such by inherent nature rather than because of an absence of human awareness of the future. Although this response does not explicitly invoke the complication of God’s foreknowledge of events, this particular clarification by Boethius can be applied to the problem of divine foreknowledge. If, as Boethius claims it is not, the indefiniteness of future-focused statements was due to human “ignorance or knowledge,” then determinism

would still be possible because God has foreknowledge that humans do not, yet when it is the nature of the statements themselves that result in this uncertainty, this eliminates the possibility that a determined future that humans are unaware of (but that God is aware of) exists.

Although philosophy was a life-long interest of Boethius, his major work, the *Consolation of Philosophy*, was written in a time when his own future was uncertain, the year he was a prisoner waiting to learn his fate. It is perhaps no wonder then that the work tackles the problem of divine foreknowledge, the tension between the idea that God is omniscient with knowledge of all that will come to pass and the Christian belief in human free will. The determinist position that the future is set leaves a lack of responsibility, for if the future is set, then humans are not truly free to make their own choices and so cannot be held responsible for those choices. Boethius’s future rested in the choice King Theodoric would make, and Boethius’s strong anti-deterministic stance first seen in his commentary on Aristotle’s *On Interpretation 9* (discussed above) appears once again in the fifth book of *The Consolation of Philosophy*, this time as a conversation between Boethius and Lady Philosophy (who represented the ideas of the two influential classical thinkers on free will, Aristotle and Plato).

Boethius presents the problem of divine knowledge to Lady Philosophy, through whose voice he is able to build his anti-determinism case as she, the guide-figure, leads Boethius the character through his confusions and allows him to reconcile God’s foreknowledge with the existence of human free will. After presenting this seeming conundrum to Lady Philosophy, she explains that it is the temporal existence of humans compared to the eternal existence of God that allows the concurrent truth of divine
foreknowledge and genuine human free will to exist. Book 5 of *The Consolation of Philosophy* begins by tackling the question of whether *chance* really exists. Boethius wonders if things can truly happen by chance, which Lady Philosophy explains that if *chance* is understood as random occurrences without any causes, then chance is not real, but it does exist if one understands it to be the unintended result of specific actions that caused it. Once this is established, Boethius introduces the conundrum of whether a system in which “coercente in ordinem cuncta deo locus?” [“God disposeth all things in due order”] allows for the presence of free will.

This question prompts a lengthy response from Lady Philosophy who explains that all rational beings have free will and the ability to make judgements, and that in fact, without the existence of free will, rationality would not be possible. She then gets into the nuances of this freedom to make decisions, explaining that all beings attempt to gain that which they desire, but that their desires are affected by the state of their souls. She draws a distinction between “supernis diuinisque substantis” [“supreme and divine substances”] and humans, explaining that the souls of divine beings are uncorrupted and therefore they are more free while the souls of humans, having been corrupted when placed into fleshly bodies, still have the freedom to make decisions, but are “inscitiae nube caligant” [“blinded with a cloud of ignorance”]. She goes on to note that when humans consent to their fleshly desires, “sunt quodam modo propria libertate captiuae” [“captives by their own freedom”].

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102 Boethius, “Consolation of Philosophy,” 5.2.23.

103 Boethius, “Consolation of Philosophy,” 5.2.26-27.
Boethius, rather than accepting the explanation provided by Lady Philosophy, expressed that he is now further confused, saying “Nimium,…aduersari ac repugnare uidetur praenoscere uniuersa deum et esse ullum libertis arbitrium” [“It seemeth...to be altogether impossible and repugnant that God foresseth all things, and that there should be any free-will”].

He explains his confusion: if God is able to see all things and is infallible in his knowledge, then it is certain that whatever he sees will come to be, and if he knows not only the deeds of men, but also of their “consilia uoluntatesque” [“councels and wills”], then free will cannot exist as no alternative possibility to that which God already knows could exist. Here we have progressed in the character Boethius’s doubts from the matter of God determining human action to the matter of God’s foreknowledge of human’s behavior (both actions and desires). Before Lady Philosophy responds, Boethius explains and subsequently both discredits and discards a variety of counterarguments that he says some present in attempt to resolve this conflict. When the Lady finally does respond, it is the difference between “humanae ratiocinationis motus” [the motion of human discourse] and “diuinae praescientiae simplicitatem” [the simplicity of the divine knowledge], and humanity’s inability to grasp that simplicity of divine knowledge that raises these questions and doubts. She works through the complexity of how foreknowledge can exist while not causing the events it foretells to occur, calling foreknowledge a sign of what is to happen as opposed to a cause of it. Yet, she recognizes the difficulty of the question of whether foreknowledge of events that are not necessarily going to occur is possible.

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104 Boethius, “Consolation of Philosophy,” 5.3. 4-6.
105 Boethius, “Consolation of Philosophy,” 5.3.9-10.
106 Boethius, “Consolation of Philosophy,” 5.4.6-8.
It is here that she tackles Boethius’s problem from a new angle—rather than arguing about whether the events that are foreseen as happening could still potentially not happen, she addresses the matter of whether events which could potentially not happen (have no *necessity*) can be foretold since “nihilque cientia comprehendi posse nisi certum” [and that nothing can be perfectly known unless it be certain].  

Rather than arguing against the logic of this, Lady Philosophy instead pokes holes in the logical unpinning upon which this conclusion would be reached. She says that Boethius believes that true knowledge rests on knowing what a thing is; yet she argues that this is an error. She explains that although Boethius (and thus humanity more broadly) believes that “omnia quae quisque nouit ex ipsorum tantum ui atque natura cognosci aestimat quae sciunter” [“all that is known is known only by the force and nature of the things themselves”], it is instead through the force of the knower, not the known, that knowledge is understood—in other words, the foreknowledge of an event comes not from the occurrence of the event itself, but rather through the faculty of the one who holds the foreknowledge (i.e., God). This evolves out of the distinction between that which is observed with the senses, something humanity does, and that which is truly understood, something God is able to do—“ratio uero humani tantum generis est sicut intellegentia sola diuini” [“But reason belongeth only to mankind, as understanding to things divine”]. It is this difference in faculties that limits human knowledge while not limiting divine knowledge. Lady Philosophy explains that “summae potius scientiae nullis terminis inclusa simplicitas” [“the simplicity of the highest knowledge

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107 Boethius, “Consolation of Philosophy,” 5.4.67-68.
108 Boethius, “Consolation of Philosophy,” 5.4.72-74.
enclosed within no bounds”[110] is the ultimate reason that foreknowledge can be certain even when the things which it foretells are not.

It is also worth noting that, while Boethius’s original grappling with the idea of free will in the *Consolation of Philosophy* seems to focus on human freedom of thought, this emphasis is shifting to human freedom of action in the Old English translation of the text that is commissioned as part of King Alfred’s translation project at the end of the ninth century.[111] This is not to say that the Latin version of Boethius’s work never concerns itself with freedom to act or that the Old English version never addresses freedom of thought, but rather it is a clarification of what type of freedom each text prioritizes. This becomes particularly important because, despite Alfred’s complaining in his Preface to the translation of *Gregory’s Cura Pastoralis* that there is a lack of Latin literacy among the clergy[112] (and as a result, there was a strong need for translation of important texts such as Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy* into Old English), in the later Middle Ages, Latin learning is strong among the clergy and those who are writing on theological matters would have been able to grapple with Boethian ideas in Latin as opposed to the vernacular. If later medieval clergy, like Thomas Aquinas, were working with the Latin version of Boethius, then his

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110 Boethius, “Consolation of Philosophy,” 5.5.55-56.
112 “Swæ cólæn hio wæs ðeðefallenu on Angelkynne ðætte swiðe feawa wæron behionan Humbre þe hiora ðéonu gæðendan on Englisc, oððe fúðum an ærendgewrit of Lædene on Englisc areccan” [“So general was its decay in England that there were very few on this side of the Humber who could understand their rituals in English, or translate a letter from Latin into English”]. Henry Sweet, ed. *King Alfred’s West-Saxon Version of Gregory’s Pastoral Care: With an English Translation, The Latin Text, Notes, and an Introduction* (London: Oxford University Press, 1871-72), 1-2.
original prioritization of freedom of thought would have been what Aquinas was encountering.

Boethius’s ideas on free will particularly influenced the later work of St. Thomas Aquinas, who is one of two major medieval intellectuals\textsuperscript{113} contributing to late medieval conceptions of free will; the other is St. Augustine of Hippo, whose late-fourth- and early-fifth-century writings remained influential even into the following centuries and who was influenced by Plato’s work. Augustine, after converting to Christianity, took on the topic of free will in his \textit{De Libero Arbitrio}, claiming that free will is a gift from God. İlham Dilman, whose survey of free will across history, explains Augustine’s understanding of free will as “our \textit{capacity} to act and choose freely, in other words according to our own rights as individual agents.”\textsuperscript{114} The ideas of Augustine indirectly respond to the classical ideas of Plato who also wrote on free will and who explains that “when the mind is overpowered by evil in the form of lust, meanness or hatred, the person in question does not act freely.”\textsuperscript{115} Although Plato is dealing with the spiritual and moral complexities surrounding the idea of free will, his general belief about a person’s inability to act freely when the mind is overpowered applies well to the use of love magic, which overrides individual free will.

\textsuperscript{113} The work of a third theologian and philosopher, Anselm of Canterbury, is also worth noting here. Anselm is less well-known than Augustine or Aquinas, but he does also address similar matters as these two major figures, including free will. Although Anselm’s thoughts on free will do, at times, seem to align with those of Augustine, his approach to the question of whether free will exists and how it can exist is different. For a comprehensive look at Anselm’s work on the subject, see G. Stanley Kane, \textit{Anselm’s Doctrine of Freedom and the Will}, Texts and Studies in Religion 10 (New York and Toronto: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1981)
\textsuperscript{114} İlham Dilman, \textit{Free Will: An Historical and Philosophical Introduction} (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 73.
\textsuperscript{115} Dilman, \textit{Free Will}, 78.
Augustine of Hippo, who was writing about theological issues in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, was highly influential in crafting church doctrine. Aaron J. Kleist claims that “for the Western church in the Middle Ages, it was Augustine of Hippo who formulated the official position on the issue” of free will and its coexistence with God’s foreknowledge.\footnote{Aaron J. Kleist, \textit{Striving with Grace: Views of Free Will in Anglo-Saxon England} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), ix.} Augustine’s main beliefs on free will were made official doctrine at the Second Council of Orange (held in 529 CE).\footnote{Kleist, \textit{Striving for Grace}, 8.} While it is Augustine’s Christian musings on free will that are most influential, his grappling with the matter began prior to his conversion and he was interested in the question of “volition—the extent to which God and human beings are responsible for human choices” throughout his life, including his time as a Manichaean.\footnote{Kleist, \textit{Striving for Grace}, 4.} Augustine’s ideas of free will admit that human freedom was corrupted by original sin, leaving Adam as the only man who ever “possessed unhindered moral choice,” but argues that this corruption does not inhibit free will.\footnote{Kleist, \textit{Striving for Grace}, 9.} Instead, Augustine posited that even though humans are inclined to choose evil voluntarily, they still have the full capacity to choose good instead—it is their desire that is affected, not their freedom of choice, by original sin; yet, because of that corruption, a person can still choose to do good, but is only able to achieve redemption through choosing God’s grace. While God might inspire a person’s desire, turning their “love of evil (\textit{concupiscencia}) into a love for God (\textit{caritas}),” they remain free to choose between the two.\footnote{Kleist, \textit{Striving for Grace}, 11.} Although direct access to Augustine’s work...
during the early Middle Ages may have been limited, this did not prohibit his ideas, already accepted into church doctrine, from becoming prominent.

St. Augustine’s ideas on free will, and Plato’s to a lesser extent, were influential in the later Middle Ages, but it is St. Thomas Aquinas who was the most prominent contemporary philosophical and theological author writing on free will during this time period. Beyond differing from Augustine, Aquinas also demonstrates a familiarity with Boethius and Aristotle’s work as he engages the works written by each of them. The tentative timeline of Aquinas’s work suggests that his reading of Aristotle occurred concurrently with his writing of *Summa Theologiae*, and Aquinas’s commentaries on Boethius demonstrate a direct engagement with Boethian thought (although many scholars argue Aquinas did not adequately understand Boethius’s points).\(^1\)

Like theologians before him, Aquinas grapples with the apparent conundrum that exists between God’s ability to know of a person’s choice prior to the choice being made and the person’s freedom to make choices. In *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas lays out the reasoning for why anything that God knows must occur: a logical modal basically arguing that something that is known is by definition true, and therefore if God knows something will occur (“the antecedent”) then it is necessary that the thing occur (“the consequent”).\(^2\) Aquinas focuses on the connection between reason and free will to help explain why humans have free will, unlike beasts; he calls this idea the *rational appetite*. In essence, Aquinas


recognizes that while humans and animals both have instinctual reactions, such as fear, the difference is that humans, through their ability to reason, are able to act counter to these instinctual reactions, thus acting by free will. Aquinas, like Plato, addresses the concept of coercion. Dilman explains Aquinas’s thoughts on coercion and free will saying, “it is coercion that excludes the free exercise of the will: ‘coercion and voluntariness are incompatible.’” The basic idea behind Aquinas’s thought is that will must be voluntary, for when an action is committed through coercion, it is the will of someone else that is being exerted through the coerced action. This is the state in which magically-induced love occurs. Love magic compels its victims to act and even feel in certain ways, thus removing their free will (and so excusing them from responsibility).

In his conception of good and evil as they relate to free will, Aquinas breaks in thought from Augustine, putting forth the belief that the intellect is naturally inclined for good because it is a distant echo of God’s goodness: “cujus præsentia in mente ipsius memoria est in mente, et sic memoræ quæ de ipso habetur, intelligentia et etiam voluntas sive amor æquatur” [“His presence in the mind is memory of Him in the mind; thus, intelligence is proportioned to the memory of Him, and will or love is proportioned to this intelligence”]. In Questions 82 and 83 of Summa Theologiae, Aquinas further addresses the intersections of will and intellect and argues that the will desires good and follows the person’s reasoning; therefore, when persons commit evil, it is not because their will desired it

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123 Dilman, Free Will, 94.
but rather because “the evil is proposed to the will as a good” by means of a mistake in the reasoning used. In Question 81, Article III, Aquinas addresses the matter of the sensual appetite (that which the body desires) and whether this appetite obeys the will. He concludes that in humans, unlike animals, it does, explaining that:

Voluntati etiam sujacet appetitus sensitivus quantum ad executionem quæ fit per viam motivam. In aliis enim animalibus statim ad appetitum concupiscibilis et irascibilis sequitur motus; sicut ovis timens lupum statim fugit: quia nonest in eis superior appetitus, qui repugnet. Sed homo non statim movetur secundum appetitum irascibilem et concupiscibilem, sed expectatur imperium voluntatis, quæ est appetitus superior. In omnibus enim potentiis motivis ordinatis, secundum movens non movet nisi virtute primi moventis. Unde appetitus inferior non sufficit movere, nisi appetitus superior consentiat.

[To the will also is the sensitive appetite subject in execution, which is accomplished by the motive power. For in other animals movement follows at once the concupiscible and irascible appetites. For instance the sheep, fearing the wolf, flies at once, because it has no superior counteracting appetite. On the contrary, man is not moved at once according to the irascible and concupiscible appetites; but he awaits the command of the will, which is the superior appetite. For wherever there is order among a number of motive powers, the second moves only by virtue of the first; and so the lower appetite is not sufficient to cause movement, unless the higher appetite consents.]

In this explanation, Aquinas differentiates the animal instinct that drives animals’ behavior following their sensual appetites (such as fear or hunger) from the human ability to act against this appetite based on their will (why we can exhibit characteristics like self-control or bravery, even when they go against our bodily desire to take something or to flee). While the sensual appetite is subject to and not part of free will, in encompassing the bodily desires,

125 Dilman, Free Will, 97.
it is relevant for the matter of love magic because one’s emotional desire (love) as well as one’s physical desire (lust) to be with a particular person would fall under the sensual appetite, and thus would be able to be resisted if that were the will of the person. As will be shown in the subsequent chapters, the use of love magic overrides the will, and thus removes the factor which allows a human (unlike an animal) to act against their sensual appetite.

Furthermore, Aquinas addresses the Will and Free Choice immediately following this, in his Question 83. He asserts that humans do have free choice, and once again compares humans to animals in order to illustrate that although animals may make choices, these choices are not the equivalent free choice that humans can make. Using the example of the sheep that chooses to avoid the wolf, Aquinas explains that this choice is born of the sheep’s nature, not from freedom of choice. Humans, however, can deliberate in order to formulate their choice, thus allowing them to have free choice which originates in the reason and judgement of the decision made. Here Aquinas draws on Augustine’s work in crafting his Reply Obj. I that counters the Objection 1, which is “homo non facit quod vult…homonon est liberi arbitrii” [“man does not what he wills…man has not free choice”]. Aquinas explains that while desires submit to reason, humans are able to resist the appetite. Having made his point that man has free choice, Aquinas soon turns to the question of whether free choice is distinct from the will. Aquinas lays out Aristotle’s position that “voluntas est de fine, election autem de iis quæ sunt ad finem” [“the will regards the end, whereas choice regards the means to the end”] and thus the two are distinct.

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explains that although the two refer to separate acts, they are both part of the same power—the intellectual appetite—because the means and the end are so connected.

While the nuanced understandings of how free will worked in the natural world differed across the work of various philosophers, ancient and medieval, they all share the consistent certainty that people do possess free will and that free will is a good thing. It is this foundational tenet far more than any particular nuanced understanding of how free will works, that is vital for understanding the arguments in the following chapters parsing out the reasons for medieval authors’ attitudes toward love magic in medieval romances.

In chapter two, I examine instances in which magic is used to induce love and argue that in these occurrences, the use of love magic violates the victim’s free will, and is understood as immoral by default, but can be renegotiated as acceptable when the outcome is part of God’s plan and the events involving love magic are divinely endorsed. The chapter analyzes Gottfried von Strassburg’s *Tristan and Isolde*, which contains the most famous example of medieval magically induced love: the love potion the titular characters accidentally consume. Because this narrative presents a case of love inducing magic in which neither of the involved lovers are the source of the magic (Isolde’s mother brews and sends the love potion), it provides a prime example for considering the author’s representation of the morality of love inducing magic without needing to take into account the motives or morality of either lover. The chapter also contrasts other instances of love inducing magic, enacted either through drinks (although not necessarily love potions like that in *Tristan and Isolde*) or through enchantments. Several of these episodes, drawn from Arthurian legends, appear in multiple sources and the chapter engages both *The Vulgate Cycle* and Sir Thomas
Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur*, which often offer different, but significant, elements in their accounts of the same narratives.\(^\text{129}\) I compare the magical drink employed in both versions’ narratives of Lancelot and Elaine to the love potion in *Tristan and Isolde* as well as how the author navigates the issue of the love magic’s moral value. Continuing with Arthurian material, the chapter moves to another instance of magical deception to induce love—the relationship of Uther and Igraine. The progeny of the two Arthurian relationships created through love magic explains how each man’s birth (King Arthur and Galahad) are signs of the divine approval granted to these instances of love inducing magic. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the “Pelleas and Ettarde” episode in Malory, in which the enchantress Nyneve engages in all three functions of love magic; the chapter examines her use of love inducing magic specifically, leaving the other two love magic functions to be revisited in the subsequent chapters of this project.

Chapter three continues the analysis of the “Pelleas and Ettarde” narrative, this time illustrating Nyneve’s magical disruption of love. The chapter examines the use of magic to disrupt or prevent love relationships from occurring and asserts that the morality of this love

disrupting magic is dependent on the magical practitioner’s motivations. I demonstrate that the use of magic to disrupt relationships is generally negatively perceived because it is most often done out of selfish intentions, even when it is performed by one of the involved individuals. It is the intent to cause a disruption of love, and not the magical means of the disruption, that is problematic and results in negative portrayals within the texts. Nyneve’s love disrupting magic evidences this because her motivations are selfless and the textual representation of her love disrupting magic defies the norm and is actually positive. In contrast, the multiple examples of Morgan le Fay’s involvement with love disrupting magic are presented negatively as she employs the magic selfishly, most commonly in attempts to ruin her enemy, Guinevere. Morgan’s endeavors include multiple magically facilitated kidnappings of Lancelot as well as the gift of a magical horn to her brother Arthur (which is foiled and repurposed by Sir Lameroke130 for his own plan to disrupt the relationship of Tristan and Isolde instead). Morgan also applies love disrupting magic in the creation of her Valley of False Lovers after her own lover is unfaithful and she seeks to separate him from his mistress. The chapter illuminates other bad actors in the court of King Mark who work against Tristan and Isolde, such as the dwarf Frocin/Melot, who relies on his divinatory abilities to convince Mark of the treachery of Tristan and Isolde.131 The chapter culminates in the complicated case of Merlin and Nyneve in Le Morte Darthur, in which Nyneve resorts to magic to interfere with Merlin’s love for her in what appears as self-defense against his unwanted pursuits. I argue that despite the seemingly acceptability that this instance of love

\[130\] Malory alternates between two spellings of the knight’s name, “Lameroke” (which I employ) and “Lamerok.” All quotations reflect the original spelling in the source quoted. 
\[131\] Béroul and Gottfried von Strassburg have different names for the dwarf, but in both versions, it is a dwarf with some amount of magical skill and access to King Mark’s confidence who schemes against the lovers in conjunction with a jealous courtier.
disrupting magic ought to have, Nyneve remains vilified because not only does she do this out of self-interest, but in doing so, deprives the Arthurian court of the important advantage Merlin offers.

Narrative instances of love disrupting magic often also grapple with the opposite function of love magic—facilitating love. Chapter four considers the ways in which magic is used to facilitate (but not induce) love and how the authorial treatment of this function of love magic differs from that of the love-inducing magic discussed in chapter two, instead relying on the practitioners’ motivations as the determinant of the magic’s morality as with love disrupting magic. The chapter examines two ways in which love facilitating magic is often enacted—through performed magic (such as enchantments) and magical objects. The chapter wraps up the “Pelleas and Ettarde” episode explored in the previous chapters, illustrating how Nyneve’s prior applications of magic contribute to the facilitation of her own relationship with Pelleas at the end of the narrative. The chapter then establishes the more problematic occurrences of love facilitating magic, first through the case of Viviane and Merlin in which Viviane entraps her lover, Merlin, to keep him to herself and then considering the more positively portrayed elements of Morgan le Fay’s Valley of False Lovers (discussed in chapter three for it love disrupting magic). Looking at one of Morgan’s kidnappings of Lancelot, I illustrate Morgan’s attempts to secure his affections for herself through magical methods. The chapter complicates this narrative episode with a less well-known sorceress, Hallewes, who, like Morgan, wants Lancelot for herself, but who is willing to take far more extreme measures to have him. I query the common scholarly perception of Hallewes as having a sexual fetish for necrophilia and argue that her necrophilic intentions for Lancelot stem from desperation to have him however she can and not from a sexual
preference. The chapter turns from Hallewes’s disturbing attempts on Lancelot to the (presumably false) accusations of love magic placed upon Guinevere. Important sections include the rumors mentioned in the text and their purporting of Guinevere’s use of magic to keep Lancelot’s love and loyalty before demonstrating the unlikeliness of the rumors holding any truth within the narrative.

Throughout this dissertation, I display the ways that love magic and free will are in harmony or tension with each other and how the authorial attitudes toward the various functions and iterations of love magic reveal high and late medieval social understandings and attitudes about love magic and its morality. I show that love inducing magic is understood as wrong unless approved by God and illustrate that authors’ discomfort with love inducing magic is a result of its violation of free will. I establish that the other two functions of love magic—to disrupt and to facilitate love—are morally evaluated on the intentions with which they are enacted rather than on their effects. As modern society grapples with conversations surrounding affirmative consent for sexual and romantic encounters and even moves toward the possibility of a modern, pharmaceutical equivalent of a love potion, \textsuperscript{132} examinations of the morality and theological implications of love magic in medieval romances can have profound ramifications for how we think about and navigate many of these same subjects today.

Chapter 2

Making Love Is Magical: Love Inducing Magic
In speaking about the function and tone of medieval romances, Laine E. Doggett writes that these narratives “composed with entertainment as the goal…never take on accusatory tones toward practices that theologians or jurists might condemn. They do not concern themselves with moral assessments of the empirical activities shown or depict other characters who take such an interest.”\(^{133}\) This quotation, which appeared in the previous chapter as well, is worth revisiting here because this chapter, which examines multiple instances of love inducing magic, demonstrates exactly how romances do engage “with moral assessments” of both magical practice and those who participate in it. Medieval romances tend to incorporate and accept adulterous fin’amor and the use of magic, but I argue that instances of magically induced love are presented with a sense of authorial discomfort connected to cultural beliefs about free will and love magic’s violation of that free will. Romances are intended as entertainment, and thus they enjoy great leeway in their treatment of normally problematic actions, but they also follow the medieval literary trend of delectatio et utilitas, in which texts are meant to both “delight” and “instruct.”\(^{134}\) This discomfort with love magic demonstrates that there remain some moral beliefs, such as the medieval concept of free will, that medieval romance authors seem resistant to challenging. When free will is violated through the use of love magic, authors use either an implicit moral condemnation of it or a theological excuse for it in the form of divine approval. In instances


\(^{134}\) Horace articulated this framing of literature as instructional and it was employed in the Middle Ages as a justification for pleasurable fiction works, including by Chaucer. For more on delectatio et utilitas as it relates to medieval fiction, see D. H. Green, *The Beginnings of Medieval Romance: Fact and Fiction, 1150-1220* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), particularly pages 26-34; Mary E. Shaner, “Instruction and Delight: Medieval Romances as Children’s Literature,” *Poetics Today* 13, no. 1 (1992): 5-15; and Joachim Suchomski, ‘Delectatio’ und ‘utilitas’: Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis mittelalterlicher kolmischer Literatur (Berlin and Munich: Francke Verlag, 1975).
when magic successfully induces love, the romance’s author must indicate when the relationship is divinely endorsed, in order to signal to the reader that the application of love magic should be accepted rather than condemned. When the magical attempt to induce love fails, no authorial clarification is necessary, since the failure of the attempt proves it was not God’s will. Doggett explains that the issue of magic was concerning to medieval theologians and legal authorities “not on the grounds that it was irrational or in opposition to medicine. They were worried about good and evil.” \(^{135}\) It is this particular concern that would make love magic so problematic as violating someone’s free will (a divine gift to humanity) would fall solidly on the “evil” side of the dichotomy. Romances, although functioning as spaces in which many social ideas could be played with and tested in the safe realm of imagination, remain more restrained in their dispensation of social and moral norms about violating free will, relying on authorial reader direction when the use of love-inducing magic is meant to be understood as acceptable. This *sympathieilenkung*, or direction for the reader, is provided through the text’s signaling of divine approval for the outcome of the love magic.

In this chapter, I analyze specific instances of magically induced love in medieval romances, including the love potion consumed by Tristan and Isolde and the magical influences over Igraine by Uther Pendragon, Lancelot by Elaine of Corbenic, and Bohort by King Brangoire’s daughter, the latter three resulting in conceptions of religiously and culturally important men. I also examine the use of love magic by Nyneve\(^{136}\) in Malory’s *Le


\(^{136}\) Nyneve’s name is presented in *Morte Darthur* with various spellings, including Nyneve and Nynive (sometimes translated into modern language editions as Nimue). She is most commonly named once and thereafter referred to as the Lady of the Lake or the Damsel of the Lake within the given narrative episode. For the sake of consistency and clarity—since other ladies and damsels of the lake also appear within Arthurian romances—I refer to her as
My analysis of these instances reveals the negative authorial representation of love inducing magic, connected to its violation of free will. I also illuminate the rhetorical and narrative strategies authors employed to signal when love inducing magic was made morally acceptable through divine approval. This exposes the ways in which medieval authors were exploring concepts of free will, morality, and magic, and what types of behaviors they were implicitly communicating as acceptable and unacceptable to their audience.

While legal charges of practicing love magic were historically gender-biased, these five literary instances appear to allow for men or women to be the victims of love magic. In four of the five instances, however, it is women who produce the magic, even when they are not one of the parties in the relationship, revealing that there still may be some connection of love magic with the feminine in these texts. Doggett’s study of love magic within five Old French romances notes the particular gendering of practitioners of love magic. In her selected texts, it is only women who are presented as the “empirics (that is, those without formal training),” which she uses to build her argument about “women’s acquisition of specialized knowledge and their application of it in feudal marriage politics, in which their voices and their desires were easily muted.”

The various examples in this chapter are generally

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138 See Stephen Greenblatt, “Culture,” *Critical Terms for Literary Study* 2nd ed., eds. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 225-31, for more on the idea that authors “implicitly enforced” socially acceptable behavior and beliefs to their audience through “praising and blaming” within their texts.
consistent with this trend of love magic being tied to women, as well as the utilization of love magic to exert power over situations the magical practitioner is otherwise unable to control.

These instances of love magic in medieval romances serve as spaces of contention between the concepts of personal free will and divine predetermination. In general, free will is the winner, but specific instances reveal that divine predetermination can, and does, override free will when needed—although the subordination of one individual’s free will for divinely ordained purposes must still come about through the freely made choices of other individuals. In these specific instances, love magic is indicated by the author to have been divinely endorsed; in other words, some indication has been presented that God approves of the relationship (or its outcome), and as a result, the use of love magic to bring it about. The divine endorsement of love magic will be more specifically examined in the analyses of the examples in this chapter, demonstrating the moral prioritization of the divine will over human will.

Tristan and Isolde

Possibly the best-known instance of love magic in medieval literature is the love potion in Tristan and Isolde. The literary work Tristan and Isolde is commonly cited in reference to love magic and has had a plethora of literary criticism produced about it, some of which discusses the love potion drunk by the two characters. The scholarship on the

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140 Sigmund Eisner, The Tristan Legend: A Study in Sources (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1969), has focused exclusively on exploring the sources for the Tristan and Isolde legend and considers possible sources for the love-potion in the narrative (102). Comparing the narrative to previous literary legends, Eisner argues that the love potion “has a dual ancestry” in which the magical aspect is drawn from the “love spot” tradition in which “heroines fell in love unexplainedly before meeting their heroes,” and the potion format comes from the “sleeping draft tradition” (102). The potion in Tristan and Isolde is unique,
various versions of this text is abundant. For an example of how scholars have handled the subject of love magic in the text, see Orlanda S. H. Lie, who discusses how the love potion might have been viewed by a medieval audience. Using a recipe for a love potion which cites the love of Tristan and Isolde as its promise of efficacy, Lie argues that, unlike modern scholars who tend to understand the love potion symbolically, a medieval audience would have taken it as a reality—a substance with actual efficacy, just like the potion made by the recipe, which references Tristan and Isolde’s love: “Met andere woorden, het beoogde middeleeuwse publiek zal de liefdesdrank in het Tristan-verhaal allesbehalve figuurlijk hebben opgevat: voor dit publiek was de liefdesdrank een concrete gegeven, dat met de werkelijkheid overeenkwam, en geen symbool van eeuwige liefde” [In other words, the intended medieval audience would have interpreted the love potion in the Tristan story far from figuratively: for this audience, the love potion was a concrete fact, which corresponded to reality, and not a symbol of eternal love]. Interestingly, that recipe promises love between the two potion drinkers, but does not mention marriage. A second recipe Lie provides as an example of love magic, though, is aimed at strengthening the marriage relationship which, while historically a less common function of love potions, was the

however, because of its unintentional consumption by the two lovers and as such they are both victims of the magic with neither lover as the perpetrator (102). In discussing the origins of the love-potion and the lack of guilt among the lovers for its use, Eisner cites the previous work of Gertrude Schoepperle (see note 149) who adds additional background for source influences on the love-potion element of the narrative.

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141 Rosemary Picozzi, *A History of Tristan Scholarship* (Berne and Frankfurt: Herbert Lang & Co. Ltd., 1971). This expansive volume was published almost fifty years ago, so it does not include the great deal of scholarship which has since been written. Although the title of Picozzi’s scholarship review suggests that it considers all Tristan scholarship, in actuality, it covers only the scholarship on Gottfried von Strassburg’s *Tristan and Isolde*.

intended use of the potion in *Tristan and Isolde*. Sidney M. Johnson, although approaching the study of the love potion within historical context, the manuscript history, and the legends of the *Tristan and Isolde* narrative, agrees that it is reasonable to treat the love potion in historical context, namely that medieval readers would accept the love potion as a real item, not just a symbol.\(^{143}\) He contends, after examining the narrator’s commentary about the love potion and the actions and words of Tristan and Isolde following their discovery of what they drank, that although the potion may be the cause of their love, the lovers actively take responsibility and accept the love.\(^{144}\) Rosemary Thee Morewedge examines the love potion within a study of the magical gifts exchanged in Gottfried von Strassburg’s version of the narrative, arguing that the gift gifting marks a symbolic “move away from magic” in the relationship.\(^{145}\) Morewedge also argues explicitly that the potion’s magic violates the lovers’ free will, claiming:

> Magical intervention presupposes the external control of individuals affected by magical agents without their knowledge or consent. Experiencing the effect of magic implies a lack of personal agency... When affected by magic, one’s individual will and ability to exert self-determination or self-control are effectively rendered null and void as one is forced to submit to an external power.\(^{146}\)

This perception of the potion’s magic as violating the lovers’ free will is then used as a foundation for her argument about the later rejection of magic in the text through the exchange of gifts. I agree with Morewedge about this premise regarding the controlling

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144 Johnson, “This Drink Will be the Death of You,” 98-99.


nature of love magic, and my analysis of the text in this chapter illustrates this violation and the authorial representation of it. Applying the medieval understanding of free will that was examined in chapter one—the ability to act against one’s own desires—I demonstrate that the potion removes that capacity from Tristan and Isolde.

The legend of Tristan and Isolde was reworked by several medieval authors, sometimes as a solitary piece and sometimes as a reference within a larger work (usually in the Arthurian canon), but the most studied is the thirteenth-century German version by Gottfried von Strassburg. This version also delves the deepest into exploring characters’ emotional states, and it focuses more on the romance than on Tristan’s martial prowess. Other versions of the Tristan narrative include the late-twelfth-century French versions of Béroul (Le Roman de Tristan) and Thomas of Britain, Eilhart von Oberger’s late-twelfth-century Tristrant, Marie de France’s late-twelfth-century lai “Chevrefoil,” Sir Thomas Malory’s incorporation of the narrative into his fifteenth-century Le Morte Darthur, and various anonymous works, including the Middle English Sir Tristem (c. 1300) and the French Tristen en Prose (mid-thirteenth century and a key source for Sir Thomas Malory).¹⁴⁷

Although the numerous versions of the legend all feature the love potion, their accounts of its

¹⁴⁷ Neil Thomas, Tristan in the Underworld: A Study of Gottfried von Strassburg’s Tristan together with the Tristan of Thomas, Studies in Mediaeval Literature 10 (Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 44-46, wrote a comparative study of the Tristan narratives of Gottfried von Strassburg and Thomas of Britain in which he addresses the love philter. He points out that the potion is less directly at fault in Thomas of Britain’s version which explicitly begins the couple’s attraction prior to their consumption of the philter. Linking the couple to the historical pairing of Heloise and Abelard through Tristan’s tutorage of Isolde in music, Thomas argues, unconvincingly, that “because Isolde’s musical accomplishments are the result of Tristan’s tuition we can at least imagine the two to be linked by a cultural bond, if not yet by a physical embrace.” As support for this claim, Thomas offers the idea that women were expected to “submit to the instruction of her consort” and observes that the first description of Isolde articulates her artistic talents rhetorically blended with her physical beauty.
duration do vary amongst the different authors; particularly, Thomas of Britain’s and Gottfried’s versions shift away from the tradition in Béroul and Eilhart von Oberg’s versions of the potion lasting three or four years. The original version has Tristan and Isolde parting out of shame for their sins after the spell wares off, but Thomas’s version and the *Prose Tristan* “recast this account in order to avoid making the lovers’ separation proceed from a sense of sin.”

The various iterations of the love story present slightly different descriptions of the love potion and its effects, but it is Gottfried von Strassburg’s version that provides the romantically focused take on the love potion. The history of the scholarly debate over the love potion in Gottfried’s version is overviewed by Johnson, who surmises that, although the nineteenth century took little interest in the potion, the debate was sparked in the twentieth century by Friedrich Ranke’s study on the *Minnegrotte*, which is unique in Gottfried’s version. Following Ranke’s work, was the 1957 study by H. Furstner that examined the argument that Tristan and Isolde were in love before consuming the potion and concludes that “dass Gottfried alles unterlassen hat, was uns den Eindruck geben könnte, Tristan und

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149 Whitehead, “The Early Tristan Poems,” 137. This theory comes from French medievalist Joseph Bédier who claims, based on his comparison of narrative elements across different manuscript versions, that this shift in the spell’s duration in the legend to have occurred shortly after the Norman Conquest, but other scholars have argued for a later date (137-38). Gertrude Schöpperle traces this shift to a later date in *Tristan and Isol: A Study in the Sources of the Romance*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt and London: Joseph Baer & Co.; David Nutt, 1913).
Isolde hätten sich schon vor dem Augenblick, da sie den Minnetrank zu sich nahmen, geliebt” [that Gottfried has omitted everything that could give the impression that Tristan and Isolde had already loved one another before the moment when they drank the potion].

Arthur T. Hatto arrives at the same conclusion from his examination of the “Love’s falcon” imagery used to describe Isolde. In the following decade, Peter Ganz argues that the potion “is the cause and the beginning of the love between Tristan and Isolde,” a conclusion which falls in line with the historical reality of belief in magic which has the power to “turn hate into love.” Later scholars focus on the love potion as simply the catalyst for a moment of “chance,” which renders the question of pre-existing love between the characters irrelevant. While most scholars followed in the initial path of Ranke in interpreting the potion as having symbolic meaning, Otfried Ehrismann breaks from this tradition in his argument that the medieval popular belief in magic would allow for a literal interpretation of the potion by medieval readers, who would be familiar with it. He asserts that in their extensive ascribing symbolic meanings to it, previous German scholars had stripped the potion of its magical quality. It is from similar interests to those of Ehrismann, and with the same general mindset, to consider the potion as the magical item it is presented as, which I formulate and conduct my own examination of its function—one that is magical in nature.

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151 Ranke, “Die Allegorie de Minnegrotte,” 34.” Quoted and translated by Johnson, “This Drink Will be the Death of You,” 100.
153 Johnson, “This Drink Will be the Death of You,” 102.
154 Johnson, “This Drink Will be the Death of You,” 103.
Recognizing that medieval readers would have perceived the magic in literature as symbolic within the narrative, my argument focuses on showing the greater complexity of the medieval audience’s understanding of magic—that medieval readers simultaneously could also connect a literary appearance of magic to their beliefs about the realities of magic in their society.

Although much of this chapter will draw on scenes from *Le Morte Darthur* by Sir Thomas Malory, his inclusion of Tristan and Isolde only briefly describes the love potion and does so with a minimal amount of detail. He limits his address of the drink’s magical nature to the fact that it caused the two to love each other all their lives. He also skips the potion’s creation completely, and although it is Isolde’s mother who provides it, the actual source of the potion is completely omitted. Gottfried, compared to earlier authors and Malory, seems highly interested in the love potion beyond its role as a plot device, and as a result, more information and detail is provided about the love potion as it is created, consumed, and takes effect. Gottfried gives more attention to the skill required to create the potion, but he does leave out procedural and ingredient information that earlier authors specified.  

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156 Béroul tells of the potion saying “du vin de quoi il burent...li lovendrins, li vin herbez” [“you have heard about the wine they drank...the potion, the herbed wine”] *The Romance of Tristran*, ed. and trans. Norris J. Lacy, Garland Library of Medieval Literature, series A, vol. 36, (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1989), ll. 2133; 2137. The Norse *Tristrams Saga* of Brother Robert seems to be based on that of Thomas of Britain’s version in which details of the potion’s creation are absent from the surviving fragments; however *Tristrams Saga* provides a description of herbal ingredients in the potion that is similar to Béroul’s: “En dróttning görði einn leyniligan drykk inniliga af margskonar blómstrum, grósum ok listugum vélum, ok görði svá ástfenginn, at enginn lifandi maðr, sá er af drakk, má við haldast at unna þeirri konu, sem af drakk með hánum, ámeðan hann líði” [The queen meticulously prepared a secret potion out of many kinds of flowers, herbs, and magical things that made people fall so madly in love that no man alive who drank of it could resist loving his whole life long the woman who drank of it with him.] Quotation and translation from *Norse Romance I: The Tristan Legend* ed. Marianne Kalinke, ed. and trans. Peter Jorgensen (Cambridge, UK: D. S.
of the potion tells both of the intent of the potion and the skill required to craft it. Isolde’s mother, of the same name, who brews the potion.

Die wile und sich ouch Tristan
mit sinen lantegesellen dan
bereite unde berihtete,
die wile so betihtete
Isot diu wise künigin
in ein glasevezzelin
einen tranc von minnen,
mit also cleinen sinnen
uf geleit und vor bedaht,
mit solher crefte vollebraht:
mit sweme sin ieman getranc,
den muoser ane sinen danc

Brewer, 1999), 118-119. Both versions suggest the role of natural, herbal ingredients in the love potion, but neither denies its magical qualities.

The question of the potion’s intent in the Gottfried von Strassburg version of the narrative has been previously addressed in Hugo Bekker, Gottfried von Strassburg’s Tristan: Journey through the Realm of Eros, Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture 29 (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1987). Bekker’s commentary on the love-potion is brief, but compares the intent and results of the potion, and he argues that the intent is two-fold—to ensure the positive aspects of a loving marriage (this aligns with the historical use of magic for marital success of which Otfried writes) and to guard against the potential harms of love (165). Bekker also considers the manner in which Brangaene is given charge of the potion for the trip and is provided with instructions for its use. He relieves her of any blame in the outcome, and claims that in addition to her inexperience, the secretive manner in which the instructions are conveyed to her does not provide an explanation that would allow her to grasp the full significance of the potion’s power and danger (165). Bekker also considers whether the potion falls within the realm of courtliness, questioning whether “the fact that no one, not even the two for whom the potion is meant, is ever to know of its existence, does it imply that there is something uncourtly adhering to the potion?” (165). Beyond the secrecy of the potion, Bekker also draws on Brangeane’s negative reactions to the potion as evidence that it is outside of courtly acceptability.

For more on Isolde the Queen’s role as creator of the potion, see Christopher R. Clason, “The Magic of Love: Queen Isolde, the Magician Clinschor, and “Seeing” in Gottfried’s Tristan and Wolfram’s Parzival,” Magic and Magicians in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Time: The Occult in Premodern Sciences, Medicine, Literature, Religion, and Astrology, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2017), 291-314.

The phrase “tranc von minnen” translates literally as drink from/of love, offering an interesting possibility that this could be a pun on the idea that the potion is made out of love, both literally and metaphorically—the love of Queen Isolde for her daughter. This could also be a possible reference to Queen Isolde getting her knowledge from Frau Minne, the personification of courtly love in Middle High German minnesang literature.
[While Tristan and his compatriots were making ready, Isolde, the prudent Queen, was brewing in a vial a love-drink so subtly devised and prepared, and endowed with such powers, that with whomever any man drank it he had to love her above all things, whether he wished it or no, and she love him alone. They would share one death and one life, one sorrow and one joy.]\(^{160}\)

The only explicit description of Queen Isolde here is that she is “wise” [“prudent”], a term that suggests not only that she is intelligent as a healer and magical practitioner, but that she is a political strategist looking ahead and working to guarantee the success of the political arrangement that is her daughter’s marriage to King Mark of Cornwall. While it may be Queen Isolde’s emotion for her daughter that drives her to make the potion, it is also pragmatic both for her daughter’s happiness in the arranged marriage and also for the bond the marriage is meant to forge between Ireland and Cornwall. “Wise” is a positive characteristic, and so it appears that the intended use and function of the potion is at least somewhat acceptable in the narrator’s eyes. However, the verbs that describe the action of the potion-making reveal Queen Isolde’s skill as a potion-maker and the somewhat questionable nature of the deception surrounding the potion.

Although use of the potion (had all gone according to plan) would have been pragmatically beneficial, the deception surrounding how it was to be administered suggests that morally, it may have been less than desirable since the two intended participants may not

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have been willing to consent to drinking it had they the choice. The phrase “mit also cleinen sinnen” [“subtly”] holds dual meanings, both of which come through in the context of the potion-making. The first meaning, that there is a precision to something that makes it indescribable; this not only hints at the highly skilled nature of the Queen in potion-making, but also sets the reader up for how effective the potion is at creating love, even when administered to the wrong recipients.161 The sentence structure sets up a causal relationship between the subtlety of the potion and the strength of its effects, which are described as fairly ironclad. This adverbial description is positioned to modify two grammatically conjoined verbs—“uf geleit” [“devised”] and “vor bedaht” [“prepared”]. These verbs also give us minute insight into the magical practice of the Queen. That the potion was both subtly devised and subtly prepared implies that the Queen is not simply following a recipe for the potion, but is planning it, potentially determining its composition based on her knowledge of various magical ingredients; in essence, she is a magical chef rather than a cook.

The second implication of this description is that an action is being completed in an indirect or undetected manner, which often carries the connotation of deceit.162 Although the

161 Historically, love magic was often representational, tying its effects to an intended target through something of the person’s (for example a hair or nail clipping. Not all love magic required this though, and the love potion in Tristan and Isolde must be consumed in order to alter one’s desires and emotions, so it can be assumed that the potion’s efficacy likely would not have been impacted by who drank it.

162 The use of “subtly” in Gentry’s translation aligns with other editions’ understanding of this description of the brewing. Reinhold Bechstein’s footnote gloss of line 11440 addresses both “kleine adj., heir: fein, genau, scharf” and “mit kl. Sinnen, mit Scharfsinn.” Gottfried von Strassburg, Gottfried’s von Strassburg Tristan, ed. Reinhold Bechstein, vol. 7 (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1891), 45, n. 11440. The modern German gloss “Scharfsinn” can be translated into English as “subtly,” as Gentry does, or it can be translated to focus more explicitly on the intellectual aspect, such as August Closs’s translated gloss of the line as “with ingenuity,” which retains the creative and innovative implications of Queen Isolde’s brewing although it deemphasizes the secretive nature of her actions. Gottfried von
sentence in full seems to embrace the first meaning of the word more directly, the second meaning is revealed in the subsequent passage, in which Queen Isolde entrusts the potion to Brangäne and warns her to guard it, make sure that only the two intended individuals drink it, and most pointedly, “sich, daz es uf der erde / ieman innen werde” [“that absolutely no one gets to hear of it”]. This command demonstrates that the secrecy of this potion’s use is of utmost importance. Although the Queen does not extrapolate on the reasons for the urgent secrecy, we can logically consider two major scenarios that she is hoping to avoid if other people were to know of the potion: 1. they would obtain and use it for themselves or 2. one or both of the intended recipients would refuse to consume the potion, thus thwarting the plan.

Beyond what the passage divulges about the potion’s maker, it makes clear the power of the potion and its ability to override a person’s free will. The potion was “mit solher crefte vollebraht” [“endowed with such powers”] that both of its drinkers would be forced into the action of loving one another. Here, “solher” [“such”] is not only specifying the type of power the potion held but is being applied as an amplifying term to emphasize the strength of that power. The lines “mit sweme sin ieman getranc, / den muoser ane sinen danc / vor allen dingen meinen” [“that with whomever any man drank it he had to love her above all things, whether he wished it or no”] make clear that the man who consumes this potion will not get a choice in loving the woman who consumed it with him. The phrasing of these first two lines

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163 Names will appear as they do in the text being discussed or quoted; however, when discussed as part of another scholar’s work, names will appear as they do in that scholar’s work has presented them (for example, Bekker’s spelling as Brangaene—see note 157).

implies a lack of choice for the man, an implication which is confirmed in the final of the three lines which articulates the lack of control he retains. Beyond the induction of the man’s love, the love’s intensity is also controlled by the potion as the man must “vor allen dingen meinen” [“love her above all things”], thus ensuring that the woman will be his first priority. This aspect would be important since the love potion is designed by Isolde’s mother to ensure her happiness in an arranged marriage, and perhaps her safety as well, for if the intended drinker, her husband-to-be, King Mark, did consume the potion, Isolde would become his most beloved, not only among people, but higher than any object as well. This would not only position Isolde in a place of extreme power in the court, beyond what her position as a queen would be, but would place her in the king’s heart, above even his kingdom.

It is not just the man who is affected by the potion though; the woman is also subject to its effects, which include the induction of love for her fellow potion-drinker, but also forces emotional monogamy. Unlike many cases of courtly love in literature, where a noble woman is married but secretly loves a knight, the potion would force the woman to “er da wider in einen” [“love him alone”]. This insurance of loyalty to her husband would have also been of pragmatic importance, since King Mark was likely to have been significantly older than Isolde and it would not be unreasonable or uncommon to expect a young woman to be more attracted to the young knights of the court than a king far older than herself. By

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165 Several scholars have addressed the way in which the love potion is contrasted in the narrative with the true love story of Tristan’s parents, Riwalin and Blanscheflur, who experienced immediate, non-magically induced love. Wolf characterizes this pairing of the relationships in the larger narrative as an argument for the idea of magic as “primitive” and true love as “enlightenment.” Alois Wolf, “Humanism in the High Middle Ages: The Case of Gottfried’s Tristan,” in A Companion to Gottfried von Strassburg’s “Tristan,” ed. Will Hasty (New York: Camden House, 2003), 23-54; here 28. Danielle Buschinger, in “Gottfried’s
incorporating the woman’s marital fealty into the potion, Queen Isolde removes the free will her daughter would have had to engage in extramarital affairs. As it was, because of the accidental consumption of the potion by Tristan and Isolde instead of Mark and Isolde, this specific caveat was highly problematic because Isolde was forced into loving Tristan and prevented from developing any love for her husband King Mark. The failure of the potion, not in its efficacy, but in completing its intended purpose, seems to critique the practice of love magic despite the positive aims Queen Isolde had when creating it, and also highlights the problem of arranged marriages and the lack of power women had in them. The text’s condemnation centers on the magic, not on its creator, as is apparent through a close examination of the narrator’s language about the potion and its effects—the narrator’s condemnation falls on the potion, not on Queen Isolde for its creation.

Several choices are taken away from the two who would consume the potion; first, whom they will love, second, how deeply they will love, and then whether they will remain loyal to that lover. Although the actions the two lovers take may be made with free will, their

Adaptation of the Story of Riwalin & Blanscheflur,” A Companion to Gottfried von Strassburg’s “Tristan,” ed. Will Hasty (New York: Camden House, 2003), 73-86; here 77, similarly contends that the introduction of love to Riwalin and Blanscheflur transforms them from individuals into one entity, and that this is evidence both couples, through Gottfried’s use of “the alternating syntactic interlocking of names, which suggests that the lovers do not exist as separate individuals, but rather as a unity.” Tristan and Isolde are described with this interlocking syntax only after they have drunk the potion. Buschinger proffers that the two love plots are antithetical both in the contrast between true love/love potion and marriage/adultery (82-3). Ruthemarie Mitsch, “The Other Isolde,” Tristania 15 (1994): 75-83, considers the role of the second Isolde (Isolde of the White Hands), whom Tristan marries. She compares the two relationships, characterizing Tristan’s marriage as “unrequited, mundane love” compared to the “extraordinary love of Tristan and Isolde,” as does Neil Thomas, “Duplicity and Duplexity: The Isolde of the White Hands Sequence,” in A Companion to Gottfried von Strassburg’s “Tristan,” ed. Will Hasty (New York: Camden House, 2003), 183-201. Thomas argues the second Isolde represents Tristan’s “rather calculated attempt to shoehorn his emotional affairs into a state of normalcy” (190).
emotions for one another and inability to stop loving each other is outside of their control. Although Gottfried’s narrator seems to have a somewhat indulgent view of the potion in its intended function, the description provided when it is consumed displays a far more condemning tone. For example, immediately before the potion is drunk, the reader gets a sense of the impending doom through the narrator’s epithets for the potion. The passage in which the potion is accidentally discovered makes clear that its effects ultimately were to be negative for the two lovers who unknowingly consumed it:

Dereinez sprach: ‘feht, hie statwin in disem vezzeline.’  
nein, ez was niht mit wine,  
doch ez ime gelich were:  
ez was diu wernde swære,  
diu endelose herzenot,\textsuperscript{166}  
von der si beide lagen tot.  
nu was aber ir daz unrekant:  
si stuont uf und gie hin zehant,  
da daz tranc und daz glas verborgen unde behalten was.

[‘Look,’ said one of them, ‘here is some wine in this little bottle.’ No, it held no wine, much as it resembled it. It was their lasting sorrow, their never-ending anguish, of which at last they died! But the child\textsuperscript{167} was not to know that. She rose and went at once to where the draught had been hidden in its vial.]\textsuperscript{168}

The epithets employed by the author suggest the inherent nature of the potion is to cause suffering. Terms like “swære” [“sorrow”] and “herzenot” [“anguish”] re-name the contents

\textsuperscript{166} The translation of “herzenot” as sorrow, while accurate, does not fully capture the nuance of the term’s meaning which alludes more specifically to sorrow or anguish of the heart. “Hertze” is literally “heart” and “not” can mean “distress,” “hardship,” “misery,” or “affliction.” The compounding of these terms foreshadows the emotional nature of the lovers’ impending suffering.

\textsuperscript{167} The German translates literally as “she,” so this characterization of Isolde as a “child” is an editorialization by the translator that ascribes an immaturity of age and/or experience to Isolde that is not necessarily indicated in the original text.

\textsuperscript{168} Gottfried von Strassburg, \textit{Tristan und Isold}, ll. 11670-11680; Gentry, \textit{Tristran and Isolde}, 153-54.
of the vial and provide foreshadowing of the unhappy ending of the lovers’ relationship. Unlike in some other versions of *Tristan and Isolde*, in which the potion is consumed knowingly as a rebellious, free choice by the pair, in Gottfried’s version, Tristan and Isolde are unaware of the vial’s true contents, as are all others in the ship’s room. The only two people who know of the potion at this point in the narrative are Queen Isolde, who made the potion, and Brangäne, to whom the potion was entrusted.

This completely accidental consumption of the potion leads to a situation in which the normal literary use of magic to test or judge a character does not seem to apply since there is no conscious interaction with magic, no choice to be made for or against its consumption. Rather, both Tristan and Isolde become victims to the potion’s effects and lose self-control over their emotions. Schoepperle argues that the lovers are both victims of the potion and positions the potion within a Celtic tradition of love potions evidenced in “Old Irish law and medical tracts.” She also provides cultural and historical context for how the potion might be understood, explaining that twelfth-century marriages in France involved a tradition in which “it was part of the wedding ceremony to offer a drink to the couple after consummation of the marriage;” this was done by the wedding party and family of the bride and groom. This cultural connection offers an interesting parallel to the intended purpose of the love potion (to be drunk by Isolt and King Mark to ensure a loving marriage).

Sweeney, as noted in chapter one, makes the argument that magic in medieval romances “is used to achieve a similar purpose across the range of texts under discussion, that is, evaluation of the characters’ values, identities or moral beliefs.” She explains that

the magic is deployed as a test for characters, and those who fail against or with magic are revealed to have moral flaws or failings while those who are successful can be understood as good and morally upright. This argument is applicable for instances in which the character engages actively with or against magic. However, when the magical nature of an object is disguised from those interacting with it, such as Tristan and Isolde’s unknowing consumption of the potion, an additional complication is presented. It is possible for characters to unknowingly engage with magic as part of a moral test, and the characters can still be morally evaluated for the choices they make while engaged with the magic. This is not the case for Tristan and Isolde, however, because they lack free will and are rendered unable to behave according to their self-generated desires, so no moral judgement of their behavior can be made. It is the virulence of the potion that overrides their free will and prevents them from having the option to act in moral (non-adulterous) ways. The blamelessness of the lovers, having been manipulated by others into drinking the potion, does not prevent their suffering the consequences of the magic though. Although the lovers are unable to be morally judged because their actions are not their own, the narrator does place a moral condemnation on the love inducing magic—the potion. It is important to distinguish between suffering, which can happen to anyone regardless of behavior or deservedness, and condemnation, which is a moral judgement of someone or something as wrong or immoral. Condemnations are communicated in a text through the negative presentation of the person or thing condemned, and negative descriptions given by the narrator, such as the potion receives, signal the condemnation to the text’s audience.

The narrator in *Tristan and Isolde* does not signal any wrongdoing by each of the two lovers and he presents them as blameless victims who suffer through no fault of their own.
The narrator hones in on the potion as immoral and indicates this opinion to the audience through his description of the drink’s consumption, which is littered with negative epithets for the potion, such as “ouch der werlde unmuoze” [“arch-disturber of tranquility”] and “aller herzen lagærin” [“waylayer of all hearts”]:

Nu daz diu maget unde der man,
Isot unde Tristan,
den tranc getrunken beide, sa
was ouch der werlde unmuoze da,
Minne, aller herzen lagærin,
und sleich zir beider herzen in.
e sis ie wurden gewar,
do stiez sir sigevanen dar
und zoch si beide in ir gewalt:
si wurden ein und einvalt,
die zwei und zwivalt waren e;
si zwei enwaren do nieme
widerwertic under in:
Isote haz der sas do hin.

[Now when the maid and the man, Isolde and Tristan, had drunk the draught, in an instant that arch-disturber of tranquility was there, Love waylayer of all hearts, and she had stolen in! Before they were aware of it she had planted her victorious standard in their two hearts and bowed them beneath her yoke. They who were two and divided now became one and united. No longer were they at variance: Isolde’s hatred was gone.]

The actions that the personified draught takes are notably dominant (as well as feminine—interesting since much historical love magic was associated with women) and forces the two lovers into submission. The instantaneous effect of the potion that is described demonstrates that the love produced by the potion is indeed a magically induced love and not one that grew naturally or incrementally as the two lovers spend time together. This point is made clearer when the narrator explains that Isolde’s hatred for Tristan, which had been the

173 See note 3.
topic of the previous interactions between the two characters, had dissipated. Some versions of the Tristan and Isolde story show them being companionable even before drinking the love potion, allowing room to argue that their love was either pre-existing or was at least beginning to develop when they took the potion.\(^{174}\) In Gottfried’s version, while it might be argued that Tristan has a pre-existing interest in Isolde, it is clear that Isolde holds no romantic interest in Tristan prior to her consumption of the love potion. On the contrary, Isolde clearly articulates her dislike of Tristan’s presence, protesting “wan ich bin iu gehaz” [“because I hate you”]\(^{175}\) due to his killing of her uncle and “ir sit mir doch unmære” [“I detest you”]\(^{176}\) because he is dragging her off to a foreign land to be married. An unusual insight into Isolde’s thoughts confirm the truthfulness of these statements as they are uttered in response to Tristan’s attempts to console her, attempts which instead, cause her to recall his slaying of her uncle.

Isolde’s hatred of Tristan is important to understanding the magical properties of the love potion because the potion not only causes her to love him, but to cease feeling her genuine emotions. In doing so, the potion is not only a magical force of creation (of love) but of destruction (of personal barriers to that love). In this way, Isolde’s free will is impeded in two ways: she is forced to love Tristan and is unable to continue hating him. This stripping of the lovers’ free will is presented as a violent action. August Closs discusses the lovers’ affections in relation with Christian doctrine. He points out that Gottfried was “a poetic

\(^{174}\) This is the approach the 2006 film *Tristan & Isolde* takes, entirely eliminating the love potion from the narrative. Dean Georgaris, *Tristan & Isolde*, directed by Kevin Reynolds, performed by James Franco, Sophia Myles, and Rufus Sewell (Los Angeles, CA: Franchise Pictures, 2006), film.


\(^{176}\) Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan und Isold*, ll. 11579; Gentry, *Tristan and Isolde*, 152.
genius, and theologically highly trained,” and was “the first German medieval author to direct his invocation not to the Christian deity but to another transcendental power.”  This transcendental power was that of classical authors—Apollo and the Muses. Although interesting, Closs does not expound upon this oddity, instead turning to the relationship of Tristan and Isolde, whose love he states, “is not a Christian love,” although this is not due strictly to the adulterous nature of their love, but rather that love itself is “a daemonic force” which is “inescapable.”

The characterizations of the love which the potion produces are presented in the passages with violent language. Lines such as: “do stiez sir sigevanen dar / und zoch si beide in ir gewalt” [“she had planted her [love’s] victorious standard in their two hearts and bowed them beneath her yoke”] evoke a sense of battle between the action of the potion and the two consumers’ desires. Indeed, a later passage describing Tristan’s personal experience with the potion and its effects explicitly states this struggle between the Tristan’s will and the potion’s effects:

so wolte et ie daz herze dar;  
wider sinem willen crieget er,  
er gerte wider siner ger:  
er wolte dar und wolte dan.  
der gevangene man  
versuohtez in dem stricke  
ofte unde dicke  
und was des lange stæte.

[But his heart was impelled towards her. He was striving against his own wishes, desiring against his desire. He was drawn now in one direction, now in another.

Captive that he was, he tried all that he knew in the snare, over and over again, and long maintained his efforts.]  

The language of force used in this passage matches that of Isolde’s captivity by the love potion, and in the descriptions of each lover’s experience, the lover is presented as helpless against the love induced by the potion. Just as Tristan was “wider sinem willen crieget” [“striving against his own wishes,”] Isolde is said to be “volgete ungerne mite” [“succumbing against her will”]—a clear statement that the potion’s effects are violating her free will. Medieval romances often present the experience of love in this type of language—love as an overpowering force causing the lovers to suffer is also common in representations of courtly love, yet in these passages the distinction between descriptions of love or of the potion are virtually non-existent. The trope of the arrow of love shot into one’s eye is frequently used to initiate love relationships in medieval romances. A medieval audience would be familiar with the arrow of love and its induction of love, which draws on classical traditions including Venus and the God of Love, and which circumvents many of the free

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179 Gottfried von Strassburg, Tristan und Isold, ll. 11748-55; Gentry, Tristan and Isolde, 154.
180 Gottfried von Strassburg, Tristan und Isold, ll. 11802; Gentry, Tristan and Isolde, 155.
will issues involved in magically induced love.\textsuperscript{184} This foundation establishes a literary precedence for love being induced through external means out of the lovers’ control. It is as if the potion they consumed was liquefied love that they then experience and can attempt to resist but not actually defeat. Although the passages are describing love’s actions, those actions in this instance belong not only to personified love but to the potion which induced that love, for it is the potion that is responsible for the existence of that love.

The ending of the two lovers’ relationship is an unhappy one, and while Gottfried’s version breaks off as Tristan contemplates the feelings which remain for Isolde and cannot be mustered for Isolde of the White Hands (yet a third woman by the name Isolde in the narrative) rather than concluding the story with the lovers’ demise, the narrative’s ending suggests that Tristan will not be happily reunited with his first Isolde. Although neither Tristan nor Isolde freely choose to love one another, the unpleasant results of their magically induced love, and thereby loss of free will, remain an implicit condemnation of the love magic used.\textsuperscript{185}

\textsuperscript{184} Although the love arrow could be construed as supernatural due to its classically divine origins as the tool of choice for the God of Love, it is not magical in the way that human created potions or human cast enchantments are. For more on the classical connections involved in the love arrow trope, see George D. Economou, “The Two Venuses and Courtly Love,” in Pursuit of Perfection: Courtly Love in Medieval Literature, eds. Joan M. Ferrante, George D. Economou, and Frederick Goldin (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1975), 17-47.

\textsuperscript{185} George Gillespie, “‘Tristan- und Sigfriedliebe’: A Comparative Study of Gottfried’s Tristan and the Nibelungenlied,” Gottfried von Strassburg and the Medieval Tristan Legend: Papers from an Anglo-North American Symposium, eds. Adrian Stevens and Roy Wisbey (London: D. S. Brewer and The Institute of Germanic Studies, University of London, 1990), 155-170, discusses the tension between social conventions, courtly love, and the behavior of the lovers, claiming that “in Tristan concepts of courtly love are pursued as consistently as the story will allow,” yet the lovers’ exile separates them from the court and “after drinking the love-potion the moral values of society are rejected by the lovers” (167). Although Gillespie does not explore these observations further, they do raise the issue of the tensions
This stands in sharp contrast to the use of love magic in three other “deceptive” relationships, brought about deliberately through magic and trickery—that of Lancelot and Elaine, Bohort and King Brangoire’s daughter, and Uther and Igraine—which each have a divinely endorsed result. Unlike in Tristan and Isolde, in which both lovers are unknowing victims of love inducing magic, in the next three examples, one of the lovers is aware of the magical deception and, at times, take an active role in deploying the magic. The Lancelot episode uses a magical love drink that is similar in form to the Tristan and Isolde love potion, although it is different in its magical methodology. Although seemingly complicit in the plan, Elaine does not take an active role in the magic involved and the extent of her awareness of it could be minimal. In an episode that seems, in many ways, to parallel Lancelot’s, Sir Bohort succumbs to deception enacted through a magical ring, and Lancelot’s experience with love inducing magic colors his understanding when he hears a recounting of the trickery played on Bohort. The lady involved with Bohort is more explicitly conscious and amenable to the magic employed to get Bohort to her bed. In the magical deception of Igraine, not only is King Uther aware of and an active participant in the love inducing magic, but he also seeks out a magical solution through his request for Merlin’s aid in securing Igraine for himself. These three love magic induced relationships all involve a third party to enact the magic, and the texts signal each as divinely approved through the relationship’s production of a gifted bastard (Sir Galahad, Helain le Blanc, and King Arthur). The love inducing magic in the final example of this chapter, the “Pelleas and Ettarde” episode, is performed, by lady of the lake Nyneve, without the intent for a reciprocal relationship to result. Nonetheless, this incidence between courtly love conventions which expected passionate, adulterous love and courtly expectations that, even in literature, women were to remain faithful to their husbands.
of love inducing magic is also marked as divinely approved, this time through Nyneve’s own justification of her actions as fulfilling God’s judgement.

**Lancelot and Elaine**

A love potion, like in *Tristan and Isolde*, that directly induces love for another person is not the only way magic is utilized in medieval romances to induce love. Other drinks/potions that act more indirectly, enchantments, and magical rings can all be employed in schemes to induce love as well. Even among other potions, the nuanced of the magical effects vary from the potion in *Tristan and Isolde*. It is important to look at instances representing various magical methods of inducing love to see that regardless of the form the magic takes when inducing love, the same general concerns over free will remain present.

Other instances of magic inducing love are less direct in their methods than the potion in *Tristan and Isolde*. In the case of Lancelot and Elaine, another magical drink is consumed, but this drink does not function as a love potion in the same way that Tristan and Isolde’s drink did. Whereas the Tristan and Isolde’s relationship emerges out of love magic mistakenly executed, the sexual encounter between Lancelot and Elaine arises from a carefully laid plan. Like many of the narratives belonging to the Arthurian corpus, the events of Lancelot’s and Elaine’s coupling are presented in the works of various medieval authors, and each author adapted the narrative’s language and events as he saw fit. Two main versions of this particular narrative occur in *The Vulgate Cycle*, and in Sir Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur*. Although both versions present the same series of events that lead to the encounter
between Lancelot and Elaine, there are minor, but significant details that vary between the two accounts.\textsuperscript{186}

*The Vulgate Cycle* is an early-thirteenth-century French text, also known as *The Prose Lancelot* because it recounts both the quest for the Holy Grail and the story of Lancelot’s life, with a focus on his relationship with Guinevere. This is part of a larger move by the *Vulgate* to elevate the status of Lancelot (a French knight) within the Arthurian tradition. One significant narrative result of this effort is the shift away from Perceval as the central figure of the Grail quest (as he is in Chrétien de Troyes’ Grail narrative and Wolfram von Eschenbach’s subsequent *Parzival*) and instead centers Lancelot’s kin group (Lancelot, his son Galahad, his cousin Bors) within the Grail quest; although Percival does remain one of the three knights who sees the Grail in the *Vulgate* version. The particular scene of interest, which depicts the deception of Lancelot, ends up being a significant point of contention between Lancelot and Guinevere, despite Lancelot’s lack of consent in the events with Elaine. In both *The Vulgate Cycle* and in Malory’s late-fifteenth-century version, the sequence of events is initiated when Lancelot arrives in the kingdom of King Pelles\textsuperscript{187} where he lifts a tombstone engraved with a prophecy: “ceste tombe ne sera leuee deuant ce que lit lupars de qui li grans Lyons istera y uenra Et cil la leuera legierement Et cils grans Lyons sera engenders en la bele fille le roy de la terre foraine” [“This tombstone will not be lifted until the leopard, from whom is to descend the great lion, puts a hand to it, and he will lift it easily,


\textsuperscript{187} King Pelles is not to be confused with the knight Sir Pelleas who appears in the Pelleas and Ettard episode in *Le Morte Darthur* that has been previously discussed in this chapter and the last.
and afterwards the great lion will be begotten in the beautiful daughter of the King of the Land Beyond”]188 or, in Malory’s version, “Here shall com a lybarde of kynges blood, and he shall sle this serpent. And this lybarde shall engendir a lyon in this forayne contrey whych lyon shall passe all other knyghtes.”189 Although the wording of the engraved message differs slightly between the two versions, the basic meaning is consistent—the man who is able to lift the tombstone, “the leopard,” will father a child who will be “the lion.”190 Both versions tell of these events and set this conception in this particular kingdom, but the Vulgate version, the earlier one, specifies the lion’s mother as the daughter of King Pelles (who is known as the King of the Land Beyond), something Malory omits in his version of the engraving. In both accounts, the union takes place between Elaine (daughter of King Pelles) and a deceived Lancelot.

The prophecy shows that Lancelot (the leopard) is predestined to conceive the best knight in the world—who is Galahad (the lion)—and that this conception is to be with the king’s daughter of the nearby kingdom. This prophecy’s foreknowledge of Galahad’s conception demonstrates the predetermination of the conception and the events which lead to it. Although the exact time when the prophecy was carved is unclear, it appears to be well-known locally and being engraved on a tombstone gives it a sense of timelessness and

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190 For more on this tombstone prophecy, see Donald Maddox, “‘A tombeau ouvert’: Memory and Mortuary Monuments in the Prose Lancelot,” *Por le soie amisté: Essays in Honor of Norris J. Lacy*, eds. Keith Busby and Catherine Jones (Amsterdam: Brill Academic Publishers, 2000), 323-338.
The determinization presented by the prophecy further challenges the concept of free will since it suggests a long-standing fate for Lancelot that cannot be avoided regardless of his individual choices or desires. Beyond foretelling Lancelot’s role in the conception of Galahad, the prophecy includes an order of events—that the leopard will first lift the same tombstone upon which the prophecy is carved and then will beget the lion. While *The Vulgate Cycle* focuses heavily on the leopard’s role in lifting the stone and conceiving a child, Malory adapts the prophecy to include more about the lion and his future as the best of all knights.

In both texts, it is a female helper—an ancient lady named Brisane in *The Vulgate Cycle* and the great enchanter Dame Brusen in *Le Morte Darthur*—who works magic to befuddle Lancelot and make him believe he is lying with his lady-love Queen Guinevere. While Brisane in *The Vulgate Cycle* is not explicitly referred to as a magical practitioner, the description of her as “vne dame de si grant aage” [“a very ancient Lady”] suggests the wealth of knowledge she would have held and firmly places her within the crone stage of life. It is through Brisane that a statement on the necessity of action is first voiced, and it is through her that the solution of a potion is provided. The age of the lady contributes to her association with the magic that is soon revealed.

The crone figure who brews potions, as Brisane does to trick Lancelot, is also reflective of the historical reality of local wise-women who functioned within small

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191 For more on the role of prophecy in the Grail quest, including discussion of this tombstone and Lancelot’s subsequent behavior during the Grail procession at Castle Corbenic, see Kathryn Karczewska, *Prophecy and the Quest for the Holy Grail: Critiquing Knowledge in the Vulgate Cycle* (New York: P. Lang, 1998).

communities as healers and who would have provided remedies that sometimes blurred the line between medicinal and magical. These historical women fulfilled a role that the church wanted to monopolize; the women, to whom others divulged their secrets as they sought help, had no religious obligation to keep the confidence of the non-religious, non-orthodox confessions made to them. This local arrangement not only left the church out of these confessions, but did not assign penance as part of the remedy. It is interesting in *The Vulgate Cycle* that this local wise-woman is providing the path of action; rather than being presented as circumventing the church, her actions and magic are directly contributing to a divine plan, although here the action stems not from a response to a personal confession but to a prophecy. Masculine and feminine medieval magic often took different forms, with learned magic, requiring literacy and involving extensive ritual, being more commonly connected with men and natural magic, performed using organic ingredients and often overlapping with medicinal practices, being more closely associated with women. The preparation of a love drink or potion would tend toward categorization as natural magic due to the likely use of organic materials to create it. Although the term “learned magic” in scholarship often refers to the type of magic that would require literacy, it would be wrong to take this to mean that no body of knowledge was required to perform natural magic. Instead of learning magic through written texts, female acquisition of the knowledge needed for natural magic would have likely been oral, passed through generations, and would include understanding how to

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194 The natural magic of potion-brewing is also applicable for Queen Isolde’s potion, although she is a noble woman and presented as a mother rather than a crone (two different stages in the triple goddess life cycle). Béroul’s version of the Tristan narrative specifically mentions the “herbed” nature of the potion providing even stronger evidence that Gottfried’s that the potion is a form of natural magic.
identify herbs, plants, animals, and other natural ingredients and their properties in order to
craft magic from the ingredients available to them. Because these women would have also
assisted with medical issues in their communities, including matters of fertility and
childbirth, they would have also had, at the very least, a basic body of medical knowledge.

Doggett asserts that the empirics of who is practicing healing and love magic within
the Old French texts in her study, “show that the instances of sickness, injury, and amatory
magic depicted formed a part of everyday experience—observable phenomena that audiences
experienced. In short, they are quite realistic for the time;” she goes on to characterize these
depictions as “strikingly positive.” While healing practices may be positively portrayed in
the texts examined in this chapter, instances of love magic are not consistent with this trend
of “strikingly positive” depictions. Instead, love magic is presented as explicitly negative in
*Tristan and Isolde* but shown only to be acceptable in the unions of Uther and Igraine,
Lancelot and Elaine, and Bors and King Brangoire’s daughter because of divine approval.
Doggett’s observation about the representation of love magic as positive relies on the
connection of love magic to healing, which allows for the magic to be more acceptable.
Although this connection features in the Old French texts in her study, it is not always
present in instances of love magic, and when considered on its own, the magic’s acceptability
is seen to be more complex. In discussing her assertion further, Doggett focuses heavily on
the healing role of empirics and minimalizes their roles in love magic; although healing and

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195 Chapters three and four will discuss two versions of Nyneve/Viviane’s imprisonment of
Merlin using the magic she learns from him. Nyneve/Viviane is specified as particularly
well-educated, and she writes down the enchantments Merlin teaches her. However, the
transmission of Merlin’s knowledge to her is done orally, not through study of written
magical texts.
love magic may at times be connected or overlap in medieval romances (such as Isolde’s healing of Tristan prior to the love magic worked on them or the use of love magic to remedy physical ailment caused by lovesickness), it is consistently easier to find positive portrayals of healing magic than love magic in medieval romances.

While the prophecy about Lancelot shows that these events could be considered pre-determined, it is Brisane who reinforces that these events are endorsed by God when she refers to Lancelot as “cest cheualier que diex nous a amene” [“this knight that God has sent us”]. The idea that Lancelot has been sent to the kingdom by God to fulfill this prophecy suggests that the events that lead to the prophecy’s fulfillment are also then acceptable to God. The tombstone on which the prophecy was found was located within a chapel where Lancelot and a lady he had saved went to give thanks to God, and this holy location serves as another signal that fulfilling the prophecy is the will of God. It is important for the text to clarify for the audience that the events between Lancelot and Elaine are divinely endorsed because they would otherwise be sinful; the two are not married, after all. Although King Pelles is willing to hand his daughter over to Lancelot, Brisane explains that Lancelot’s love

197 For more on the idea of love sickness as a medical condition, see Marion A. Wells, The Secret Wound: Love-Melancholy and Early Modern Romance (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).
198 Writing about the thirteenth century A Summary of the Duty of the Inquisition, P. G. Maxwell-Stuart quotes an instruction to ask the accused whether they have used materials like clothing or hair for “hatred or love.” Maxwell-Stuart also provides an overview of the summary of Alice Kyteler who confessed to a variety of magical practice, including magic “to rouse loves and hatreds.” Maxwell-Stuart, The British Witch, 52-53. These historical examples from instructional guides to court records show both the conceptualization of and response to love magic as a crime.
for Queen Guinevere would prevent him from accepting Elaine, something that becomes clear the following morning when Lancelot discovers the deception and almost kills Elaine for it. Therefore, the more “subtle” approach is necessary.

Brisane explains that “Et por ce conuendra il con le face si sagement quil ne sen aperchoiue” [“we’ll have to do it so subtly he won’t notice”], and it is administration of the potion that carries out this subtle action. The term “subtle” echoes the description of Queen Isolde’s potion-making. Here it is the course of action itself that must be subtle, not necessarily the potion-brewing, yet the secretive nature of the potion-making and administering is certain. While it is unclear whether the two intended drinkers of the love potion in Tristan and Isolde might have consumed it willingly, it is certain in Lancelot’s case that he did not want to become enamored with anyone but Guinevere. This positions the potion as a means for a direct, intentional violation of Lancelot’s free will, yet the text excuses this violation because the result (Galahad’s conception) is an event that God has designed.

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202 In Malory’s version, Lancelot explicitly articulates these events as being against his will later in the narrative when he is found by Lady Elaine sleeping in the gardens after having lost his wits. After his wits are returned to him, he apologizes for his previous treatment of Elaine (when he had almost killed her upon waking with her after being tricked into sleeping with her the first time) and states that his anger “all was for the cause that ye and Dame Brusen made me for to lye be you magry myne hede” (651). This final phrase meaning “against my will” as indicated in Thomas Malory, Le Morte Darthur, ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2004), 485, n. 5.
If the prophecy was not enough to suggest that the events to follow were divinely ordained, the spectacles in the court that occur directly after the conversation between King Pelles and the ancient lady support this idea. Once the king returns to the court where Lancelot is, a dove enters the window and is carrying a golden censer. Everyone in the court kneels before the dove and the most pleasant scents fill the entire hall. Immediately upon the departure of the dove from a hall into a room, servants cover the dais and all in the court begin praying. The dove is a long-standing symbol in Christianity for God’s promises, most famously known from the biblical narrative of Noah and the flood and as a well-known symbol of the Holy Spirit. The arrival of the dove in the court while Lancelot is there, suggests that there is some promise from God to the kingdom that is being fulfilled. Lancelot’s role in this divine promise becomes clearer when a lady appears carrying a chalice-shaped vessel described as “sainte chose & digne” [“a holy and worthy thing”] which, after Lancelot and everyone else at the court bows to it, seems to create a magnificent feast for them all.²⁰³ It is King Pelles’s comment that “fet il ie oi moult grant paour. que la grace de nostre seignor ne vous fau[s]sist a cest cop endroit vous. aussi comme elle fist [lautre iour] a monsignor Gauuain. Quaint il fu chaiens” [“I was very fearful that Our Lord’s grace might fail this time as it did the other day, when Sir Gawain was here”] which both clarifies the divine origins of these two occurrences and appears to set up a standard of divinely judged worthiness which Gawain was unable to meet, but Lancelot has.²⁰⁴

Lancelot’s attendance at the court then seems to be divinely approved, indicated by the feast that appears before him from the chalice, as opposed to the lack of feast Gawain received.

This miracle signals that Lancelot’s presence is divinely sanctified, but the early prophecy about him and Elaine establishes the moral justification for the actions that are then taken to ensure the prophecy is fulfilled—even against Lancelot’s will. It is after this feast episode that the deception of Lancelot begins, first with Brisane planting the seed in Lancelot’s mind that Queen Guinevere, whom he loves above all other women, is staying nearby, and then with her offer to take him to her. While Lancelot prepares to depart, she instructs the king to send his daughter to Case Castle where she will go with Lancelot. As she gives these instructions, she explains, “Et iou ai vn boire appareilliet ue iou li donrai. Et plus quil en aura beu & la force len sera montee el ceruel. Iou nen dout mie quil ne face ma volente. Et ensi porra auenir chou que nous alons querant” [“I’ve mixed a potion that I’ll give him, and after he’s drunk it and it’s gone to his brain, I’ve no doubt that he’ll do everything I want, and so what we’re all seeking will come about”].

It is worth noting that although the translation provided by Lacy and Kibler for “ma volente” is “I want,” the verb actually holds a stronger connection to will and desire than is communicated through that translation; this is significant because it shows that she is not only violating Lancelot’s will through her plan, but imposing her own (and King Pelles’s) upon him as well. The substance she has Lancelot consume is identified here as a potion, which clarifies the magical nature of this deception. The effects of the potion are clearly designed to override Lancelot’s free will, since it will have him “do everything I want,” implying that what she wants he would not have done.

willingly. Brisane gives the potion to a maiden to bring to Lancelot, instructing the maiden to make sure the potion was consumed. This seems to parallel the narrative of Queen Isolde and the handmaiden Brangäne, to whom the queen entrusted the love potion.\footnote{Gottfried von Strassburg, 
\textit{Tristan und Isold}, ll.11455-56; Gentry, 
\textit{Tristan and Isolde}, 151.} Brisane’s choice to hand off the potion to someone else is interesting since she has already led Lancelot to the castle and interacted with him. In 
\textit{Tristan and Isolde}, Queen Isolde entrusts the potion to another as a logistical necessity since she could not be present to administer it herself; however, Brisane is in the room as the maiden serves the potion to Lancelot.\footnote{As will be seen in the following chapters, Morgan le Fay also employs a maiden to administer a potion to Lancelot at one point, although this is seemingly because by that point in the narrative Lancelot knows not to trust her (having already been drugged by one of her potions previously) and would presumably know better than to accept a drink from her.}

The potion is also described in detail at this point:

\begin{quote}
[He called for wine, and the maiden who had received Brisane’s instructions brought him the potion, which was the color of wine and more sparkling than spring water. The cup was not large, but was filled to the top. He was thirsty, and the lady said to him, “My lord, drink it all; it will do you good, for I don’t think you’ve ever drunk anything like it.” He took the cup and emptied it and found the potion sweet and good; he asked for more, which she brought him, and he drank it down.]
\end{quote}

It is unclear whether the potion has been deliberately disguised to look like wine or whether that is its natural appearance, but regardless it is the part of the deception.\footnote{Sommer, ed., 
\textit{Lancelot-Grail}, 3:164.} The description

\footnote{Malory’s version does not clearly distinguish the substance as a potion, although its effects clearly induce lust in Lancelot, and he acts under the belief that he is going to bed with Guinevere, not Elaine: “and anone as he had drunken that wyne he was so asoted and madde that he myght make no delay but wythoute ony let he wente to bedde. And so he wente that mayden Elayne had bene Quene Gwenyvere” (623). Although some editors, like Stephen...}
of this potion focuses on positive and attractive traits; the potion looks like wine and is “more sparkling than spring water”—both of which are beautifying attributes. To Lancelot’s tongue, the potion is “sweet and good” to the point that he requests more of it, suggesting that the taste is as attractive as the appearance. Nowhere in the description of this potion is it personified or vilified as the potion is in *Tristan and Isolde*; nowhere in the description is the potion described as bad or in domineering terms, rather Lancelot, the potion’s own victim, desires more of it. Interestingly, this potion does not directly create love as the love potion does in *Tristan and Isolde*, rather the potion leaves Lancelot in a “transformed” state, in which he becomes susceptible to suggestion and it is through this method that Lancelot lies with Elaine, whom he believes to be Queen Guinevere.

The potion’s effects are as thoroughly described as the potion itself:

Quant lancelot ot beu lez puisons\textsuperscript{210} si fu plus enuoisies et plus emparles quil ne sieult. Si demande a brisane comment il porra parler a sa dame la royne. & elle le regarde. et uoit qui lest ia tous mues. si quil ne set ou il est ne comment il vint laiens. Ains quide estre uraiement en la cite de camaalot. Si li snable quil parolt a vne dame qui tous iours soloit tenir compaignie a la royne puis que la dame de malehaut fu morte. Et quant elle le voit si afole & que elle porra bien faire de lui sa volente. Si li dist. Sire madame la royne puet bien ia estre endormie. que demores vous tant que vous nales a lui.

\textsuperscript{210}Although this term can translate with a negative connotation as “poison,” a term Sommer even uses for his summary gloss of this passage, the term in its general sense simply means “potion” or “drink” and can, when more specific, even refer to a healing “medicinal drink” as well. Since no other narratorial comments are made about the potion’s positive or negative virtues, it is most reasonable to take the use of “puisons” as a general term for a potion.
[Then he became more animated and talkative than usual; he asked Brisane how he could see his lady the queen. She looked at him and saw that he was completely transformed: he did not know where he was or how he had come there; he really thought he was in the city of Camelot and was talking to a lady who had been the queen’s principal lady-in-waiting ever since the lady of Malehaut had died. Once she saw how confused he was and was sure he could easily be tricked, she said, “Sir, my lady might already be asleep. Why have you waited so long to go to her?”]

These specific effects of the potion further demonstrate its magical nature. Although the potion may have looked like a fine wine, it is not simply that Lancelot is drunk, although he demonstrates some characteristics of that state, such as becoming “more animated and talkative,” but that his senses and awareness of his surroundings has been completely overridden by the potion. It is not only the identity of the lady he is to visit that is disguised through the potion, it is the entire setting and people in it that are warped in Lancelot’s vision and understanding. In his potion-induced state, Lancelot believes Brisane to be a lady-in-waiting to Guinevere and that they are all in the court of King Arthur rather than in a castle in the Land Beyond. This type of magic seems almost illusory in nature, yet the illusion created is only seen through the consumption of the potion, thus limiting the alteration of mental faculties to Lancelot’s experience, while the other individuals present—Brisane, the maiden, and eventually Elaine, are all perfectly aware of the true events that are occurring.\(^\text{212}\)


\(^{212}\) In *Le Morte Darthur*, the following morning, after the deception has been somewhat explained to Lancelot, he refers to it as “enhaunte” which has been worked upon him. He also demonstrates a condemnation of the means through which the conception was wrought, even after he has forgiven Elaine, by stating that “and I may fynde her, that same lady Dame Brusen shall lose her hede for her wychecraufys—for there was never knyght discyeyed as I am this nyght” (466). This threat on her life, made on the accusation of witchcraft, reflects the larger cultural movement in the fifteenth century of witch persecutions and trials.
Believing he has been invited to the chambers of Guinevere, he “sen vint au lit et se couche avec la damoisele comme cil qui quide que ce soit sa dame la royne” [“came to the bed and lay down in it with the maiden, thinking she was the queen”]. This particular misconception is the key deception in the plan of Brisane and King Pelles because the entire goal of the potion was to coerce Lancelot into having intercourse with the king’s daughter, Elaine, so the prophecy would be fulfilled through Galahad’s conception. The divine endorsement of their union is made clear in the narration of each lover’s motives. First the two are described as each being the best in the world, with a series of superlative terms that highlight their gendered positions. Lancelot is characterized as “sont mis ensemle li mil[e]ldres cheualiers & li plus loiaux qui a ce tamps fust” [“the best and most handsome knight who ever lived”] which focuses on both his overall status as a knight and his appearance. Similarly, one of the two superlative descriptions of Elaine focuses on her beauty—“la plus bele pucele” [“the most beautiful”]—while the second speaks to her noble status by birth as the “del plus haut lingnage. qui fust au tamps de lors” [“highest-born maiden of that day”]. Interestingly, the two compliments to Elaine are constrained within the time frame of “that day” while both of Lancelot’s compliments were all-encompassing as the best “who ever lived.” Despite Lancelot’s characterizations being more complimentary than those of Elaine, it is Elaine’s motives for their sexual intercourse which are superior:

Si sentredesirent par diuersesentensions. Care elle ne le fist mie tant pour la biaute de lui ne pour escauffement de char comme elle fist por le fruit recheuoir don’t tous li

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pays deuoit reuenir en sa premiere biaute...Et cil la desiroit tout en autre manier. Quar por sa biaute ne la conuoitoit il pas. Mais il quidoit que ce fust sa dame.

[Their desires stemmed from different motives: she did it not so much for his beauty or from lust or bodily desire, but so as to receive the fruit that would restore that entire land to its original beauty, that land which had been laid waste and destitute...But he desired her in a very different way, because he did not covet her for her beauty, but believed she was his lady the queen.”]216

Elaine’s main goal is to fulfill the prophecy through her interaction with Lancelot, and while she may recognize his beauty, it is not what spurs her to lay with him. Her motives demonstrate that she is acting with regard to what is best for her kingdom, and, since the prophecy is assumed to be divine, for what is ordained by God. It is not clear whether she is aware that Lancelot comes to her because of love inducing magic rather than his own free will. She is never involved in or present for the conversations between her father and Brisane as they develop their plan. Although her father does send her to a castle where Lancelot is to meet her, this is done off-page, and there is no textual evidence for what he told her. If she was aware of the magic, then she could be considered complicit in its performance, not that this would matter since the use of love inducing magic is made acceptable by God’s approval of the union and her own motives were morally acceptable.

Lancelot’s motivations are independent from his role in the prophecy, which he did not even understand, and thus he does not realize what his role was destined to be. He is only willing to lie with Elaine because he believes her to be Queen Guinevere, which means that his actions are not only driven by the lust (and love) he has for the queen, but also suggests that even if he had understood his role in the prophecy, he would have refused to take part and fulfill it because of his love of the queen. Lancelot’s relationship with Guinevere is

adulterous, and thus sinful (even if idealized within the conventions of courtly love), so the use of magic becomes a necessity to force him into fulfilling his destined role in the divine prophecy rather than allowing him to prioritize his sinful love over his divine duty. If the prophecy is understood to be divine, willfully refusing to fulfill it would also have been going against God’s wishes.

The narrator presents Lancelot’s coupling with Elaine as sinful yet explains that it is God’s desire for the result that justifies their action and consequently, the action of using a potion to force Lancelot’s participation. This illustrates an important distinction—that the condemnation or approval of a relationship can be independent of the condemnation or approval of the love magic used to bring it about. It is particularly interesting that the condemnation of Lancelot’s and Elaine’s coupling does label their joining as sinful, and particularly Lancelot’s motives in the joining, yet had the potion not been administered, Lancelot would have likely refused to take part in it. Lancelot’s desires and the pair’s union is described as morally wrong, yet the role of God in the overall plan is enlisted to both rectify the sin and justify the actions of all involved:

Et pour ce fu il escauffes. si la connut aussi comme adam fist sa feme. Et non mie en tel maniere. Quar adam connut sa femme loiaument. & par le commandement nostre seignor. Et il connut ceste en pechie & en auoltire. Et pour ce que li sires en qui toute pit[i]es habite et qui ne iuge mie tout dis selonc les mesfais as pecheors regar da cele assemblée selonc le preu a ceuls del pais comme cil qui ne voloit mie quil fussent tous iors en escil. si lor donna tel fruit a engendrer et a conceuoir. que pour la flor de virginite. qui illuec fu corrompue. fu restoree vne autre fleur. dont grans biens vint al pais. Car de la douchour qui de la flour issi fu toute la terre raemplie.

[…and this inflamed him to know her as Adam knew his wife, but not in precisely the same manner, because Adam knew his wife faithfully and by the command of Our Lord, whereas Lancelot knew her in sin and adultery and in opposition to God and Holy Church. Yet nonetheless the Lord, who is the font of every mercy and who does not judge sinners by their deeds, looked on this coupling in light of its value to the land, for He did not wish it to remain a wasteland forever: so He permitted them to engender and conceive a fruit, by virtue of which the flower of virginity that was}
corrupted and violated there blossomed forth in another flower whose goodness and tenderness would replenish and console many a land.\textsuperscript{217}

The comparison of Lancelot and Elaine to Adam and Eve sets them up as similar mother/father figures to the land, as the Grail hero would rejuvenate the wasteland. The “knowing” of Adam and Eve was both divinely instructed and a marker of their sinfulness, which parallels the narrative’s depiction of Lancelot and Elaine’s relationship as both fulfilling a divine prophecy yet being inherently sinful because of Lancelot’s motives and their adulterous situation of coupling out of wedlock. The focus in this denunciation of their actions is on Adam and Lancelot more than on the women, and the narrator specifically points out Lancelot as acting against “God and Holy Church.” The narrator depicts God in a benevolent role, offering mercy to sinners and “not judg[ing] sinners by their deeds.” If God does not make his judgements about people based on what they do, this then offers the unstated implication that he evaluates why they do things instead. This perspective of God’s evaluative criteria aligns with the narrator’s heavy focus on explaining the differences in the motivations of Elaine and Lancelot. This also goes further to show that the administering of love inducing magic, although a violation of Lancelot’s free will (which would normally be considered morally wrong), is acceptable to God (and thus morally acceptable within the narrative as well) because it was done for the right reasons.

Although at first glance this seems like a reproof of the coupling, it is quickly absolved as the narrator tells that God looked at the union as valuable and thus “permitted” their action, using it to bring forth goodness for the Earth in the form of Galahad, who is the best of the spiritual knights (Lancelot being the best of the terrestrial knights). Although

extramarital sex and love inducing magic may not be the most spiritually desirable methods, the result was divinely intended and endorsed, which is shown in the retroactive approval God provides. Virginity is here described with the flower trope, and the text tells that through the corruption of the flower of virginity (Elaine’s) “there blossomed forth in another flower.” The product of Elaine and Lancelot’s union is described both as “a fruit” and “another flower.” As a fruit, Galahad is marked as the product of a productive coupling—a flower must be pollinated for a fruit to be produced, but Galahad is also characterized as a flower, which is a signal of his own virginity, a trait that becomes central to his winning of the Grail.

The question of why this is an example of love magic rather than sex magic must also be addressed; after all, Lancelot does lust after Elaine-as-Guinevere and this leads him to eagerly sleep with her. It is the long-standing love of Lancelot for Guinevere that is the source of this lust and although he is happy to be intimate with her, it is an emotional experience for Lancelot, not simply an act of physical pleasure. Aside from the extensive documentation throughout Arthurian legend of Lancelot’s love for Guinevere, it is emphasized in this particular episode by the ancient lady’s explanation that Lancelot will not take King Pelles’s daughter “quar il aime tant la royne genieure la femme au roy artus quil ne voldroit auoir nulle autre” [“because he loves the queen, King Arthur’s wife, so dearly that he’ll refuse to have anyone else”]. Also in Malory’s version, Lancelot’s emotional love for Guinevere is brought up as Dame Brusen explicitly explains that it is Lancelot’s love of Guinevere that is the sole obstacle to getting him to conceive with Elaine. She tells King Pelles, “Sir, wyte you well Sir Launcelot loveth no lady in the worlde but all only Quene

Gwenyvere. And therefore worche ye be my counceyle, and I shall make hym to lye wyth youre doughter, and he shall nat wyte but that he lyeth by Quene Gwenyver.

In both versions, it is Lancelot’s love of Guinevere, not lust, which is first the obstacle to the prophecy’s fulfillment, and then part of the manipulation that brings it about. It is the belief that the lady with whom he is being intimate is “his lady the queen” that “inflamed” Lancelot—this passion, whether sexual, emotional, or both is a clear product of his love for Guinevere. Malory describes the effects of the potion as being emotion-based, writing “and anone as he had drunken that wyne, he was so asoted and madde that he myght make no delay.”

The emotional connotation of the two terms used to described the affected Lancelot, “asoted” and “madde” make clear that Lancelot’s love (for Guinevere, not Elaine), not just his lust, is being aroused with the potion. Later on, Elaine is also revealed to have love for Lancelot, but it remains uncertain if she loved him prior to their night together or only afterward. Although during their coupling the text focuses on her fulfillment of her duty and joy in fulfilling the prophecy thereby restoring her land. Soon after she gives birth, she is approached by a suitor whom she rebuffs claiming that “my love ys sette uppon the beste knyght of the worlde,” who she then admits “ys Sir Launcelot du Lake that I love and none other.”

The lack of discussion of Elaine’s love until after she has lost her virginity to Lancelot suggests that although her motivations for doing so may be her duty to fulfill the prophecy, her coupling with Lancelot—the result of the love inducing magic—may have resulted her developing emotional love for Lancelot. In this way, she becomes collateral damage of the love inducing magic. Although she is not a direct victim of it, she still suffers

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because of it. Elaine does not consume the potion and her actions with Lancelot are done of her own free will, but the emotional love she gains for Lancelot will forever remain fruitless because his feelings for her were only temporarily induced by the potion and his love continues to belong to Guinevere after the potion has worn off.

In this narrative, the use of magic to induce love is marked as acceptable first, through the divine prophecy that foretells that Lancelot with father a child with Elaine, and then, again, through the narrator’s explicit statements of God’s permission for the coupling because of the spiritually beneficial result. Malory makes an important addition to this narrative in Le Morte, which is that the conception story of Sir Galahad begins with a scene in King Arthur’s court. As an English author, many of Malory’s narrative adaptations refocus the Arthurian matter on the English knights and locations, and this addition further links the Grail and its winner to the English Arthurian court. The arrival of a hermit, who questions the court about the identity of the rightful claimant of the Siege Perilous (the seat at the Round Table left unoccupied by Merlin’s mandate) and foretells of the claimant’s impending birth establishes the first connection between Galahad and King Arthur’s court. Although no one in the court knows who the claimant will be, the hermit tells them that he knows the knight’s identity and proclaims that the same knight is at this time “unborne and unbegotyn,” but that “this same yere he shall be bygotyn.” From there, the adventures of the knights lead them in different directions, and Lancelot ends up in the Land Beyond where the same basic events as in the Vulgate Cycle occur resulting in this prophesied conception of Galahad who eventually lays claim to the Siege Perilous before his eventual success in the Grail quest.

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222 Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 620.
This added hermit’s prediction is an additional layer of approval of what happens and is something Malory adds to the narrative. Malory is often referred to as “Malory the Redactor” because he compresses a huge body of existing Arthurian material into *Le Morte*, but in doing so he must selectively edit and cut material. More discussion on what Malory chooses to leave out of *Le Morte* will be discussed in chapters three and four, but Malory’s general trend of cutting out material makes an addition to it all the more significant. Malory elevates Galahad and his conception in the narrative because of Galahad’s primary role in the Grail quest, a narrative thread that makes up a significant portion of *Le Morte*. Through the inclusion of this narrative tie between Galahad’s prophesied birth and claim to the Siege Perilous, Malory further emphasizes both the spiritual greatness of Galahad and builds anticipation within the larger narrative for his conception and birth.

The *Vulgate Cycle*, however, has its own early narrative reference to the prophecy of Galahad’s conception, which helps to solidify the divine origins of the prophecy Lancelot encounters on the tomb. Whereas Malory’s addition in *Le Morte* centered Galahad and his future accomplishments, the *Vulgate* episode focuses on Lancelot as much as Galahad. A conversation between Galehaut and King Arthur’s wise-man Master Elias reveals that the prophecy of the lion who will surpass even the leopard is a prophecy of Merlin. Merlin’s role as the original messenger of this prophecy lends credibility both to the accuracy of the prophecy and to its role in the divine plan, since Merlin’s knowledge of the future is a direct gift from God.223 Because his ability to know the future is provided through God, his...

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223 In Merlin’s conception narrative within *The Vulgate Cycle*, his knowledge of the past and present come from his demonic paternal parentage, but God provides him also with “the power to know the future” in order to balance the scales and allow Merlin to choose which side he would serve, the demons or the Lord. Sommer, ed., *Vulgate Version*, 2:12; “The Story of Merlin,” *Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in*
knowledge of the future and his prophecies, such as the one about the leopard and the lion, are foretelling pieces of the divinely-presented future. It is in Galehaut’s conversation with Master Elias that Lancelot is identified as the leopard and that Galehaut learns that although, at the current time, Lancelot is the best of all knights present and past, the lion will in the future will exceed him. This future event is revealed slowly, in tantalizing bits from Master Elias as he recounts the information from Merlin’s foretelling of events. Although the reader already knows the validity of Merlin’s foreknowledge from his conception narrative earlier in the text, the accuracy of his prophecies is supported here as well. Master Elias emphasizes Merlin’s history of correct prophecies, referring to the magician as one “qui moult fu voirs disans” [“who never makes a mistake”] and “qui encore ne nos a menti de rien” [“who has never yet lied”].

The Master, as he works to interpret Galehaut’s dream, first identifies Lancelot as a leopard, a characterization which Galehaut counters since he believes the lion to be the superior of the two animals and that, as a result, Lancelot ought to be the lion. It is here that Master Elias explains that although Lancelot is the premier knight currently, one who would surpass him will come in the future and that this coming is “dist merlins en ses prophesies” [“foretold by Merlin”]. Galehaut inquires about this foretold knight, trying to learn more of his identity, but the Master states that not only is he unaware, but he has not attempted to gain that knowledge, yet he also reveals “que cil qui acheuera les auentures de bretaigne sera li miedlres cheualiers de tot le monde & emplirea le deerrain siege de la table

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reonde & cil a en scripture la senefiance de lion” [“that the one who completes the Adventures of Britain will be the finest knight in the world and will take the last seat at the Round Table; and his emblem will be the lion”]. 226 These Adventures of Britain are further discussed and the reader, along with Galehaut, learns that they include the Adventure of the Grail and that Lancelot, despite his supreme prowess as a knight, could never accomplish these tasks due to his immense love for a woman.

This disqualifying love which Lancelot feels, is not simply a matter of whether he has engaged in the physical acts of love, but also that he has felt love, in an emotional sense. In describing the qualities the Grail Quest winner must possess, Master Elias says, “Car il couuient quil soit premierrement de sa nascion uirges dusques a le mort. Si enterinemenent quil naura amor ne volente nen autre coze vers nulle femme” [“Above all, that man must be, from birth to death, so utterly virginal and chaste as never to feel love for a woman, married or not.”] 227 It is Lancelot’s feelings of love for Guinevere, which are at times shown to overwhelm him, that disqualify him, even if he had remained physically chaste. It is interesting, in light of this that it is through Lancelot’s physical act of love with Elaine, an act that was only elicited through the use of magic, against his own will, and which involved no love for Elaine herself (only for Guinevere and Elaine-presented-as-Guinevere) that Galahad, the knight who remains virginal and chaste enough to achieve the Grail, is conceived.

Although Lancelot’s motives were lustful in this interaction, since he thought the lady was his Guinevere, they were not lustful toward the actual object of his actions, Elaine. The text

demonstrates that while Lancelot admires Elaine’s beauty and noblesse, his non-chaste thoughts are reserved for Guinevere only, which makes Galahad the product of a magically induced love which was simultaneously chaste (in the emotional sense) and non-chaste (in the physical sense) between Lancelot and Elaine. The fact that Lancelot’s affections for Elaine were strictly existent due to the influence of magic and his misunderstanding of her real identity contributes both to the uniqueness of the situation from which Galahad is conceived, and to the significance of virginity and chastity in Galahad’s own story.

In her article comparing the three strains of the Grail narratives, Anita Obermeier identifies the Vulgate strain as “privileg[ing] chastity and virginity as virtues of the successful Grail quester, effectively disqualifying Lancelot, and giving the later Grail stories their main trajectory in the virginal Galahad.” Through the Vulgate strain’s focus on virginity as central to success in the Grail quest, the concept of virginity is expanded beyond physical action and into the emotional purity, which is the point on which one of the three Grail finalists, Perceval (the Grail winner in previous strains of the Grail narrative), is disqualified. Lancelot, who is rewarded with a glimpse of the Grail is prevented from advancing in the quest because of his non-virginity, both in terms of his emotional love for Guinevere and his physical sexual interactions with Elaine. Obermeier attributes Lancelot’s lack of action upon seeing the Grail to his emotional failings: “Lancelot…is paralyzed and cannot act because of his sinful love for Guinevere.” I agree with the implication that it is Lancelot’s love for Guinevere, rather than his physical intimacy with Elaine, that is the death

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knell for Lancelot’s Grail quest hopes. Obermeier goes on to summarize the reasons for failure of the two non-successful Grail quest finalists, including Sir Bors, who “is denied the final vision of the Grail because he had lost his virginity in a scenario of trickery,” which is not that unlike the deception Lancelot is victim to. If Bors’s loss of virginity through a deception does not prevent him from being a Grail quest finalist, only from being the winner, then it is logical that Lancelot’s physical actions with Elaine, which are also the result of trickery, would not disqualify him either; however, unlike Bors, Lancelot has an additional point for disqualification—his emotional (and likely physical) impurity in loving Guinevere.

Recognizing the bitter irony of this, Obermeier comments that, “Lancelot’s involvement is nonetheless paradoxically unfair: he is vilified and excluded from the achievement of the Grail for his love of Guinevere, a love that is exploited and manipulated to trick him into sleeping with King Pelles’s daughter and fathering Galahad,” who goes on to win the Grail. While Lancelot does seem unfairly deprived, he is also honored for his part in the Grail quest since he was required for the carnal creation of the Grail quest winner and as such he is fulfills a role in a larger divine plan. Obermeier asserts, “God effectively genetically engineers a person that would otherwise not exist and only serves one purpose. In both cases of semen theft from Bors and Lancelot, God is presented as a pragmatist who guides and justifies these acts of fornication and adultery, along with these products of gifted bastardy, because of their beneficial outcome.” This is a keen observation, and I would clarify even further that God not only justifies Lancelot’s coupling with Elaine along with its

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230 Obermeier, “The Rhetoric of Symbolism,” 216. This episode of trickery enacted upon Sir Bors is discussed later in this chapter.
result, but *through* its result. It is not just that the coupling leads to a generalized “beneficial outcome,” but rather that it is specifically designed to and is successful in the creation of Galahad, whose entire role in the narrative is predetermined through divine prophesy. This same basic principle of God’s approval of and utilization of human implementation of love magic for “genetically engineer[ing]” men who are extraordinary, albeit bastards, can also be witnessed in Arthur’s conception, though in that case, discussed later in this chapter, the gender roles in the conception are reversed and rather than semen theft from the father occurring, it is Arthur’s mother who is magically tricked into the intercourse, the more standard occurrence.

Despite Lancelot’s own inability to meet the standards necessary to achieve the Grail, his own birth was foretold by Merlin, just as Merlin foretold Lancelot’s conception of Galahad. The specific prophecy of Galahad’s conception is finally revealed by Master Elias in response to Galehaut’s sadness that Lancelot had not “se fust netement gardés” [“kept himself pure”] and been able to accomplish the feats that Galahad is fated to do:

Savés vos…que Merlins dist, ançois que la dame del Lac l’eust acointié? Il dist que del lieupart orgueilllos et de la ligne de Jherusalem istroit li lions redotés desor totes autres bestes et cil feroit tant qu’il avroit eles et que tos li mons en seroit covers. Ensi dist Merlins; mais certes je ne voi mie bien clerement qui cil lieupars est, se cest chevaliers n’estoit.

[Do you know…what Merlin said before the Lady of the Lake had come to know him? He said that from the prideful leopard and the line of Jerusalem would come forth the lion feared above all other animals, and the lion would sprout wings that would cover the world. That’s what Merlin said, and I certainly do not see who that leopard could be, except your knight.]233

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This articulation of Merlin’s prophecy reiterates Lancelot’s role in the conception of the “lion,” but it also provides the new insight into the mother of the “lion.” Although Lancelot’s heart may belong to Queen Guinevere, Merlin foretells that it is from the leopard, Lancelot, and “la ligne de Jherusalem” [“the line of Jerusalem”] that the “lion” will be born. Having already established Lancelot’s role as the leopard, the female participant in this prophecy is left as the descendent of Jerusalem. The reader later discovers that this refers to Elaine, the daughter of King Pelleas in the Land Beyond. The reference to her as “la ligne de Jherusalem” is fitting since Galahad is prophesized to emerge from “la chamber al roi mehengnie” [“the chamber of the Maime King”] and to achieve the spiritual quest of the Grail. Elaine’s lineage forges a common genealogical ancestry with Jesus, further establishing Galahad’s spiritual excellence. Lancelot, whose maternal lineage traces back to King David, is also genealogically related to Jesus, offering a second divine heritage connection for Galahad. These dual genealogical connections to Jesus are interesting because of the similarities between Galahad’s life of purity and eventual ascension into heaven and the pure, sinless life attributed to Jesus.

235 The line of Jerusalem, or the Davidic line, traces its lineage back to King David, and according to the New Testament gospels Matthew and Luke, Jesus’s lineage also belongs to the Davidic line.
Sir Bohort and King Brangoire’s Daughter

Sir Bohort suffers a fate similar to Lancelot’s as he too is magically duped into participating in sexual intercourse with a woman in whom he has no interest in *The Vulgate Cycle.* 237 Although Malory does include Sir Bors and uses his character in significant ways in *Le Morte,* much of his narrative is edited out, including this love magic episode. Malory does not erase either of the results of this episode—the conception of Sir Bors’s only child, a son named Helain the White, or Sir Bors’s inability to achieve the Grail because of this singular violation of his vow of chastity. *Le Morte* focuses on Galahad as the deserving Grail winner, so by eliminating the love inducing magic which prevented Sir Bors from upholding his vow of chastity, Malory allows the impression that Bors willfully made his singular sexual misstep. Malory’s choice to leave out the story of Sir Bors being undone by love magic follows the larger trend of Malory reducing the amount of magic in the overall narrative. 238 Helen Cooper discusses the scarcity of magic in Malory’s text, observing:

> The supernatural is limited to a handful of episodes (only the love-potion and Morgan’s horn outside the story of Lancelot and Elaine); the motivating force of the many actions instead becomes a web of shifting allegiances, inspired most often at the start of the Book by motives of political loyalty or personal admiration, but giving way increasingly to hatred and envy—words that begin to take over dominance from ‘fellowship.’ 239

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237 His name is adapted to Sir Bors in Middle English and is translated as such in the modern English version of the *Vulgate* as well. He appears in Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur* as Sir Bors although Malory edits out much of his narrative, including this love magic episode.

238 The magic that does appear is either acceptable because it is used legitimately, in service of the king (generally by Merlin and the Lady of the Lake) or threatening and dangerous when it is wielded outside of the control of the court’s authority (such as by Morgan le Fay and Hallewes the Sorceress).

Malory’s editorializing of the Arthurian material is influenced by the historical context of the War of Roses, in which he was intimately involved and not only with a single side. Malory’s choices of which characters to put into the spotlight, which to elevate in status, and which to vilify all exist within the historical context of his own cultural situation. Writing Le Morte while jailed during the War of the Roses, Malory was likely deliberate in his presentation of and focus on various characters who hold narrative similarities to prominent historical figures of his own time.\textsuperscript{240} Lancelot benefits from this, but Sir Bors fades largely into a background role, demoted from his more prominent position in the Vulgate Cycle, in which the full narrative of his experience with love inducing magic is presented.

The logistics of the love magic used on Sir Bohort differ somewhat from those employed on Lancelot—a magical ring rather than a potion is employed to override Bohort’s free will—but other aspects of the episode’s set up are remarkably similar to the Sir Lancelot and Elaine episode. In both knights’ narratives, an older, more knowledgeable women, well-versed in magic makes arrangements for the deception of the knight; a magical method is used to alter the will and desires of the knight so they will participate in intercourse with the woman; and a notable, renowned knight is produced through the single night of copulation between the knight and maiden. Sir Bohort, already a well-honored Arthurian knight, arrives at the court of King Brangoire\textsuperscript{241} and joins a tournament being held there, immediately


\textsuperscript{241} His name is adapted to King Braundegorys in Middle English and is translated as King Brandegorre in the modern English version of the Vulgate.
becoming fodder for the court ladies’ gossip and drawing the interest of the king’s daughter.

After performing well and being chosen as the best knight, Bohort is given two honors: first, to take a maiden of his choosing as his wife, which he declines, and second, to play matchmaker between twelve maidens of the court and the elected twelve best knights. He hands the matchmaking duties off to King Brangoire, who, he states, knows the knights and ladies better than he does and therefore is more suited for the task. Bohort only requests the caveat that the king’s daughter not be assigned to a knight though, and this angers her since it twice deprives her of her opportunity for a good marriage (first to Bohort who by all rights was supposed to take her as his wife and then by preventing her from being matched with another knight). Still deeply interested in him, she confides in her governess that night; the governess, wise in the ways of magic, promises to handle it and goes to Bohort, giving him a magical ring to wear. As expected, the ring changes his will, and he goes to her and sleeps with her.

From the beginning of the episode, the attentions between Bohort and the king’s daughter are wildly unequal; the maiden notices Bohort as soon as he rides into the area, first observing his beauty and later his fighting prowess. During the entire tournament, the king’s daughter seeks her companions’ opinions of Bohort, and they all gush over him. Bohort’s first awareness of the maiden is not even through his own notice, but rather comes as a result of his squire pointing her out to Bohort. The maiden goads Bohort a little and he enters the frey, joining the king’s side in the tournament where he shows off his brawn in addition to his beauty. His efforts do not go unnoticed, and the ladies periodic comments during the Vulgate’s narration of the tournament are all about Sir Bohort and include various admirations of his appearance and his abilities, such as “moult li fu diex deboinaires qui tel
largesce li donna de biaute” [“God was very gracious to give him such a generous supply of beauty’’] and “Il puet bien dire securement que diex li a donne biaus dons proece et biaute. Car plus biau cheualier ne vi ie onques. Ne meillour a mon escient’’ [“he can certainly say that God has given him two gifts, prowess and beauty, because we can’t recall having ever seen a more handsome or a more valiant knight’’].

Although it is perhaps unsurprising considering her higher rank than her companions, but time and again, the ladies’ commentary on Bohort is initiated through the king’s daughter’s questions and observations about him. After the tournament, it is she who reminds the ladies that they are to choose “le mellour cheualier de cest tornoiement. Et apres lez xij meillors” [“the best knight of all and, after him, the twelve next best’’].

The specific assignment of this duty to the other ladies and their subsequent return of a decision to the king’s daughter show that she does not actively participate in this decision; this then is a likely reason for her continual commentary to the ladies about Sir Bohort during the course of the tournament, for, as we later learn, the tournament is being held for the purpose of finding her a husband. Since tradition seems to prevent the king’s daughter from directly participating in choosing the best knight and his twelve peers, her constant references to him are her way of indicating to the ladies which knight she wants chosen for the title of “best knight of all,” and as a result, the assumed title of her husband. Her agreement with their decision hints at this since she “sacorde bien a lor acort’’ [“concurred happily with their judgment’’].

During the celebrations after a resounding victory by the king’s side, the knights learn the ladies have chosen Bohort as the best knight, for which he is especially honored. Demonstrating her interest in Bohort, the king’s daughter pays him particular attentions, bringing him a rich robe to wear after his dirtied armor had been removed. After the spectacular feast, music begins, and the ladies are dressed elegantly in preparation for the matchmaking they know is set to come as is the tradition. The narrator tells that the king’s daughter was the most beautiful among the ladies, and this commentary falls in line with the frequent references to her beauty that are present throughout this episode. However, the sources of opinions on the beauty of the two eventual lovers are notably different: Bohort’s beauty and prowess are continually voiced by the characters of the episode, mainly the ladies and foremost among them, the king’s daughter; however, mentions of the beauty of the king’s daughter never come from Bohort, instead being highlighted by narrator and, at one point, Bohort’s squire. The difference in who is voicing observations of beauty further emphasize who is romantically interested in whom within this dynamic. This also has later implications for Bohort’s role in the Grail quest as one of the three Grail knights—his lack of interest in and notice of the maiden’s beauty aligns with his vow of chastity he has taken and also shows that he is pure in both physical and emotional states.

After the feast, the king explains to Bohort his reward:

que vous poes prendre la plus bele de toutes ces damoiseles a vostre c[h]ois et toute lonnor et toute la rikece que elle a. Et encore vouous convient il autre cose a faire. Car vous poes a ches xij cheualiers qui deuant vous sont donner sij damoiseles. Lezqueles que vous voldrois.

[for you have earned such a reward that you may claim the most beautiful of these maidens for yourself, with all the honor and riches she has. And you’re permitted to
do even more: you may give twelve maidens of your choosing to the twelve knights who are before you.]\textsuperscript{245}

This places the fate of the ladies, including the king’s daughter, into Bohort’s control, but being uncomfortable with the arrangement, he seeks clarification from the king on whether he has to carry out his task, and upon being told he does in order to uphold the court’s tradition, Bohort inquires about the possibility of a knight not wanting a wife.\textsuperscript{246} The king, explains that the knight need not take a wife, but must still fulfill his matchmaking duties for the other twelve knights, which reveals the tradition’s true purpose of forging marriages. Bohort abdicates his charge, placing the decision of matching knights and ladies back upon the king, and refuses a lady for himself. He commands only one exception—that the lady who gave him his robe (the king’s daughter) not be among the ladies given away to the twelve knights, “car certes il na cheualier en tout le monde en qui sa biaute fust bien emploie” [“because surely there is only one knight in the whole world who merits her beauty”].\textsuperscript{247} This signifies his good intentions in forbidding her pairing, and it is Bohort’s only direct acknowledgement of the maiden’s beauty. Although it appears genuinely intended as a compliment, it prevents her from being married as she had hoped and planned to be as a result of the tournament.

Ironically, Bohort’s exclusion of the king’s daughters from the ladies who would be matched with the twelve knights fulfills the very fault he attempts to avoid by handing off the matchmaking decisions to the king; Bohort had previously expressed concern about the


\textsuperscript{246} The same consideration of a lady possible unwillingness to marry in general or to marry the knight she is matched with is not even a given a thought in the text or in Bohort’s mind.

responsibility stating, “sil nassiet bien lex xij damoiseles. la honte en sera soie et li damages a cheles qui forfait ne lont pas” [“yet if his decision is displeasing to the ladies, then the shame will be his and the harm will fall to the maidens, who will have done nothing to deserve it”].

By preventing the king’s daughter from being matched and married, Bohort’s decision does displease the lady and it is her displeasure which the governess states as the reason Bohort must take and wear the ring (which at the time he does not know is magical). This deception occurs later that night after the other ladies have been happily matched up and the king’s daughter is upset that she was not able to participate. Bohort’s behavior and balking at the idea of taking a wife turns the ladies’ opinion against him and they even curse him for his meanness.

It is in her bedchamber that night with her governess that the king’s daughter expresses her unhappiness and a plot is crafted. The king’s daughter declares that she loves a knight so passionately that if she were not to have him, she would surely die. The maiden gives lip-service to the symptoms of lovesickness but no physical symptoms seem to actually manifest, casting some doubt as to the genuineness of her love and allowing for the possibility that she is more upset about not getting her way than about not getting Bohort’s love. The maiden’s agency in securing her governess’s magical abilities also seems enhanced in the text through the narrator’s first introduction of the governess as “vielle dame. Si sauoit a[s]ses de charmes & denchantemens” [“an old lady who was well instructed in charms and enchantments”] even before the king’s daughter discloses her grief to the governess. The

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positioning of this information gives the sense that the daughter is aware of her governess’s magical knowledge and may be intending for it to be employed to help resolve her situation. Whether this is the maiden’s intent or not, this is how things play out—the governess here’s the maiden’s dilemma and after confirming that the king’s daughter will not give up on her love for Bohort for anything, the governess steps in to fix things for the maiden. The governess herself suggests that she has special expertise in love magic as she reassures the king’s daughter that “Et se vous ames par amours ie vous y puis bien aideier. Et plus que toutes les femmes del monde” [“if it’s a problem of your being in love with someone, I’ll be able to help you with that better than any living woman”].

The king’s daughter accepts this offer of help, tells the governess whom she loves, and willingly submits to the governess’s plan. After the governess’s declaration that she can help best if it is a matter of love, the narrator shifts from referring to her by her title “governess” to calling her “the old woman.” This change in how she is presented to the readers aligns with various stereotypes of the old woman enchantress who would work love magic for younger lovers. The old woman tells the king’s daughter to rest easy and sleep because she will take care of Bohort in the meantime: “Et uees chi anel que iou li porterai de par vous qui a si grant force quil vous amera ou il voelle ou non Et iou vous aiderai a mon pooir si que iou le ferai uenir en la uostre chambre” [“Here is a ring that I will take to him on your behalf. It has such great power that he will love you whether he wants to or not. I’ll help you as best I can to make him come to your room”]. The description of the ring’s abilities

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signals its violation of the wearer’s free will since it forces him to love the lady regardless of what he desires. Since free will is based on one’s ability to follow their own desires, the ring violates free will by preventing the wearer from doing so. The maiden does as instructed, and the old woman goes to Bohort, who had not yet fallen asleep.252 Once in audience with him, she explains the purpose of her visit is to lodge a complaint with him from the king’s daughter. The women goes through the complaint and is honest about the things that led to the lady’s disgruntlement—Bohort’s refusal of her, particularly after she showed him such reverence in the court, and then his preventing her from gaining a different husband.

Without any defense or explanation from Bohort, the woman makes the complaint on behalf of the maiden and then tells him, “Et pour chou ne remaint il mie quele ne vous enuoit sien anel. Et vous prie que vous le portes dore en auant pour lamour de li. pour chou que aucune foys soies ramembrans de li & de vostre mesfait” [“And that’s why she doesn’t hesitate to send you one of her rings and entreat you to wear it from now on, so that you’ll remember her as well as your misdeed”].253 The gift of the ring follows the general pattern of giving a love token,254 but here it has been adapted to account for the one sided love between the king’s daughter and Bohort; the ring functions as a symbol for remembering both the lady (like a love token) and for remembering Bohort’s offence against her.255 This framing of the

252 This follows the tradition of the go-between character who passes communication between potential lovers and helps arrange for them to meet in person, often directing the development of their relationship through their role. For more on the role of go-between characters, consider Leyla Rouhi, Mediation and Love: A Study of the Medieval Go-Between in Key Romance and Near-Eastern Texts (Cologne, Germany: Brill Academic Publishers, 1999).
254 Magical love tokens which facilitate love will be addressed in chapter four.
255 This second function is reminiscent of the green girdle in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight which Gawain first accepts as a gift given as a (supposed) love token but which, by
reasons for the gift manipulate Bohort into accepting it because it requires no commitment of love on his end, but does appeal to his need to uphold his honor as a knight.

The ring is no mere symbolic token though, and as soon as Bohort puts it on, its magical influence takes effect and the ring’s suppression of Bohort’s free will is apparent:

Et bohort sip rent lanel & le met en son doit. Et si tost quil li ot mis si li est li cuers mues moult durement. Car se il estoit par deuant de froide nature et uirgenes et enfes. Ore est chaus de ce don’t il ne li estoit orains riens. Si se tient a trop mal bailli de ce don’t la damoisele li auoit mande.

[So Bors took the ring and placed it on his finger. As soon as he had put in on, his heart changed completely. If earlier his heart had been cold by nature and virginal in thought and deed, now it desired what it had formerly shunned. So then he considered himself ruined because of what the lady had said to him.]256

The magic of the ring alters his desires by changing his heart, shifting him from his state of uninterest in romance and sex (his “cold” heart that was “virginal”) to wanting those things. The change in his will is so dramatic that he immediately worries about his chances with the lady since she had sent the old woman with a complaint about Bohort’s treatment of her, and he pleads to the old woman to help him reunite with the king’s daughter and make up for his transgressions against her. With everything going as planned, the old woman agrees to help him by taking him to the lady. Upon entering the bedchamber of the king’s daughter, Bohort begs her for the opportunity to right his wrongs against her and places himself in her power, offering to let her acquire “si grans que si haute amende com il li afiert puist par moi estre

rendue. Et prendes ent tel uengance comme il vous plaira” [“as great a reparation as is your
due. Avenge yourself against me however you please”].

Being more interested in securing herself a husband than her vengeance, the king’s daughter forgives Bohort, but the old
woman gives him the “lamende” [“penance”], which he accepts, of remaining with the king’s
daughter from then on, and tells the maiden to accept him. The old woman, although relying
on love magic, takes on the role of a faux priest here as she first assigns penance to Bohort
and then pairs the two together using language resembling a marriage vow:

“Or vous commanc iou donc fait elle que vous demoures hui mes aueques li. Et vous damoisele ne le
refuses mie. Ains le recheues comme celui qui tous est vostres et vous sieue. Et lors les met
ensamble & ferme la camber & puis sen ist” [“‘Now I command you, as dear as you hold
your life, that you remain with her from this moment on. And you, my lady, do not refuse
him, but rather receive him as your own and you be his.’ Then the lady left them together and
closed the bedroom door on them”].

After commanding the two lovers to each other, she
retreats from the private bedchamber, leaving little doubt as their impending consummation
of the relationship.

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Lancelot-Grail, 3:55.

258 This behavior aligns with the concept of the religion of love that is frequently employed in
medieval romances. The religion of love centers on devotion to one’s lover, and utilizes
behaviors traditional in Christianity to display that devotion to one’s lover in a form of
romantic worship. For a more detailed examination of the medieval religion of love, see
and the foundational work on courtly love by C. S. Lewis in The Allegory of Love: A Study in
Medieval Tradition.

Lancelot-Grail, 3:55.
Hidden away from any prying eyes, the physical union of the king’s daughter and Bohort is recorded only through the eyes of the narrator, whose commentary reveals a divinely approved conception as the result:

Ensi sont li doi uirgene assamble fille de roy et fil de roy. Et chou dont il nauoient onques rien ueu ne seu lor aprent nature. si sentraprochent si carnelment ensamble que lez flors de uirginite sont espandues. Et si ouura tant a cele assamblee la grace de dieu et sa volente deuine que la damoisele conchut helain le balnc qui puis fu empereres de constantinoble. Et passa lez bonnes aixandre…Et pour ce que cils assemblemens fu fais en pechie & par ignorance denfans ne remest il mie que diex nen eust pitie. Ne il ne vault pas que lor virginite fust corrumpue por noient Ains y mist fruit si haut que onques de. Si iouenes enfes ne descendi si haut fruit.

[In this way were the two virgins brought together, the son of a king and the daughter of a queen and king. Nature taught them to do what they had never known anything about. They joined together in carnal union so that the flowers of virginity were scattered between them. The grace and divine will of God worked in such a way during their union that the lady conceived Helain the White who later became Emperor of Constantinople and surpassed the deeds of the good Alexander…Thus, even if this union resulted from the young couple’s sin and ignorance, God nevertheless took pity on them and would not allow their virginity to be corrupted in vain. Instead, he placed such a noble fruit there that no more powerful tree had ever before been engendered from two such young stems.] 260

The emphasis on the virginity of both parties is unique here as it is most commonly the woman’s virginity that is centered in descriptions of intercourse in romance, 261 but because Bohort’s chastity is so central to his role in the Grail quest, it is important for the narrative to emphasize it here, during the single incidence when his vow of chastity is broken. The focus on virginity, often understood as sexual pureness or innocence, within the couple’s union also supports the narrator’s claim that the resulting conception is divinely willed. Their innocence is made clear not only through direct statements of their virginities, but also

261 See the discussion on the description of Lancelot and Elaine’s coupling earlier in this chapter.
through the narrator’s comment about them knowing nothing about sex and learning through experience in the moment, guided by their natural instincts. The narrator makes clear the occurrence of physical intercourse between the two (as if any doubt could exist considering the conception of a child), but elevates the tone of their coupling through common romance tropes for sex scenes (the “flower of virginity”) and through the immediate turn from any lust involved to God’s intervention in and use of the situation. The focus becomes spiritual with the narrator explaining how the conception of their son, Helain le Blanc, was worked through “la grace de dieu et sa volente deuine” [“the grace and divine will of God”]. The narrator belabors the role of God, crediting the conception as a gift from God’s pity as well as a form of divine pragmatism—why let a good carnal union between two virgins go to waste when it offers the opportunity for God to let them conceive a great man?262 Although not as famous in Arthurian legend as King Arthur or even Galahad, Helain le Blanc still qualifies as a great man considering his future role as Emperor of Constantinople. His prominent title also furthers the Vulgate’s elevation of French knights (Lancelot’s kin group) by showing their wide-reaching power within the world.

262 In medieval romances, great men are rarely the product of marital relations and are often the result of love magic. Gifted bastards are (male) children born out of wedlock who grow up and play important roles in the politics and power dynamics of court life and who accomplish great feats including becoming kings, going on the Grail quest, and becoming emperor. Karen Cherewatuk uses the term “holy bastards” to describe the children whose conceptions are divinely ordained within extramarital relations, such as Bors’s son Helain le Blanc and Lancelot’s son Galahad in “Born-Again Virgins and Holy Bastards: Bors and Elyne and Lancelot and Galahad,” Arthuriana 11, no. 2 (2001): 52-64. See also Stacy L. Hahn and her argument about the amplification of paternal character flaws for children born of illicit relationships in “Genealogy and Adventure in the Cyclic Prose Lancelot,” in Conjunctures: Medieval Studies in Honor of Douglas Kelly, eds. Keith Busby and Norris J. Lacy (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1994), 139-51.
The fruit metaphor in the final line of the passage above is expanded on even further by the narrator who develops an extended metaphor of the laborer offering his labor to the plant as his only contribution to its growth and development. This metaphor does hint at the narrator’s theory of reproduction:

Autresi li hom quant il gist a la feme et il assamble de buen voloir et en bonne volenté, il covient ensamable par lor assamblement, et li germes confre el ventre a la feme tant qu’il a os et char et sance, et tot le cors formé,—et li Haut Sires I met le soreplus, c’est li fruis—, tot ausi ne porent donner li dui enfant fors la façon, et li Haut Sires I mit le fruit et l’esperit.

[…so when man lies with woman and joins with her in good intentions and good will, their desire grows in their union, and the seed germinates in the woman’s belly until it has bone and flesh and blood, and the body is completely formed—and the Lord on High puts the surplus there, which is the fruit—just so, these two young people could give nothing but their physical effort, and the Lord on High provided the fruit and the spirit.]²⁶³

The narrator reveals a belief that the intentions of the man are important in both the development of their union and the facilitation of a pregnancy. Even more, he separates the physical from the spiritual aspects of conception—all the people can do is create the physical, which emerges as a result of their contributed physical labors, but it is the Lord who gives the spirit and makes the union productive through providing the “fruit” (in this case, Helain le Blanc). In an agricultural sense, the pollination of a flower is only good when it results in the production of fruit; similarly, God’s blessing of Bohort and the king’s daughter’s mutual loss of their virginity (their flowers) allows the union to be viewed positively because of what it produces. The narrator goes on to evaluate this union, which was the result of love magic and against Bohort’s will, by discussing the reactions of non-present entities. Readers are first told of the devil’s reaction—pleasure because he thought he

had both lovers now in his grasp (they are not married after all, despite the old woman’s faux marriage ritual with them). The narrator does clarify that the devil later learned he was mistaken, and although the narrator does not explain this comment, one can reasonably assume that Bohort’s prominent role as one of the three finalists in the Grail quest, the ultimate challenge of spiritual and moral pureness is likely what is being referenced. The Lady of the Lake’s reaction of surprise is also addressed, although her reaction is distress at Bohort’s loss of his virginity, thus violating his intention to remain a virgin his whole life and his vow of chastity.

Bohort, like Lancelot, realizes what happened the following morning; however, whereas the potion used on Lancelot seems to have worn off, Bohort is only freed from the love magic influencing him because the ring was slightly too large and slipped off his finger while rubbing his hands after returning to his own bedchamber in the early hours of the morning. When the ring is dislodged from his being, Bohort returns to his right mind and “Et lors saperchut il quil auoit este decheus. si en fu moult dolans. si soffri ensi iusques au ior Et lors se eua & ala oir messe” [“Bors then realized that he had been deceived. He was chagrined, and he waited suffering until dawn. Then he rose and went to Mass”].\(^{264}\) Bohort, understanding the consequences of his encounter seems to take the approach of self-blame, being “chagrined” and the implication of confession that is built into his immediate attendance at Mass. Because his only blunder in chastity is this encounter which only occurred through the use of love inducing magic, Bohort is still able to participate in the Grail quest, becoming a finalist alongside Galahad and Perceval. Bohort leaves the court

although he does speak with the king’s daughter before doing so, and she gives him a broach to wear; this time her gift is a non-magical love token, and makes him promise to come back within six months in case she is pregnant since she wants him to claim the child. He promises only to try to return in that time and rides off hurriedly, leaving her behind distraught. Bohort does return eventually to claim his son, but that occurs when the boy is a teenager and at that time Helain le Blanc is handed off from King Brangoire to Bohort without any consultation with the king’s daughter, Helain’s mother, and he is taken to King Arthur’s court where his journey of greatness begins. Prior to Bohort’s taking possession of his son though, Lancelot meets the king’s daughter and the boy Helain le Blanc, to whom Lancelot is kin. In this brief meeting, Lancelot is delighted to learn that Helain is the son of Bohort and is told the story of how Helain was conceived:

Et la damoisele qui herbergiet auoit lancelot. Li contre tot ensi comme bohors auoit geu a la damoisele. Et lancelot pense maintenant que ensi li estoit il auenu de la fille le roy pelles qui auoit enfant de lui. Si comme on li auoit dit.

[And the maiden who had given Lancelot shelter told him all about how Bors had lain with the lady and according to divine plan. He was sure that this was true, and reflected that the same thing had happened to him with King Pelles’s daughter, who already had a child by him, as he had been told.]265

This exchange validates the belief that Helain’s conception was divinely ordained and it shows no moral condemnation of the King Brangoire’s daughter for using love magic.

Lancelot, a victim of love inducing magic himself, accepts the story as true because of his own experiences with love magic and resulting divinely planned offspring, but he does not take any moral issue with what has been done to his kinsman Bohort. In fact, Lancelot

entreats the lady not to be mad at Bohort for not returning to her within the set time and even promises himself to her as her knight in service.

The narrative has Lancelot acknowledge the similarities between his own experience and Bohort’s, but in fact the consequences of their respective encounters do affect them differently. The encounter for Bohort is a violation of his vow of chastity, and as a result, a loss of his chance at being the ultimate Grail winner. This also preemptively eliminates Bohort’s potential competition to Galahad, which is further evidence that this instance of love magic is divinely acceptable because it contributes to God’s overarching plans for both Bohort and Galahad. However, because he is chaste before and after the singular, magically induced incident with King Brangoire’s daughter, he is still allowed to advance as one of the final three Grail knights. Lancelot on the other hand is never able to be a real competitor in the Grail quest because, despite being a superior knight in terrestrial matters, his love for Guinevere prevents him from achieving the spiritual (i.e., sexual) purity that the quest requires. Overlooking the possible emotional trauma of being magically forced into sex, Lancelot loses little from his encounter with Elaine—Guinevere is mad at him for a while, but they ultimately reconcile. Bohort loses much more because it breaks his vow of chastity which in turn ruins his chances for being the true Grail winner. The violation of each man’s free will is accepted within the text though because it is part of God’s divine plan; in both cases, the divine plan includes the use of the knight’s magically induced love and night of passion as an opportunity for the conception of a blessed child who becomes prominent in

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266 I am deliberately avoiding using the term “rape” here to avoid anachronistically placing modern evaluations onto the text. However, I fully acknowledge that when applying the modern definition of rape, that is exactly what happens to both men since neither consent.
the world. Bohort’s son becomes an important ruler as Emperor of Constantinople, and Lancelot’s son, whose conception was even foretold in prophecies, goes on to win the Grail.

**Uther and Igraine**

Another noble bastard, King Arthur, is also conceived through means of love inducing magic. Although Merlin’s prediction of Galahad’s conception is first mentioned well in advance of the interactions and love magic used between Lancelot and Elaine, Merlin’s foretelling of King Arthur’s conception by King Uther and Igraine exists as part of the unfolding narrative of their relationship and becomes part of the motive for Merlin’s direct involvement in using magic to induce Igraine to “love” Uther. Once again, the relationship involves identity deception but produces a great man (one of the nine worthies), and this is pre-ordained and endorsed by God. Like the narrative of Lancelot and Elaine, there are multiple versions of the conception of King Arthur that appear throughout medieval Arthurian literature. The shared foundational narrative of these different versions is that Uther sees Igraine, who is married to the Duke of Tintagel, one of Uther’s dukes, and falls in love with her. Out of desire to have Igraine as his own, he goes to war with the duke and while the two sides are at battle, Merlin helps disguise Uther as the duke and sneak him in to see Igraine. Igraine, believing Uther to be her husband, has intercourse with him and is it

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267 The nine worthies are first explicitly identified in Jacques de Longyuon’s early fourteenth century *Voeux du Paon*, and include three pagan, three Jewish, and three Christian men who are recognized as the worthiest men across history. The acknowledgement of the selected men (Hector, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Joshua, David, Judas Maccabeus, King Arthur, Charlemagne, and Godfrey of Bouillon) as noble and courageous predates Jacques’s formation of the nine worthies though. Caxton references the nine worthies in his preface to *Le Morte Darthur* because King Arthur is one of the three Christian worthies.
through this that King Arthur is born; the duke is killed this same night and Uther, as himself, takes Igraine as his wife.

The details within this narrative outline vary from author to author, sometimes in particularly significant ways, such as Malory’s inclusion of the exact timing of conception: “So after the deth of the duke Kyng Uther lay with Igrayne, more than thre houres after his deth, and begat on her that nyght Arthur.”268 The exact temporal locating of the conception as firmly (although quite soon) after the death of Igraine’s husband ensures that there is no room for Arthur to be deemed illegitimate. Igraine, although deceived into the encounter, is not being adulterous, knowingly or unknowingly, because at the point at which she sleeps with Uther, she is not a married woman, but a widow. The precision in the timing of the conception is absent from the earlier Vulgate Cycle, but in both versions, Merlin’s price for having helped Uther obtain Igraine is the same—the male child that was conceived through the union. Uther is compliant to this price in both versions, but whereas the Vulgate Cycle does not have Merlin making his specific demand until after the union has occurred, Malory changes this into an agreement made prior to Merlin’s assistance being rendered.

The descriptions of Merlin’s methods likewise vary slightly, although both versions have a clearly magical implication to them. The Vulgate Cycle explains the disguise in more detail than Malory, stating: “Lors sen vont dune part & se dessamblent entre lui & ulfin si sen retournent au roy. & merlins aporta vne herbe & li rois la prinst si sen froia. & quant il sen fu froies si ot tout apertement la semblance del duc” [“He {Merlin} and Ulfin went to one side, separated, and went straight back to the king. Merlin brought a herb, and the king took it and rubbed himself with it; and after he put it on himself, he looked unmistakably just like the

268 Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 3.
Despite the use of a herb to instigate the identity transformation, the accuracy of the deception implies that it is magical and not simply natural. Herbs were frequently used in medieval magic, and thus the use of an herb by Merlin, a well-known magician, to create an “unmistak[able]” disguise, suggests that this process is magical in nature. This is further supported by the same accuracy occurring in the disguises of Ulfin as Jordan and Merlin as Bretel (two of the knights closest to the duke). A natural (non-magical) use of an herb to disguise oneself might work on a basic level, but would not create a particularly convincing replication of another person’s appearance, and certainly would not do so for the transformation of three different men’s identities. The text reveals the perfection of the magical disguise as King Uther is amazed at Ulfin’s transformation:

And Merlin said then, “Do you recall ever having seen Jordan?”
The king answered, “I know him very well.”
And Merlin showed him Ulfin in the likeness of Jordan.
When Ulfin saw the king, he said, “Good Lord God! How can any man be changed to look like another?”
And the king asked him, “What do you think about me?”
Ulfin answered, “I recognize you as no one but the duke.”
And the king told him that he looked just like Jordan. After they had spoken thus for a while, Merlin came, and it seemed to them that he was Bretel.

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And the king asked him, “What do you think about me?”
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And the king told him that he looked just like Jordan. After they had spoken thus for a while, Merlin came, and it seemed to them that he was Bretel].

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The disguises that have been created are depicted as good enough that these men, who know each other quite well, would not have recognized each other’s true identity had they not already known it. Later Merlin is described as looking “just like Bretel,” further emphasizing the precision in his transformed appearance.

The disguises of the three men, and particularly of Uther as the duke are in fact so thorough that Igraine too is fooled without having any suspicions. Although the gatekeepers the three men encounter would have been well acquainted with the appearance of the Duke of Tintagel, Jordan, and Bretel, if anyone would have been able to discern the disguise, it would have been Igraine who would know her husband more intimately than anyone else. Even though Igraine is intimate with the disguised Uther, she holds no suspicions of his real identity, nor gives any indication of suspecting him of being anyone but her husband the duke. Later, once her pregnancy begins to show and Uther, now her husband, presses her about the father’s identity, she recounts her experiences of that night, emphasizing her complete belief at the time that the man she had lain with had been her husband the duke. She explains, “quidai chertainement que ce fust mes sires” [“I thought certainly that he was my husband”].

Although Arthur, a prophesied and divinely chosen king, is the product of this conception, the use of love magic does not go without some gentle critique by the author of the Vulgate Cycle. The reactions of the victims of love inducing magic reveal the power dynamics tied to their genders. Whereas the two men, Lancelot and Galahad, are able to openly express their emotional responses and then leave the individual with whom they were

forced into sexual relations, Igraine is maneuvered into a marriage with Uther and is manipulated into feeling shame and fear at the revelation of what happened to her. When Uther calls Merlin to discuss Igraine’s agreement to give up the child (she is not informed the specifics of why or to whom), Merlin explains to the king that “ulfins sest auques aquites des pechies que il ot des amors faire. Mais iou ne me sui mie aquites del pechie que iou aidai la dame a decheuoir del engenderment quele a en son ventre & si ne seit qui il est” [“Ulfin has to a degree atoned for his sins in abetting your love-making. But I have not atoned for my sin in helping to deceive the lady about the child fathered in her womb and she does not know by whom”].

Here, Merlin clearly identifies the magical deception as a sin, although it is Ulfin who seems to hold this sin, while Merlin’s own sin he identifies as the deception about the identity of the child, not necessarily in helping the love-making. Interestingly, Uther is not assigned any portion of the sin, despite being the one who was the most directly engaged—it is Uther who actually has intercourse with Igraine and it is Uther who fails to reveal to Igraine that he is the father of the child she bears.

Uther’s response to Merlin’s commentary about Ulfin’s and his own sins in the matter is that “vous estes si sages & si preus que vous uous en sures bien aquiter” [“You are so learned and so worthy that you will know how to atone for this”]. Merlin does seem to know, and states that it will require Uther’s help. It is at this point that we learn the specifics of Merlin’s plan for Arthur—to place him with a foster family from a nearby country in Uther’s kingdom. The chronological progression of the two men’s conversation from atoning

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for the sin of their deception to this placement of Arthur creates an implied causal relationship that suggests Merlin’s plan for Arthur to be raised by this family, instead of by Uther, is his atonement. Because of Arthur’s later status as an unknown young man and not as known heir is what sets the scene for the sword in the stone events (which are the clear divine acknowledgement of Arthur’s right to rule), the hiding away of Arthur with an unknown family is also part of the divine plan, and thus, by overseeing the events that are part of a divine plan, Merlin is able to not only atone for his self-identified sin, but is able to help ensure the divinely ordained product (King Arthur) of what would have otherwise been a sinful union between Uther and Igraine comes to fulfill his divinely established purpose.

There is little question about the divine approval of Arthur as king, since he proves himself through pulling the sword out of the stone on several occasions. This test of the sword and the stone is not only presented to the people after a prayer from a holy man, with a prophecy\textsuperscript{274} engraved on the stone explaining its purpose, it is christened by the holy man with holy water (which is what reveals the engraving), making it clear that this is a test and message sent by God. The stone is not the only source of credibility for its purpose; the archbishop tells the people, after a week of their failed attempts to remove the sword, that “nus hors ne lostera se cil non que nostre sires voldra qui soit sires” (“no man will ever draw it out but the one whom Our Lord wills to be king”).\textsuperscript{275} Aside from the brief mention by Merlin of the sins for which Ulfin and Merlin must atone, there is a distinct lack of critique

\textsuperscript{274} A frequent tool in Arthurian romances, prophecies are often used to divulge criteria which an unknown individual must meet to prove themselves as Galahad does with the Siege Perilous and Arthur does with the sword in the stone. Prophecies offer the society a peek into God’s plan, and so in medieval romances, they also determine what events are divinely ordained, such as Lancelot’s union with Elaine.

for the love magic used to get Uther and Igraine together. Even in his brief identification of
the sin involved, Merlin does not specifically condemn the use of love magic or the deception
of Igraine that night. He does condemn his own later role in deceiving her about the resulting
child’s identity, and leaves Ulfin’s “sins in abetting [Uther’s] love-making” vague and more
open to interpretation—the sin might as easily be abetting sexual relations outside of
intercourse as anything else. This lack of a clear condemnation of the use of love magic,
along with the happy ending that seems to be crafted between Igraine and Uther, and the
result of Arthur as the divinely chosen king all suggest that the love magic used by Merlin in
this situation is acceptable because, like in the case of Galahad, it was necessary in order for
God’s plan to come to fruition.

Igraine, the victim of the love magic, is not designated by the narrator as having
committed any sin (unlike Lancelot whose lust was considered sinful) since her actions are
the direct result of the magical deception which prevent her from making an informed, and
therefore, free choice. Nonetheless, in the Vulgate, Uther implies that she has done
something wrong when he warns her not to let anyone else know of her encounter with the
figure disguised as the duke, her husband. By not telling her that he was the one she had slept
with that night, Uther allows her to continue feeling as if what she has done is somehow
wrong. Malory alters the conversation between Uther and Igraine, adding more honesty about
the events and allowing Igrayne the relief of learning with whom she had slept.

Overall, Arthur’s conception is presented quite similarly in Malory’s account;
although, the identities the men take on are slightly changed with Merlin appearing as Sir
Jordanus and Ulfyus taking on the appearance of Syre Brastias. Malory also adds the warning
from Merlin to Uther to “wayte ye make not many questions with her nor her men.” It is unclear if this warning stems simply from a lack of faith in King Uther’s acting skills or the possibility that although the men look like the Duke of Tyntigail, Syr Jordanus, and Syre Brastias their voices would not sound like them. This uncertainty is even more challenging to unravel since Malory eliminates any details about the process of their transformation, removing the reference to the herb that had been in the Vulgate Cycle. The only hint of the magic used in this deception is Igrayne’s amazement at the events when she learns that her husband had been dead by the time she believed she was laying with him: “thenne she merveilled who that myghte be that laye with her in lykenes of her lord.” Malory adapts the later events of King Arthur’s birth though, and Uther reveals to Igrayne that it was in fact him with whom she had slept that night and “he told her alle the cause, how it was by Merlyn’s counceil.” Merlin’s claiming of the child is more consensual in Malory’s version as well, for instead of demanding the child be handed over, Merlin instead suggests proper arrangements to King Uther for “the nourisshyng of your child” with Sir Ector’s family. Along with the removal of Igrayne’s continued ignorance about Uther’s actions to conceive with her, Malory also removes any discussion of sin committed by the men. Considering Malory’s emphatic legitimizing of Arthur’s conception, this removal seems to be a likely attempt to ensure that the reader does not think that there was anything immoral about Arthur’s conception or the way it came about.

276 Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 3.
277 Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 4.
278 Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 5.
279 Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 5.
The love magic used in the narratives of Uther and Igraine, of Sir Bors and King Brangoire’s daughter, and of Lancelot and Elaine do not create love in the same way that the potion in *Tristan and Isolde* does, yet nonetheless it induces love through deception about reality, coercion of its victims into action, and overriding their free will. Tristan and Isolde, both victims of the love potion, are stripped of their free will through the magic’s control of their emotions. Lancelot’s faculties are confounded by the potion, leading him to take an action he never would have otherwise. Sir Bohort throws his long-held vow of chastity out in a fit of desperation for love, caused by a magic ring. Igraine’s senses are magically deceived, leading her to believe that she is fulfilling her role as a loyal wife. The magic used on Tristan and Isolde is condemned clearly by the author both through the narrator’s commentary on the potion and by the eventual result of the relationship between the two lovers. However, both Gottfried and earlier authors like Béroul seem to excuse the lovers from any responsibility and elevate their love within the narrative. The positive outcomes and lack of condemnation of the magic used to induce the love of Lancelot, Bohort, and Igraine for their respective bedmates, suggests that there is no real moral issue with the administering of magic in these instances. In the case of the love inducing magic utilized by Uther on Igraine, a great and legendary king is conceived, and the results of the magical deception appear positive. However, Igraine’s acceptance of her new situation as Uther’s wife is glossed over by the text, perhaps suggesting that some uneasiness may still exist regarding the personal ramifications of love magic; although, by the time of Uther’s death, Igraine appears to have adjusted to her role as his wife as she grieves over his passing. The explicit and implicit role these relationships play in the divine plan (Sir Galahad’s eventual winning of the Grail, Helain le Blanc’s emperorship in Constantinople, and King Arthur’s reign as a legendary
king) allow for an acceptance of love magic when, under other circumstances, its use would be problematic for its violation of free will.

The love potion in *Tristan and Isolde*, presented as morally wrong, overrides the free will of the lovers and determines their emotions toward each other, leading to their later choices to engage in an affair. The love magic used on Lancelot, Sir Bohort, and Igraine embodies a different violation of its victim’s free will by using coercion rather than compulsion. Although the action of sleeping with their partner is not compelled through the magic, both Lancelot and Igraine are deprived of their free will through the magic’s effects because of their inability to freely consent due to the deception regarding their respective partner’s identity, and in Lancelot’s case, his impaired faculties. The magical ring that controls Sir Bors is the example closest in its effects to the *Tristan and Isolde* love potion. In this sense, the love potion, although resulting in an emotional compulsion, still allows a measure of free will over one’s actions, since two lovers are able to choose whether or not to be physically intimate—it removes their free will over desire, but not behavior. This same slim allowance of free will is not present in the other three cases in which the victims would not have willingly slept with their deceiver had they not been magically tricked (i.e., coerced) into it. Although it appears that Igraine and Lancelot each freely made the choice to engage in sexual activity, neither did it knowing the true identity of their lover, and therefore neither could fairly consent to the relationship. Although the magic influencing Sir Bors seems targeted at his emotions (it is said to change his heart), this also coerces him into his sexual actions because the magic replaces his deep commitment to his vow of chastity with intense love for the lady.
Although these cases reveal that love magic could be used on either male or female victims, the long-term results for each of the characters reveals that there is still a gendered difference at play. Lancelot, although temporarily punished by Guinevere for the events, eventually regains the favor of his love and his renown and reputation as a knight in no way suffers from his ordeal; if anything, his renown increases because he becomes known to be the father of the greatest knight of all time, Sir Galahad. Lancelot’s immediate reaction upon finding out about the deception is to threaten violence against Elaine and against Dame Brusen for her part in orchestrating things. These threats help to immediately reestablish Lancelot in a position of power over the two women who have enacted this violence against him. They also provide some level of moral rehabilitation for Lancelot by reminding the reader that he was wronged through the deception and has some justification for his violent reaction. Notably, although Elaine reveals to Lancelot her father’s knowledge of the prophecy (and so implies that he knew about the deception), no threats are made against King Pelles. This suggests that it is the sexual violence being enacted by the two women’s deceit that is the true issue for Lancelot, and it is only through Elaine’s recognition of her subordinate place as a woman—she literally pleads her case “kneled downe afore Sir Lancelot”280—that Lancelot is then okay with giving her mercy. He then immediately reaffirms his masculine gender role as sexual aggressor by sweeping her into a kiss since, as the narrator comments, “she was as fayre a lady, and thereto lusty and Yonge and wyse, as ony was that tyme lyvynge.”281 It is after this reestablishment of Lancelot’s role as the

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dominant one between them that he then turns his aggression to the other woman involved in the scheme and makes his threats against Dame Brusen.

Sir Bohort faces more permanent consequences than Lancelot because of how the incident impedes his Grail quest success, yet he is still allowed to become one of the three finalists despite his momentary sexual impurity. He too is brought honor through his son, who becomes an admired member of the Round Table and eventual man of power as the Emperor of Constantinople. Whereas Lancelot reacts with immediate violent wrath when the magical deception is revealed, Sir Bohort seems to internalize the events, and although he is upset and quickly departs the castle, he not only has a conversation with the lady, but even agrees to come back and check on her within six months in case of a pregnancy.

The consequences for Igraine are more significant and harsher. Although she becomes mother to the legendary King Arthur, she either does not get to know about her son’s identity (in the Vulgate Cycle) or has to hand him over to a foster family even though she knows he is Uther’s son (in Le Morte Darthur). In both versions, the deception she was subject to is not something that is celebrated, even though there is no condemnation of the love magic used to enact it or of the results of the deception; instead, Igraine loses her husband in battle as a result of Uther’s efforts to obtain her and then is married to Uther as a form of peace-weaving. Malory’s presentation of this marriage agreement gives Igraine slightly more agency in it, suggesting that the marriage was Uther’s way of making amends to Igraine; but in the Vulgate Cycle there is a more detailed discussion of the agreement and it is portrayed less positively for Igraine. Instead of a joyous and willing tone to the events, Igraine is shown as having little other recourse than to marry after being left in a vulnerable position as a widow who is sexually coveted by King Uther. Furthermore, once married,
Uther uses her pregnancy to silence her about the events, not only withholding from her that she had slept with him that night, but also telling her to “gardes que nus hors ne nule feme le sache a qui vous le poes cheler car vous series hounie son le sauoit” [“take care to hide this from every man and woman you can, for you would be shamed if anyone knew it”].

Although Merlin’s arrangements for Arthur keep this from coming to pass, the awareness that Igraine has of this potential shaming, and Uther’s use of it to coerce her into silence, demonstrates the negative consequences she, as a woman, would be subject to as a result of being a victim of love magic. Although the use of love magic is deemed morally acceptable by the text through divine endorsement of its results (the conceptions of great men), the real-world consequences and trauma that is enacted on both Lancelot and Igraine is still significant and subtly revealed through the text as well.

The Magical Love Triangle, Part I

The character of Nyneve in Malory’s Le Morte Darthur engages in love magic in a way that presents the trifecta of the major functions of love magic which will be discussed in this project—inducing love, disrupting love, and facilitating love. The way in which magic disrupts the love of Pelleas for Ettarde and facilitates Nyneve’s own relationship with Pelleas will be discussed in chapters three and four, but it is the love-inducing magic which Nyneve inflicts upon Ettarde that is relevant for this chapter. In the “Pelleas and Ettarde,” episode of Book IV, the worthy knight Sir Pelleas fruitlessly pursues the noble lady Ettarde, who has him daily humiliated by her knight in response. Although Pelleas’s inherent noblesse and

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martial prowess allows for him to best all the knights Ettarde sends, he willingly succumbs to defeat by the last knight each day so he may be taken prisoner and catch a brief glimpse of his lady-love. After Gawain promises to help set Pelleas up with his lover, and is then caught in bed with Ettarde, Pelleas suffers from great depression—this is the state of affairs when he encounters Nyneve, who recognizes the quality of this knight and, upon hearing his sorrowful tale, chooses to intervene. She first casts an enchantment on Pelleas which puts him to sleep and then commands that no one wake him until she returns. Next, she goes to Ettarde whom she brings to see Pelleas in his enchanted sleep, in a sleeping-beauty like scene. As Ettarde looks upon the sleeping Pelleas, Nyneve enchants her as well, inducing her to love Pelleas out of measure. Nyneve awakens Pelleas, who, the reader is told, no longer loves Ettarde. With the reversal of their fates complete through the two enchantments Nyneve has wrought, Nyneve then takes the noble Pelleas as her own lover, leaving Ettarde to suffer in her newly unrequited love.

In addition to the functions of love magic demonstrated in this episode, Ettarde’s reaction to the love-magic performed on her, provides insight into the way this magic was understood by its victim and how a person’s free will was affected. After Nyneve’s enchantment, Ettarde exclaims “A, Lorde Jesu…how is hit befallyn unto me that I love now hym that I have hatyd moste of ony man on lyve?”283 This questioning reveals several important aspects of the effect of Nyneve’s love enchantment; first, that Ettarde is conscience of the effects of the love magic and does not lose her awareness or memory of her previous feelings, second, that she does not enjoy the results of the love magic, and third, that the magic has exerted control not only over her actions, but over her emotions as well. These

283 Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 136.
revelations provide us insight into the way the love enchantment works. It eliminates a person’s ability to choose what she desires, and thus, removes her free will as it relates to love. The awareness Ettarde demonstrates through her comparison of how she previously felt when she “hatyd” Sir Pelleas above all others, to how she feels after the love magic “I love now” suggests that while the magic alters its victim’s emotions, it does not affect their memory or conscience awareness of the change it evokes. While other fantastical, but non-magical inductions of love appear in medieval romances, such as Cupid’s shooting of a lover with his arrows of love, do instigate love, these victims do not have the same level of reflective awareness of this change, and thus, while these lovers may suffer due to their new emotion of love, they do not exhibit the same distress and confusion at their suddenly changed emotions as is presented in the love magic cases of Ettarde and Isolde.

This distress Ettarde expresses shows that the emotion of love is truly being induced by the magic and is not a pre-existing emotion that is now revealed. Ettarde’s positioning of herself as the passive recipient of this fate hints at her lack of agency in the situation, as well as underscoring her displeasure at now loving Sir Pelleas. The grammatical construction of her question positions the situation, “hit” as the subject of the sentence, while the “unto me” clarifies Ettarde as the recipient of the action and the indirect object of the sentence. The verb she uses, “befallyn” suggests her lack of influence on what is happening and gives a sense of displeasure toward the change that is enacted. In this sense, the events parallel the experience of Isolde after drinking the love potion, for her hatred toward a man is also disposed of and

284 This occurs in a wide variety of medieval romances, but both Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun’s Le Roman de le Rose and Geoffrey Chaucer’s Troilus and Criseyde provide excellent examples of Cupid inducing love through his arrows.
replaced by love as a result, the major difference being that Tristan returned her affections while, due to a second portion of Nyneve’s magic, Sir Pelleas no longer loves Ettarde.

It is not only Ettarde’s actions that are affected by Nyneve’s enchantment, but her actual feelings and desires; Nyneve uses the magic in such a way that Ettarde would not just accept Pelleas’ love for her, but she would love him with the same passion he previously bestowed upon her (and due to Nyneve’s other enchantment, would also feel the rejection of her love for Pelleas as Pelleas had felt from her). Unlike aphrodisiacs, which create an effect that may entice a person to engage in certain behaviors, love magic changes a person’s emotions, resulting in a deeper form of psychological control over the person. If we consider Aquinas’s ideas of free will and coercion in relation to this use of love magic, we can see that Ettarde not only lacks the ability to now make a ‘free’ decision about her behavior toward Sir Pelleas, but she cannot even desire freely. Aquinas explains that a choice made against one’s desire through external control (handing over one’s wallet at gun point for example) is not a choice made from free will, yet even in these situations, the person would still retain the freedom of desire (to not want to give over their wallet), yet the love magic used on Lady Ettarde shows that it affects her not as simple coercion but through a fundamental alteration of her desires by superseding and replacing them with desires that are not her own.

While there is a certain sense of justice in Nyneve giving Ettarde a taste of her own medicine, there is also a level of cruelty in Nyneve’s actions that would be unacceptable to the audience, if not for the reader’s cue that this result is fair and acceptable. The cue to the audience to interpret these events as being fair rather than disturbing comes through Nyneve’s response—“That is the ryghteouse jugemente of God”—to Ettarde’s outcry.²⁸⁵ By

endorsing the results of her use of love magic through God’s judgement, the action of love magic in this instance is once again marked for the reader as acceptable, and the cruelty Ettarde experiences as a result is deemed fair, as it is not only God’s determination for Ettarde but his “ryghteuouse” judgement. The phrase “the ryghteuouse jugemente of God” emphasizes the faultlessness of the judgement through word play, suggesting that it is valid because it is God’s judgement, but also allows for the interpretation that this individual judgement itself is righteousness by being in line with justice and fairness. Because love magic is imbued with such overwhelmingly authority to overpower free will and because free will is guaranteed to humans under the divine order of the world, the use of love magic, normally, would be seen as wrong (as it is condemned historically), yet when its use is the physical manifestation of “the ryghteuouse jugemente of God,” this provides a loophole through which author’s allow the use of love magic to be interpreted as acceptable, even positive at times, because it is used to fulfill God’s will, which supersedes the will of an individual person. Carolyne Larrington discusses this moment, saying, “Nenyve [sic] is co-opted, by God, or so she claims, to police women’s obedience to the rules of fin’amours, without which the chivalric system would come under threat. If a knight is not rewarded for his prowess by gaining acceptance from his lady, his unstinting pursuit of honour becomes less attractive.” Although Larrington seems skeptical of the divine approval of Nyneve’s action, Sue Ellen Holbrook expresses more wholehearted belief in the truthfulness of Nyneve’s claim, stating, “To tell Ettarde that God has made her mad with love is a clever strategy, truthful since God would have had to sanction the enchantment, yet trenchant since

being convicted in a righteous judgment seems more devastating than being victimized by a sorceress, who might be whimsical or scheming.”

The strength of the enchantment is also clear in its description. The action of the enchantment is explained concisely, occurring in a single sentence: “And therewith she threw such an inchauntemente uppon hir that she loved hym so sore that well-nyghe she was nere oute of hir mynde.” The *Middle English Dictionary* provides many nuanced definitions for “mynde,” including “the human mind as seat or instrument of memory, thought, reason, will, imagination, emotion, etc.” and “will, desire, purpose; inclination, intention.” The connection of the mind with will and desire underscores the lack of control over herself Ettarde possesses after Nyneve works her love magic, yet the discussion between the two women and the description of Ettarde’s changed emotions toward Pelleas are clear, indicating that here, “nere oute of hir mynde” must refer to another element of the mind since she has lost total control over her emotions, desire, and will and is not just “nere” doing so. The key here is to understand that both reason and emotion, memory and desire are all located in the “mynde;” therefore, when the passion of the induced-love causes Ettarde to be “nere oute of hir mynde,” we see that although she has no control over her will and emotion, she retains her memory of her previous desires and will as well as her reasoning, enough to be able to question what is taking place.

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289 *Middle English Dictionary,* “mīnd(e),” 1(a).

290 *Middle English Dictionary,* “mīnd(e),” 7.
Although it is the strength of her new love for Pelleas that causes this closeness to her being without any of these facilities, it is really the enchantment at the root of this because it is through the enchantment that the strong passion of Ettarde’s love is forced. Just as the potion in *Tristan and Isolde* determined that the drinker would love the woman above all else, Nyneve’s enchantment is specific in determining the force of Ettarde’s newly induced love. The enchantment causes her to love Pelleas “so sore,” which indicates the intensity of the force with which she loves him, but in Nyneve’s planning, she reveals a more deliberate measure of the intensity of love her enchantment will cause. In her instructions to a knight serving Sir Pelleas, Nyneve states that if he brings Pelleas to her then “she that hath caused hym so to love, she shall be in as evylle plyte as he is.”

This grammatical structure “as…as,” sets up an equivalency between the two halves of the phrase—the “evylle plyte” to befall Ettarde and Pelleas’s evil plight. The “evylle plyte” is understood to be the unrequited love and, therefore, when put into this equivalency comparison, Nyneve is indicating that what she plans to do will result in Ettarde’s suffering being equal to Pelleas’s, hence the strength of the love that is induced is equal to that which Pelleas had felt for Ettarde originally. Although the modern definition of “plight” refers to danger or a negative situation, the medieval meaning for “plyte” could include both “danger, harm, trouble” and more generally “a condition or state; a situation, set of circumstances.” In describing Ettarde’s future and Pelleas’s present as an “evylle plyte,” Nyneve embodies both the dangerous nature of being in such passionate, unrequited love as well as hints at the role reversal to come as a result of her magic.

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293 *Middle English Dictionary*, “plight,” 2(a).
Conclusion

One of the starkest differences because the love inducing magic of literature and that of historical practice is the seemingly clean-cut logistics of literary magic. Literary love magic is reasonably unoffensive in its forms (even if not in its functions)—a ring, a delicious potion, a simple enchantment—compared to the historical practices which were generously laborious and required some unpleasant ingredients. Historical recipes for love potions often required ingredients that one would not normally enjoy consuming and spells required similar components—pubic hair and menstrual blood being common ones.\textsuperscript{294} The love potions of literature do not show the use of such crude ingredients, instead leaning toward herbal practices when ingredients are specified. In this way, the love magic in literature is given a sheen of glamour and avoids whatever factor of disgust that might be created from explicating a more historically grounded formula for the potions. It is hard to think that Lancelot, were he drinking a potion with pubic hair floating in it, would find the drink so pleasant and request more—after all, he thought it was wine.\textsuperscript{295} The logistics of the other

\textsuperscript{294} In 1298, Adam de Stratton, a clerk, was accused of various magical practices, including love magic, based on a set of items found among his belongings. The items of questionable repute included “human nail-clippings, women’s public hair, toads’ feet and moles’ feet, and other devilish things.” An account of this discovery is recorded by Bartholomew de Cotton in his \textit{Historia Anglicana} and quoted here from Maxwell-Stuart, \textit{The British Witch}, 38. Adam de Stratton was a cleric, which saved him from the death sentence he was condemned to (the sentence was for other crimes, although the addition of accusations of magical practice did not help him) and Maxwell-Stuart notes that it was not uncommon for clerics to be found practicing magic; however, doing so was understood to be immoral and dangerous which is why their magical practices were secretive and, when discovered, punished.

\textsuperscript{295} Venturing away from the evidence presented in \textit{Tristan and Isolde} and \textit{The Vulgate Cycle} and into the realm of more abstract suppositions, it is feasible that menstrual blood could have been used in the two potions discussed in this chapter. Both potions present as wine, which the color of would have disguised the appearance of the blood. Only the Lancelot episode offers a description of the potion’s flavor, and its described sweetness could possible disguise the metallic taste of a very small amount of blood.
methods of love inducing magic seen in this chapter are also glossed over in the narratives. Although the powers of the magical ring given to Sir Bohort are discussed, the source of its power and creation is never addressed. Similarly, the enchantment Nyneve uses on Ettarde works instantly and effectively, but the text again focuses on the results of the enchantment rather than its casting. Historically, any type of magic requires some form of ritual to be performed, and often these rituals are quite involved. The literary realm dispenses with the need for these rituals, expecting that the reader will accept the magic as it appears in the text without additional information detailing its mechanics. This also avoids inflaming any potential criticisms from church authorities because despite the inclusion of magic in the romance, it is not enabling or encouraging anyone to attempt to perform magic themselves, so no medieval version of the “don’t try this at home” disclaimer is needed.

Despite the variance in the presented mechanics of magic in literature and history, the literary texts remain part of the larger cultural fabric of their time, influenced by contemporary cultural concerns and influencing the culture in return. The ways in which authors treat love inducing magic in these romances offers an opportunity to gain insight into what cultural concerns over love magic existed, and how people were engaging intellectually with the subject. Love inducing magic consistently is shown to work by violating its victims free will, and free will is highly valued in medieval theological beliefs and considered the very thing that separates humans from animals. Free will is also what allows people to make choices, and thus, be responsible for those decisions. The removal of free will via magic then is extremely problematic, and this is reflected in medieval authors’ care in either condemning it when it occurs or explicitly indicating God’s approval of it in order for it to be acceptable in the narrative. These strategies for navigating the theological complexities of love inducing
magic are illustrated by the narrator’s vehement negative descriptions of the love potion in *Tristan and Isolde* and in the narrators’ carefully crafted justifications for the love magic used on Lancelot, Sir Bohort, and Igraine. In the “Pelleas and Ettarde” episode, the use of divine approval as justification comes not from the narrator, but from Nyneve, who cast the enchantment, as a direct explanation to her victim. In chapters three and four, the morality of other two functions of love magic, to disrupt love and to facilitate love, is examined. Discussion of free will largely disappears within these conversations because neither of these love magic functions violates it. The question then becomes, how do medieval authors evaluate and represent of the morality of love magic when it does not violate free will?
Chapter 3

If I Can’t Have a Man, No One Can: Love Disrupting Magic
Chapters one and two have centered on the connection between free will and love magic, demonstrating that magic used to induce love is considered immoral unless endorsed by God. Chapters three and four, which examine the other two functions of love magic (to disrupt and to facilitate love), largely move away from considerations of free will. Instead, I show that moral evaluations of love disrupting and love inducing magic are made according to the motivations of the magical practitioner. These two functions of love magic do not violate free will, so the criteria upon which the magic is morally evaluated change. Authors tie their presentations of love disrupting and love facilitating to the person responsible for the magic, suggesting that these functions of love magic, unlike love inducing magic, are inherently neutral and are interpreted as good or bad through the way they are applied. When these types of love magic are administered for selfish reasons—meaning they are intended to benefit only the magical practitioner—they are deemed immoral, but, when they are deployed for selfless reasons—for the benefit of others—they are morally acceptable. It is the specific motivations of that instance of magical use that contribute to the moral evaluation as well; a character may act selfishly (immoral) in one instance and selflessly (moral) in another, and two episodes involving Nyneve in this chapter demonstrate this. Not everything about the schema for moral evaluation is different from that of love inducing magic, which was laid out in chapter two. Failure of love magic in the narratives remains a symptom of its immorally, and thus a marker of it in the narrative.

Drawing on the same major texts that appeared in chapter two, including *Le Morte Darthur*, the *Vulgate Cycle*, and *Tristan and Isolde*, this chapter illustrates instances of love disrupting magic and the moral evaluations of it in medieval romance. Most frequently the use of love disrupting magic ends up condemned because this function of love magic lends
itself to malicious intentions; however, this is not always the case, and magic is sometimes shown in a positive light, wrought for selfless reasons. Scholarship on love magic in literature is generally somewhat scarce, as overviewed in chapter one, but no one has written specifically about love magic intended to disrupt love relationships. The dearth of research extends to some of the narrative episodes and characters addressed in this chapter. Scholarly discussion that has examined these episodes, tends to lack any sustained analysis of the magical aspects. One of the better covered characters is Morgan le Fay, the most prominent enchantress in Arthurian literature, and half-sister to King Arthur. A large portion of Morgan scholarship traces her cultural origins and literary development as a character, and other scholars focus on the negative portrayals, for either her sexuality or her magic, or both. Excerpt as context for other discussions of Lancelot, very little scholarship explores Morgan’s extensive attempts to interfere in Lancelot and Guinevere’s relationship. This may be because most scholars gloss over these attempts as just part of the extensive evidence of Morgan’s desires for Arthur’s downfall (which it is connected to).


298 Cooper, “The Book of Sir Tristram of Lyones,” A Companion to Malory, 196, makes a brief mention of Morgan’s attacks on Lancelot’s relationship. She characterizes Morgan as “the female equivalent of the false knights in…Tristram” and claims that Morgan has a “desire to destroy Lancelot and Arthur.” While this is certainly true of Arthur, Lancelot is less of an intentional target of destruction for Morgan than a means to an end of destroying Guinevere, with whom her real feud lies.
Although Morgan’s love disrupting magic is overlooked in scholarship, Nyneve’s is covered more thoroughly. Scholars tend to focus on her entrapment of Merlin, and when they do examine her magic in the “Pelleas and Ettarde” episode, it is almost always in comparison to her own, earlier, rejection of Merlin’s affections.\(^{299}\) The most comprehensive treatment of Nyneve comes from Sue Ellen Holbrook, who examines the versions of the Viviane/Nymue\(^ {300}\) character as she is developed from the Vulgate into Malory. Holbrook notes the significant number of additions in Le Morte involving Nymue, including her role in the “Pelleas and Ettarde” episode and the changes he makes to the Nymue and Merlin dynamic that leads to Merlin’s entrapment. Holbrook argues, convincingly, that Malory “expands her role of benign helper” to the Arthurian court.\(^ {301}\) Unlike scholars who seem to criticize Nyneve’s actions against Ettarde as hypocritical, Holbrook situates both behavioral responses into a natural development of her character: “Nymue develops with acceptable logic: initially a damosel in distress, transitonally a sorcerer’s apprentice, finally a benevolent sorceress on the side of good knights and particularly Arthur’s court.”\(^ {302}\) She also asserts that Nymue’s legacy in the Le Morte is her marriage with Pelleas rather than her imprisonment with Merlin. This seems at first to be supported by Wilfred L. Guerin’s discussion of the reference to their marriage in the “Death of Arthur,” Book 8 of Le Morte,


\(^{300}\) This is the name Holbrook uses for Nyneve. Holbrook also includes an overview of the many names this character is identified with across different Arthurian texts, including Niniane (in the Vulgate), Viviane (in the Vulgate Lancelot) and Nymue/Nyneve (in Malory). Holbrook, “Nyme,” 761. The Viviane version of Merlin’s entrapment in the Vulgate Lancelot is discussed further in chapter four.

\(^{301}\) Holbrook, “Nyme,” 762.

\(^{302}\) Holbrook, “Nyme,” 765.
which establishes her marriage with Pelleas as the final reference to Nyneve in the text.\textsuperscript{303} However, arguing that this defines her more than Merlin’s imprisonment would require ignoring the multiple times she is referenced throughout \textit{Le Morte} as the woman who imprisoned Merlin. Although she is a benevolent character and her relationship is praised as an example of a happy marriage, Merlin’s imprisonment remains the touchstone event by which Nyneve is identified. The exchange of romance and/or sexual interest toward Merlin for knowledge of his magic is something other sorceresses, most notably Morgan le Fay, also participate in; Anne Berthelot discusses these exchanges, noting that in \textit{Prophesies de Merlin}, a number of sorceresses appear to have had this type of arrangement with Merlin, but upon learning that they were not taught \textit{everything} Merlin knows, they end up resenting “the Lady of the Lake, who \textit{did} get everything she bargained for, and \textit{did not} even pay the price for it.”\textsuperscript{304}

The “Pelleas and Ettarde” episode is almost totally ignored in Malory scholarship, making rare appearances when referenced in passing.\textsuperscript{305} Carolyne Larrington offers some limited attention to the episode in her book on Arthurian enchantresses.\textsuperscript{306} Her two page


\textsuperscript{304} Anne Berthelot, “Merlin and the Ladies of the Lake,” \textit{Arthurianna} 10, no. 1 (2000): 55-81; here 60.

\textsuperscript{305} Elizabeth Archibald references the episode only in acknowledgement of it as the source of bad feelings between Sir Gawain and Sir Pelleas in “Beginnings: \textit{The Tale of King Arthur} and \textit{King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius},” in \textit{A Companion to Malory}, eds. Elizabeth Archibald and A. S. G. Edwards (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996), 133-151; here 142. Guerin, “The Tale of the Death of Arthur,” 254-55, mentions the marriage of Nyneve and Pelleas (which will be addressed further in chapter four), but his discussion of it focuses on the mention of their marriage in the “Death of Arthur” as a model of a happy marriage.

\textsuperscript{306} She observes that Nyneve is the exception to the rule that enchantresses tend to remain sexually and romantically unsuccessful. Larrington, \textit{King Arthur’s Enchantresses}, 26.
address of the “Pelleas and Ettarde” section is largely spent comparing Malory’s version to the earlier *Suite du Merlin* version with Pelleas and Arcade, which omits Nyneve from it. However, she does raise a couple interesting points about Malory’s version, including the contrast between Nyneve’s own rejection of Merlin and her scorn of Ettarde, “who refuses to follow the courtly script and reciprocate the love of Sir Pelleas.” Both of these episodes involving Nyneve are central to this chapter, and I assert that the difference in the two situations rests with the roles of each man; the “courtly script” is only an expectation when a knight is involved, and since Merlin is a magician and advisor, but not a knight, he exists outside the expectations of courtly love. Furthermore, the behavior of romantic pursuit (and goals) is different between the men: Pelleas strives for love and fulfills the trope of making himself the lady’s servant, but Merlin is sexually aggressive, focused on taking Nyneve’s virginity, and the threat of him raping her is even implied. Larrington’s interpretation of Nyneve’s magic is focused on its love inducing function (what Nyneve does to Ettarde) and omits any mention of its love disrupting function (what Nyneve does to Pelleas). When scholars do concentrate on Nyneve’s use of magic in this episode, they largely focus on the impact on Ettarde and set up a comparison between Nyneve’s own rejection of Merlin and her disdain for Ettarde’s rejection of Pelleas. Scholars often make these arguments with an overtone of derision for Nyneve’s seemingly hypocritical actions without looking any deeper.

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308 Although rapist knights are present in Arthurian narratives and in medieval romances, they are generally presented as the villain of the story (frequently established through their defeat by a chivalric, good knight who either saves or avenges the lady) or through a condemnation of their unchivalric behavior. Occasionally, narratives even appear to hold these knights to some level of accountability within a court’s legal system (one such example is in the beginning of Chaucer’s *Wife of Bath’s Tale* in which the rapist knight is tried by the Arthurian court and put at the mercy of Guinevere’s judgement.
at the more nuanced differences in the two women’s situations. Geraldine Heng also follows this pattern in her discussion of Nyneve’s magic, but includes some minor consideration of the effects on Pelleas.309

One the two attempts on Tristan and Isolde’s relationship, Lameroke’s redirection of a magical drinking horn sent by Morgan le Fay, is also absent from scholarly conversations, only earning the briefest of mentions in passing, summarized, but rarely analyzed.310 Some scholars have included this episode within larger examinations of chastity tests, often conducted with a magic drinking horn or magic mantel.311 The other attempt is made by a dwarf in King Mark’s court,312 who, in cahoots with a jealous courtier, employs his reputation as having divinatory powers to sow suspicion about the affair and try to reveal the lovers to King Mark. This episode is also overlooked in scholarship, although Vernon J. Harward, Jr is interested in the role of the court dwarf and dedicates a small chapter to examining the behaviors of the dwarf in King Mark’s court across multiple versions of the

310 Kenneth Hodges offers a brief summary of Lameroke’s use of the magic horn in Forging Chivalric Communities in Malory’s Le Morte Darthur (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 90-1, but he is only interested in the episode as it involves the development of the relationship between Tristan and Lameroke. Dhira B. Mahoney mentions the magic horn only in context of the feud between Lameroke and Tristan in “Malory’s ‘Tale of Sir Tristram’: Source and Setting Reconsidered,” in Tristan and Isolde: A Casebook, ed. Joan Tasker Grimbert (New York: Routledge, 2012), 223-254; here 236-37.
312 The dwarf goes by various names in the different versions of Tristan and Isolde. Here I refer to him more generically as “the dwarf” except when referencing his appearance in a specific textual version.
Tristan and Isolde narrative.\textsuperscript{313} Stacy L. Hahn, too, makes mention of Tristan and Isolde’s affair, and although she does not examine the attempts to disrupt it, she does advocate that the lovers’ success is because “fate always works in their favor.”\textsuperscript{314}

This chapter aims to initiate interest in conversations of these under-researched episodes in the Vulgate and Le Morte Darthur, and Gottfried’s Tristan and Isolde and to open a discussion into their specific love disrupting function of love magic. In this chapter, I contrast instances of immoral and moral love disrupting magic and illustrate the variance in their practitioners’ motivations. I explore various immoral magical attempts to disrupt the relationships of Tristan and Isolde and of Lancelot and Guinevere, including two and a half of Morgan le Fay’s efforts. The first two are kidnappings of Lancelot and the last, the half-attempt, is taken over mid-way by Lameroke and recycled for his own attempt on Tristan and Isolde. I also analyze the more direct, and still immoral, efforts to reveal Tristan and Isolde’s affair that are made by a dwarf with a reputation for divination in King Mark’s court. I complicate the moral evaluation standards for love disrupting magic through an examination of Nyneve’s use of magic to trap Merlin in what I assert is an act of self-defense, demonstrating that even when potentially justified, a selfish act of love disrupting magic is still presented as morally unacceptable. I contrast these immoral applications of love disrupting magic with the positive portrayal of Nyneve’s interruption of Pelleas’s love for Ettarde, which is a continuation of the discussion of the same Le Morte Darthur episode addressed at the conclusion of chapter two.

\textsuperscript{314} Hahn, “Feminine Sexuality,” 489.
Snagging Men in The Valley of False Lovers

Morgan le Fay is one of the most prolific magic practitioners in Arthurian literature, acting selfishly and seeking revenge through love magic. Her magical attempts to disrupt Guinevere’s relationship with Lancelot are presented as morally wrong through textual condemnations or implied through the magic’s failure. In both *The Vulgate Cycle* and *Le Morte Darthur*, Morgan le Fay frequently kidnaps Sir Lancelot in two-pronged efforts to disrupt Lancelot’s love for Guinevere (her main motivation) and to attempt to gain his love for herself (her secondary motivation).³¹⁵ Throughout the Arthurian canon, Morgan has bad luck in love which often leads to vindictive behaviors, justified or otherwise, towards lovers in general. In the *Vulgate Cycle*, Morgan’s hatred of Guinevere stems from Guinevere’s disruption of Morgan’s affair with a knight shortly after Guinevere’s marriage to Arthur. Guinevere takes away Morgan’s happiness with her lover, Guyamor of Carmelide, by revealing to him that she is aware of their relationship and that, were the king to learn of it, Guyamor would be “que mors estoit” [“as good as dead”] because Morgan was Arthur’s half-sister and should be kept chaste.³¹⁶ With little thought, Guyamor gives Morgan up as a lover and the text says he did so easily since he was not in love with her; however, Morgan was quite in love with him, and beyond her emotional pain at his casting her off, she was also pregnant. Morgan’s child by Guyamor goes unnamed within the text, but he does become a “chevaliers de grant proesce” [“knight of great prowess”].³¹⁷ Morgan seeks out Merlin to

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³¹⁵ This secondary motivation will be revisited in the next chapter, which analyzes love facilitating magic.
learn magic and becomes his beloved, but she also harbors hatred toward Guinevere for causing the loss of her lover.\textsuperscript{318} It is her hatred that motivates many of Morgan’s kidnappings of Lancelot, attempted in order to deprive Guinevere of her paramour in the same way Guinevere took Guyamor from her.\textsuperscript{319} It is important to have a solid understanding of what exactly what transpired between Guinevere and Morgan because the details of Guinevere’s interference in Morgan’s relationship shape Morgan’s approach in her later attempts to meddle in Guinevere’s affairs using magic.

There is, of course, blatant irony that Guinevere, after dooming Morgan and Guyamor’s affair, would go on to have her own with Lancelot; however, the text also gives some context for the difference in the two women’s motivations, which become relevant when unpacking the text’s representation of their actions. Guinevere is said to have acted to protect King Arthur and Guyamor, who was “molt bials chevaliers et preus” [“a very brave and handsome knight”], as the adulterous relationship would have caused both men problems: “la roine en avoit ja esté garnie, si s’en faisoit molt prendre garde, kar ele detornast volentiers Morgue de folie fere por la honte le roi et Guiamor, d’autre part por don damage eschiever, kar li rois l’en haïst, s’il le seust” [“The queen had already been warned and had

medieval reproductive theories attributed the character of a child to the father, while the woman was more of a vessel for the pregnancy than an active contributor to the child’s identity. This is particularly evident for male children (consider the focus on paternity in the three cases discussed in chapter one). Morgan’s pregnancy is not particularly special or celebrated, and the text’s omission of the child’s name signals that he does not become an important figure worth identifying to the audience.\textsuperscript{318} Micha, ed., \textit{Lancelot}, I: XXIV, 301. Lacy, ed. and Rosenberg, trans., “Lancelot, Part III,” \textit{Lancelot-Grail}, 2:311.

\textsuperscript{319} In \textit{Sir Gawain and the Green Knight}, another iteration of this cross-textual hatred within the canon appears in a few lines indicating that Morgan’s intent in sending the Green Knight to Arthur’s court was not only as a test of the court’s chivalric values but also to frighten Guinevere to death.
been keeping watch on them {Morgan and Guyamor}, as she would gladly have kept Morgan chaste lest the king be shamed, and Guyamor as well lest the king punish him, for he would have hated him for such behavior, had he learned of it”). Guinevere’s motivations are in service of others, not herself, which makes her actions for the benefit of her king and husband, her family (Guyamor is her nephew), and the kingdom at large—she is trying to avoid shame being brought upon the king and punishment upon Guyamor. Although personally painful for Morgan, Guinevere’s methods of disruption are also more acceptable, and kinder, than Morgan’s. Guinevere goes to Guyamor personally and discusses the matter in private leading to a private resolution to the situation. Although Morgan is pained by the ending of her relationship, she suffers no public shame as a result of Guinevere’s actions. In contrast, Morgan repeatedly attempts to publicly reveal Guinevere’s affair and bring shame to her (and, resultantly, Arthur). Morgan’s various attempts to disrupt and/or reveal Guinevere’s relationship with Lancelot has no protective intentions, only vengeful ones, and the result of her meddling in no way helps Arthur or the court but instead contributes to Camelot’s ultimate downfall, as the eventual schism between Arthur and Lancelot does doom the kingdom.

Beyond the variance in Guinevere’s and Morgan’s motivations, the two women themselves are depicted quite differently. The Guinevere/Lancelot relationship largely follows standards of courtly love with a great deal of pining and longing but little physical satisfaction or consummation explicitly articulated within the narrative. Morgan is presented

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in stark contrast with the text characterizing her as “laide” [“ugly”] like her father the duke of Tintagel and “quant ele vint en aage, si fu si chaude et luxuriose que plus chaude feme ne convint a querre” [“when she came of age…so lustful and wanton that a looser woman could not have been found”]. Morgan’s behavior, like her physical appearance, is portrayed as unattractive and is immoral. Besides Morgan’s sexually promiscuous behavior as a young woman, throughout the canonical lives of the two women, Morgan expresses sexual interest in and desire for a number of knights and has various lovers, yet Guinevere is consistent in her marriage to Arthur and her love for Lancelot, implying that her dalliance of the heart is in the name of true love, but Morgan’s are in the name of lust. Looking at the earliest encounters and exchanges of Arthur and Guinevere, those that occurred prior to her meeting Lancelot, it appears that genuine affection, if not love, did exist between the two at the beginning of their relationship; Guinevere’s affections for Lancelot are also shown to be returned. This further separates the two women since Guinevere’s two relationships (with Arthur and with Lancelot) have equal, reciprocal feelings whereas Morgan tends to be more in love with her lovers than they are with her.

Morgan’s bad luck in love leads to the creation of Le Val Sans Retour, the Valley of No Return, in which knights who are unfaithful to their lovers in either thought or action (meaning all of them except Lancelot) are trapped, hence the valley’s alternate name, the Valley of False Lovers. Morgan creates this magical space in which to contain false lovers after having been betrayed by one of her own. Although the valley is created out of a need for Morgan to contain her own lover and separate him from the young lady whom he loved

over Morgan, the valley becomes, for many of the women whose lovers are trapped there, a benefit to their relationships. Chapter four will discuss the Valley of No Return as a space that magically facilitates love relationships; however, it is included in this chapter for Morgan’s intention to separate her lover from his love. The Valley also leads to Morgan’s first (of many) kidnappings of Sir Lancelot.

After Morgan catches her knightly lover with another woman in the valley, described as “uns des plus delibales lieus del monde” [“one of the most delightful places in the world”], Morgan reacts by capturing the valley in her enchantments, creating the Le Val Sans Retour which appears in the Vulgate Cycle.\(^{323}\) The magic she wrought is performed from her emotional suffering; after seeing the two lovers together, “si en fu molt anguoissose que par un poi qu’ele ne desvoit” [“she was so distressed by this that she almost went out of her mind”].\(^{324}\) This specific state of distress gives the reader a clear sense of Morgan’s emotional reaction and motivations for magic, but it also lets us know that although almost beyond sense, Morgan remains in control of her thoughts, emotions, and actions. This control, however tenuous, preserves her responsibility for her choice to create a magical trap for false lovers. The creation of the valley is not just Morgan’s revenge (although it does accomplish that purpose). The magic of the valley is necessary if Morgan wants to ensure the fidelity of her lover (and the fidelity of other knights to their ladies). It may seem like this is an extreme step, but the uniqueness of a knight loyal in love is proven through the Valley’s effectiveness in trapping every knight that enters, except Lancelot. The magic’s effects are specific:

Lors esprandi par tot le val son enchntement en tel manièr que jamais chevaliers n’i entrast qui en issist, por quoi il eust vers sa amie fausé de nule chose, neïs de volenté; et tuit cil qui d’aucune chose i avroient fausé i remaindroient jusques a icle ore que uns chevaliers i enterroït qui de nulu chose n’avoit onques mespris envers s’amie ne de pensé ne de talent; et fist encore plus del chevalier qui ses amis estoit, que ele destina que jamais hors del val ne se movroit ne plus que li autre qui après lui i enterront.

[Then she bound the whole valley in a spell such that no knight who entered might ever leave it if he had been unfaithful to his lover in any way, even in desire alone; and all those who in any way had been unfaithful would remain there until such time as a knight would enter who in no way had ever slighted his lady even in thought or desire. As for her own lover, she set down that he would never step outside the valley any more than the knights who entered after him.]^{325}

The tenets laid out in this passage establish the magical logistics of the valley—the category of people it will trap, the specific conditions determining if a knight will be trapped, when the enchantment will break, and what happens to the valley’s pre-existing occupant (Morgan’s own lover). Morgan’s enchantment does not name knights as a generality for men, but instead knights are singled out among the larger population to be tested by the valley for their loyalty in love. Later descriptions of the text inform the reader about the fate of other men and of women who enter the valley, emphasizing that Morgan’s concern is with knights’ behavior specifically:

Et se damoisele i venoit que onques d’amors n’eust fausé, ja por ce celes del val ne se remenisissent, ançois i demoroïent tant com eles voloiient et a lor volenté s’en aloïent. Mais autresi ne faisoient pas li escuier, kar a tos jors lor covenoit demorer, s’il avoient onques d’amors trichié, tant que il avenist que lor seignor s’en ississent ou k’il moreuissent laiens. Et s’il i venist escuiers qui onques n’eust amé, delivrement s’en puist issir quant il volsist.”

[The ladies in the valley, to be freed, did not need to wait for one of their kind to come along who had never been unfaithful in love; indeed, they stayed as long as they liked and could go away at will. But this was not true of the squires, who, if they had

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once cheated in love, had to stay until their masters left or they themselves died; if any squire came along who had never loved, he could leave at will.)

Although the men who have been unfaithful in love are required to stay, Morgan places no such restrictions upon the women. Squires, traditionally younger men, are granted the possibility of departure assuming they had met one of two conditions—never having been in love or never having cheated in love. Being young men or even boys, it is fully possible that squires had not yet been in love or had not yet been disloyal, but a squire’s loyalty in love would not have been enough to break Morgan’s enchantment since a knight who had never betrayed his lady was required. Although Morgan is imprisoning people, there seems to be a clear ethic incorporated into her magic that prevents the unfair punishment of those who have not been disloyal to their ladies. There is also a clear gendered approach to her magic as no judgement is made upon the women regarding their faithfulness in love. As a woman intimately familiar with betrayal by one’s lover, Morgan’s defense of women in this way is understandable—it is, after all, in her experience, knights who tend to betray their lovers and leave them, not ladies.

The valley is not created out of an idealistic desire for justice for ladies though, it is crafted as a response to Morgan’s discovery of finding her lover with another woman. This is reflected in her treatment of the two. Her knightly lover remains trapped in the valley, but Morgan far more harshly punishes the woman with whom he cheated. The woman is not contained in the valley with the unfaithful knights, instead she is trapped in far more malicious conditions: “Mais de la damoisele fist ele rop grant cruelté, kar ele le mist en une tant felenesse charter que il li estoit avis de jor et de nuit qu’ele fust en glace des les piés

jusqu’a la çainture, en amont samblot qu’ele fust en feu ardant” [“But in the case of the young woman she was extremely cruel, for she put her into a harsh prison, where she had the feeling day and night that she was standing in ice from the waist down and in a blazing fire above”]. Speculatively, two possible reasons for this disparity in punishment present themselves; first, that Morgan may wish to reclaim her lover’s affections and therefore does not wish to punish him in too brutal a manner, and second, since the young woman’s slight was not against her lover, but instead against another woman, Morgan perhaps views it as more worthy of punishment.

Beyond Morgan’s possible motivations for facilitating her own love with the knight, which will be discussed further in the next chapter, the valley’s magic and the young woman’s individual prison serve to keep the knight and young woman separated. The knight’s feelings for the young woman are strong, as indicated in the narrative about the valley’s creation, and more significantly, they are stronger than his feelings for Morgan. In discussing the knight’s relationship with Morgan, the text says,

Si i avoit mis son cuer tot, kar ele l’amoit sor tos homes et ele cuidoit que il amast autresi li sor totes femes. Mais il amoit une damoisele plus de li, qui molt estoit de grant bialté, si ne trovoit mie lieu ne aise de parler a li si sovent com il volsist, kar cele que il dotoit plus que il ne l’amoit le tenoit sic ort qu’a paines se pooit il de li partir.

[She had given him her whole heart, for she loved him more than any other man and believed that he loved her above all other women. More than her, however, he loved a damsel of rare beauty whom he could find no place or chance to see as often as he would have liked, because the woman for whom he felt more fear than love kept so tight a rein on him that he could hardly ever be gone from her.]328

The disproportion of Morgan’s love for the knight and his love for her is clear; while Morgan has whole-heartedly given her affections to the knight and believes him to return them in equal measure, the knight’s love for her is tempered by his greater fear of Morgan. Although Morgan’s knightly lover explicitly loves his damsel of rare beauty, the text hints that the knight may love Morgan too (even as he fears her), but that his love for Morgan is less than his love for the young lady. The phrasing “Mais il amoit une damoisele plus de li” “more than her [Morgan], however, he loved a damsel” suggests that some affection for Morgan does exist, but also puts it in subordination to his love for the young lady. As a knight, the man would be experienced in feats of chivalry, and were he not constrained by the magical prison of the valley, it is reasonable to assume he would have rescued his lady love from the magical prison Morgan had placed her in. Had the young lady been trapped within the valley as well, the same result could have occurred, or the knight would have at least had more access to her. Morgan’s use of magic to imprison the two of them separately, presents a clear intent to disrupt their relationship.

Morgan’s plan works for almost two decades before Lancelot, a knight who had never betrayed his lady love “de pensé…de talent” [“in thought or desire”] entered the valley. While it existed, the valley was quite effective, for the text tells that “par contre deus cent et cinquante trois” [“as many as two hundred fifty-three”] knights were trapped in it (this count is specific to knights and does not include any squires who may have been trapped or any ladies or squires who are there willingly with their masters).329 After Lancelot’s riding companion, the Duke of Clarence, disappears into the Valley of No Return, Lancelot and his

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other companion, Sir Yvain, follow in his steps intending to rescue him. The maiden leading them first offers the adventure to Sir Yvain, who once he enters is “disarmer et que li serjant l’enporterent la ou li dus estoit avec les autres” [“disarmed and carried away to the place where the duke and all the others were”].\textsuperscript{330} The maiden witnesses this happen, returns to Lancelot and predicts that he will be more successful: “kar si voirement m’aït Diex, vos geterés ancui, si com li cuers me dist, hors de cel Val tos cels qui i son ten prison par les males costumes qui assesses i sont; et neporquant ce ne vos sera mie grant proesce que vos aiés de chevalerie, kar ja par ce ne l’acheverois, s’autre bonté n’avoit en vos” [“as God as my true witness, my heart tells me that today you will set free all the men who are prisoners in this valley because of the evil customs that are in force here. Yet it will not just be a feat you owe to your skill as a knight; you could never carry it through were it not for another virtue you have”].\textsuperscript{331}

Two points of importance rest in the maiden’s declaration. First, she refers to the men’s imprisonment in the valley as the result of “evil customs that are in force.” This presents a moral condemnation of Morgan’s entrapment of the knights and positions her as the villain in the encounter. In other descriptions of the valley, the text does not always condemn it, and even describes it as being pleasant, yet at this moment, the practice of imprisoning knights, whatever the reason or conditions of their imprisonment, needs to be

\textsuperscript{330} Micha, ed., \textit{Lancelot}, I: XXIV, 286; Lacy, ed. and Rosenberg, trans., “Lancelot, “Lancelot, Part III,” \textit{Lancelot-Grail} 2:308. Although the \textit{Vulgate} does not articulate the specific offense Yvain made against a lover, this is likely a harkening back to the Chrétien de Troyes’s earlier, twelfth-century \textit{Yvain or Le Chevalier au Lion} in which Yvain betrays his wife by breaking his promise to return to her within a year’s time. Chrétien’s version is later adapted into the fourteenth-century Middle English version \textit{Ywain and Gawain}.

presented negatively as Lancelot’s impending victory over Morgan’s enchantment is meant to be a celebrated moment. Secondly, the maiden indicates that Lancelot’s imminent victory stems not from his martial prowess, but from “another virtue” which the reader understands to be his devotion in love. Ironically, Lancelot’s virtue as a lover, which eventually keeps him from obtaining the holy Grail, is the reason he is able to enjoy success in this adventure. Lancelot’s emotional skills enable him to break the enchantment of the valley, reminding the reader that a worthy knight is not only skilled in battle, but also in love.

When Lancelot inquires about what this other virtue might be, the maiden explains the rule of the valley to him. Instead of questioning himself or fearing the valley, Lancelot responds by laughing and asking “se chaveliers i venoit que onques n’i eust fausé, k’en seroit-il?” (“what if a knight came along who had never been unfaithful?”). His humor at this moment paired with his question gives the sense that he considers the possibility of a faithful knight to be a gaping loophole in the magic—so obvious that it appears to him humorous. The maiden answers that the captives of the valley would be set free. Revealing her plan for Lancelot to tackle this challenge, she goads him, manipulating him into entering the valley. She tells Lancelot that he is such a good knight that it would be a real tragedy if he were to also be lost to the valley and then suggests that he ought to “troverois mon seignor Gauvain” (“go find Sir Gawain”). If Lancelot was not already convinced to try his hand at this adventure, the idea of losing the opportunity to gain honor pushes him into accepting the challenge. The lady provides one additional piece of commentary that seems both to add to

her goading of Lancelot and to contrast interestingly with her characterization of the valley as full of “males costumes” [“evil customs”]. She asserts, “je ne cuit pas qu’il nasquit onques chevaliers qui par amors eust amé qui en aucune manière n’eust fausé envers s’amie” [“I do not believe there is any knight alive who has been in love and has not in some way been unfaithful to his lady”]. Although she previously had condemned Morgan’s practice of entrapping disloyal knights in the valley, she states her own belief that no knight can remain loyal in love. This statement should be taken with some skepticism because there is evidence that she does believe Lancelot is loyal in love. She shows full faith in Lancelot’s ability to free the prisoners, but her attitude suggests that she thinks Lancelot alone could actually accomplish this feat. Although he offers an exception, her statement of belief about knights’ disloyalty otherwise rings true. The statement is, however, the belief upon which Morgan relied for her enchantment to remain secure.

Lancelot does prove successful, and the course of his adventure and the various reactions of the valley’s inhabitants will be revisited in the next chapter, but we turn first to Morgan’s response to learning Lancelot’s identity. Although Morgan is displeased at the destruction of her enchantments, she genuinely acknowledges and honors the knight for having been so pure in his love. However, things take a turn when Morgan learns the faithful knight’s identity:

Quant ele sot que c’estoit Lancelos, si sospeça bien tantost k’il amoit la roine par amor, sise pense qu’ele l’en fera corocie et cuide tant fere qu’ele n’en avra jamés gaires de joie, s’ele l’aime autretant com il fet li, kar ele het la roine sor totes autres femes.

[When she learned that he was Lancelot, she guessed right away that he was in love with the queen, and resolved to cause her some distress. Indeed, she thought that, if

the queen loved him as much as he did her, she would deprive her of happiness forevermore, for she hated the queen more than any other woman.]

As discussed earlier, Morgan hates Guinevere because of her interference in Morgan’s love affair with Guyamor; here, Morgan seizes the opportunity for revenge. Just as Morgan views Guinevere as being responsible for taking Guyamor from her, Morgan decides to keep Lancelot from Guinevere and, in doing so, return onto Guinevere the a parallel theft of happiness that resulted for Morgan. This statement reveals the depth of her hatred for Guinevere and the type of suffering she intends to cause her. It also suggests that Morgan attributes her continued failure in love to the ending of her first affair. Morgan’s plan intends to parallel her own experience of pain, caused by Guinevere’s interference, and Morgan’s statement regarding Guinevere’s happiness can be understood as a projection of Morgan’s own experiences. Morgan has time and again been denied happiness with her lovers, and this repeated suffering seems to invoke Morgan’s past trauma of losing Guyamor and add onto it with each additional betrayal by a lover.

Morgan, believing that depriving Guinevere of Lancelot would be the most effective way to cause Guinevere suffering, lulls Lancelot into a false sense of safety through her charming hospitality, honors, and appeals to his duty to other knights. She claims that once Lancelot leaves, the valley’s magic will dissipate, so if he does not spend the night, no one will have a place to sleep that night. When Lancelot goes to bed, Morgan pretends to retire, but instead returns once he is asleep and uses a magical ring that “s’en le meist a home endormi en la main, que tant com il l’avroit tant dormiroit” [“if it was put onto the finger of a

sleeping man, he would remain asleep as long as it stayed in place”]. This places Lancelot into a vulnerable state during which Morgan has her men carry him off. Lancelot is taken far away, to a forest where Morgan had a splendid property and a very beautiful house], where he is placed in an underground cell by the men.

The Morgan-Lancelot Kidnapping

When Sir Yvain and the duke find Lancelot gone the next morning, they realize that Morgan has kidnapped him. Once they are reunited with the duke’s squire and the same damsel who had led Lancelot into the Valley, she gives them details about Lancelot’s kidnapping, which she witnessed. She recounts, “Morgue l’en fist anuit porter par traïson” “[Morgan had him carried off by treachery last night”], but that when she pursued them, Morgan saw her and gave the maiden assurances of Lancelot’s safety. The news puts everyone at ease, which is somewhat strange since Morgan is not especially trustworthy. Morgan has a record of deception, and the maiden even expressed some skepticism of Morgan’s claims, reporting that “Et je li dis que tel poor en avoie qu’el nel pooie croire” [“I told her I was too frightened to believe what she was saying”], but the maiden also seems

placated by Morgan subsequent response: “el en commença a rire et lors me tendi sa main et me fiança cmme loials crestiene que ensi iert com ele l’avoi dit” [“she laughed and gave me her hand and promised me as a true Christian that it would turn out as she had said”]. This is the second reference to Morgan as a Christian in this passage—previously she crossed herself and claimed “M’aït Diex” [“As God is my witness”] as she first made assurances of Lancelot’s safety. Although Morgan has been shown to be a fairly ungodly women, the rhetorical strategy of invoking Christian belief to make her promises is accepted as credible by all those involved. Despite her relationship with magic, an essential aspect of her character development, she still seems to honor Christian values, such as making her oath here and ensuring the knights in the valley could still attend Mass. In fact, she does uphold her word and releases Lancelot temporarily upon his word that he will return to her when his adventure to rescue Sir Gawain is complete. This is the second time that Morgan’s kidnapping of Lancelot is referred to as “traïson” [“treachery”]. The squire who first tells people of Lancelot’s disappearance calls it “la traïson Morgain perdu” [“the treachery of

342 This mirrors the larger concurrent presence of magic and the supernatural alongside Christianity in Arthurian literature. These seemingly conflicting practices are often harmonious in the texts, but at times are put into tenacious juxtaposition. These moments can reveal cultural concerns being expressed within literature. Gareth Griffith notes that although Arthur is a Christian figure, “he also lives in a religious milieu that would be broadly familiar to contemporary audiences in the predominantly Christian Europe of the twelfth (and later of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth) century…In this context, the knightly virtues and ideals that Arthur and his court embodied were thus presented as in some sense Christian, too- the ideal Arthurian knight was also one form of ideal Christian.” “Merlin: Christian Ethics and the Question of Shame,” in Handbook of Arthurian Romance: King Arthur’s Court in Medieval European Literature, eds. Leah Tether and Johnny McFadyen (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 477-92.
Morgan”), just as the maiden also characterizes Morgan’s actions. The specific term “traïson” is stronger than simple deception or betrayal—treachery was more explicitly sinful. In this way, Morgan’s kidnapping of Lancelot is condemned as a morally wrong action. This makes the pairing of Morgan’s actions with her oaths as a Christian and gestures of crossing herself all the more intriguing.

When Lancelot awakens in the cell where he had been placed, he is distraught over the betrayal. Once he is awake, Morgan clarifies that his imprisonment comes as a result, not of any wrong Lancelot has done, but because of what Morgan wants. While she holds him in prison, and before forging a release agreement with him, Morgan attempts to confirm her suspicions about his love for Guinevere, but she does not reveal to him her desire to cause Guinevere suffering. Lancelot refuses adamantly to tell her whom he loves, regardless of the threats she makes. As he grows increasingly angry, Morgan remains calm, seeming to find humor in the situation (possibly because she already is confident as to the answer of her question). However, Morgan reverses strategies and gives up her pursuit of an answer.

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344 Treachery is repeatedly condemned throughout the Bible, which builds a foundation of its sinful nature. According to historian Francis Young, in fourteenth- through seventeenth-century England, magic was a common component of treason charges. “Intrigue and Incantation: Treasonous Magic in Medieval and Early Modern England,” in Inner Lives: Emotions, Identity, and the Supernatural, 1300-1900 (research project), investigators Malcolm Gaskill, Sophie Page, and Owen Davies, The Leverhulme Trust, August 21, 2017, https://innerlives.org/2017/08/21/intrigue-and-incantation-treasonous-magic-in-medieval-and-early-modern-england/. See also Francis Young, Magic as a Political Crime in Medieval and Early Modern England: A History of Sorcery and Treason (London: I. B. Tauris, 2017). One of the most prominent, albeit post-medieval, examples of magic being connected with treason was the Affair of the Poisons, in which prominent individuals were charged and executed for attempting to assassinate King Louis XIV using poison and witchcraft.
agreeing to release Lancelot temporarily. She first attempts to take his ring as collateral for his pledge that he would return after Sir Gawain’s rescue, but Lancelot vehemently refuses that as well, leading her to the (correct) conclusion that the ring was a love-token given to him by Guinevere. Morgan, having deduced a small amount of insight, allows Lancelot to keep the ring on the condition that he gives his oath to return and agrees to take with him, under his protection, one of Morgan’s maidens who would also serve as a guide. Stacy L. Hahn categorizes this maiden as a *demoiselle tentatrice* (tempting damsel), which is one type of the “lustful females[s]” Hahn analyzes in her work on feminine sexuality.

The maiden doubles as a second attempt for Morgan to disrupt Guinevere’s love with Lancelot because she attempts to seduce Lancelot through engaging in increasingly flagrant behaviors to catch his attention. Although her behavior is at several points attributes to Morgan’s orders, it is unclear whether Morgan’s orders are for the maiden to seduce Lancelot or for the maiden to elicit information about his lover, and the maiden chooses seduction as her method for this task. Although the maiden’s seduction attempts are physical and involve no magic, they are all part of Morgan’s larger plot initiated through magic to disrupt Lancelot and Guinevere’s relationship. Lancelot, annoyed, chastises the maiden for her inappropriate behavior, emphasizing the expectations for courtly behavior to which a maiden ought to adhere. The lady, however, is one of Morgan’s maidens, and Morgan’s own attitude toward sexual freedom seems to have influenced her.

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346 This is a contradiction within the text as earlier in the Valley of False Lovers episode the ring is said to be a gift from the Lady of the Lake which allows Lancelot to see through enchantments. Here, and moving forward in the text, the same ring is attributed to being from Guinevere. See Lacy, ed. and Rosenberg, trans., “Lancelot, Part III, *Lancelot-Grail* 2:315, n. 2 for more on this discrepancy of the ring’s origins.

The maiden’s final, and most forward attempt at seduction comes that night when they take lodging in a tent. Upon finding only one bed and untrusting of his companion, Lancelot only partially undresses to lie down. This proves an insightful measure as the lady undresses and slips into the bed with him. In a playful act reminiscent of a contemporary Harlequin novel she accidentally rips off Lancelot’s shirt. Lancelot, highly embarrassed, steadies her and insists she promises not to “requerra de chose qui encontre lui soit” [“ask for anything distasteful to him”], which the lady pretends she will promise if she can whisper it in his ear.\footnote{Micha, ed. Lancelot, I: XXVI, 323; Lacy, ed. and Rosenberg, trans., “Lancelot, Part III,” Lancelot-Grail 2:317.} In direct contradiction to Lancelot’s hopes for a promise of better behavior, the maiden feigns a faint and when Lancelot leans over to check on her well-being, she surprises him with a kiss. Furious and running away from her but finding himself followed, he grabs his sword and threatens to strike her in a set-up that parallels his later reaction to awakening with Elaine after having been magically tricked into sleeping with her the night before. A humorous scene follows, in which both Lancelot and the maiden realize that due to his values as a knight he will not strike her, leading to the lady chasing Lancelot around the camp site and repeatedly challenging his bravery for fleeing from her. Through a slip of the tongue in their shouted exchange-on-the-move, Lancelot reveals that he is in love with someone and eventually confesses “je sui amés de tant loial amie que je doi tant doter a fuaser vers li plus que je ne feroie peril de mort ne honte ne nule desloialté” [“I am loved by such a true lover that I am bound to fear being unfaithful to her more than I would fear the danger of dying or dishonor or any disloyalty.”\footnote{Micha, ed. Lancelot, I: XXVI, 325; Lacy, ed. and Rosenberg, trans., “Lancelot, Part III,” Lancelot-Grail 2:317-18.} This admission satisfies the lady and puts her pursuits to rest.
claiming that they had all been “por vostre cuer essayer, kar issi le me commanda l’en” [“to
test your heart, as I had been ordered to do”]. Ultimately, the maiden’s sexual harassment
accomplishes what Morgan’s magical kidnaping could not—getting Lancelot to confess to
being in love.

While on adventure to rescue Sir Gawain, Lancelot and the lady take a side-quest
which sheds light onto the workings of courtly love and the morality of disrupting love
relationships. It also establishes the foundation of “pure” and “guilty” love, a distinction
which is later invoked by Guinevere as a defense against one of Morgan’s magical
relationship assassination attempts. Lancelot and the maiden come upon a river, in which
Lancelot sees a knight’s body resting with a beautiful lady’s body beside him; Lancelot
inquires about the bodies, and the lady tells him:

Il fu voirs que cist chevaliers que vos veez la ama par amor ceste dame qui delez li
gist et la dame avoir seignor felon et le plus cruel del monde, n’ele n’amoit cel
chevalier se de bone amor non, kar il seust maintes fois, s’ele ne li eust s’amor done,
ocis. Ses sires s’em prist garde et cuida que lor amor tornast a vilenie, si agaita tant le
chevalier k’il l’ocist en traïson et la geta o ses armes en ceste eve. Et quant il vint a la
dame, si ne li cela onques et ele li conut tantost qu’ele l’amoit voirement, mes ele n’i
pensoit a nulu vilenie et dist que jamais ne fineroit desci la qu’ele l’avroit trové.

[The truth is, the knight that you see there was in love with the lady lying beside him.
She had a wicked husband, the cruelest in the world, and she had nothing but pure
love for the knight, who many a time would have killed himself, had she not granted
him her love. Her lord became very wary, believing their love to be a guilty love, and

350 Micha, ed. Lancelot, I: XXVI, 326; Lacy, ed. and Rosenberg, trans., Lacy and Rosenberg,
351 In the “Death of Arthur,” when Lancelot returns Guinevere to Arthur, he also denies that
he has engaged in “fole amor,” a term that is left unclarified. See Elspeth Kennedy, “The
Making of the Cycle,” in A Companion to the Lancelot-Grail Cycle, ed. Carol Dover
(Cambridge: D. S. Brewer. 2003), 13-22; here 21, for more discussion on this scene. It is
possible, that “fole amor” [foolish love] could be connected to these concepts of “pure” and
“guilty love.” The Anglo-Norman term “folie” translates as “foolishness, mischief,” but in a
more nuanced way, can mean “wickedness” or “sin, wrong act.” The Anglo-Norman
Dictionary, “folie.” This specific connotation lends itself to the same understanding as the
“guilty love” discussed in this episode.
spied on the knight until one day he killed him treacherously and threw him, in full armor, into this river. Then he went to the lady and did not hide what he had done. She acknowledged right away that she truly loved the knight but had no thought of a guilty love, and she said that she would never stop looking for his body until she had found it.\textsuperscript{352}

This story establishes a distinction between “bone amor” [“pure love”], which was morally acceptable regardless of whether it was adulterous, and “amor tornast a vilenie” [“guilty love”], which would be immoral. Pure love is purely emotional in nature without thought of committing the physical act of sinning through adultery. Guilty love would have involved some type of sexual interaction (or plan for it) between the lovers. The lady is a textbook case of \textit{mal marié} and her love for the knight is pure. The story tells that the lady did give the knight her love, so it can be inferred that she verbally responded to him, accepting and returning his affections, but nothing beyond emotion and linguistic communication of their love was involved. One additional element of this story, a staple in courtly love and a frequent rhetorical strategy of men for obtaining their desired lover’s affections,\textsuperscript{353} is the potential death of the knight were the lady not to return his love. Because if she were to deny her love to the knight it would lead to his death, the responsibility for his health is placed upon her and she could be held in blame were he to die from her lack of love. The concept of a pure love allows for her to engage in loving the knight, as she is supposed to under the expectations of courtly love, but without engaging in sinful adultery that would be morally condemnable.


\textsuperscript{353} A perfect example of this is Pandarus’s use of this possibility of a good knight’s death from lovesickness to manipulate his niece Criseyde into showing affection toward Troilus, who is deeply in love with her, in Chaucer’s \textit{Troilus and Criseyde}. 
Beyond shedding light upon these two forms of love, this pause in Lancelot’s quest foreshadows the problems that will arise as a result of his own love for Guinevere, which although still pure at this point in the narrative, becomes guilty later on. Unlike in the story of the anonymous knight and lady, King Arthur is not a jealous husband and actually seems fine with the pure love between his wife and his best knight, as is suggested by his nonchalant reaction when Morgan attempts to out the relationship publicly using the magical ring she eventually obtains from Lancelot. After their love becomes a guilty love though, Arthur must eventually confront the relationship, which causes problems for both lovers and the Arthurian kingdom more broadly. Although the endings to both sets of lovers’ relationships are unhappy, the relationship between the anonymous knight and lady is more acceptable, as shown in the pseudo-hagiographical scene that follows the lady’s learning about what her husband has done. The lady goes to the place on the cliff and she prays “oiant son mari meismes ki i estoit et oiant maintes autres gens, que si voirement qu’ele n’avoit onques vilené vers osn espos, ne de cel chevalier ne d’autre, que issi voirement li feist il aperte demostrance et que tos li siecles le seust” [“right in front of her husband himself and many other people as well, that inasmuch as she had never deceived her husband with this knight or any other, he should reveal the body to her and let everyone else know about it, too”].

Through her prayer, the lady accomplishes two things; first, she locates the knight’s body as she had told her husband she would, and second, she publicly demonstrates and proves the innocence of her love with the knight. This is fulfilled through a miracle; the river’s waters divide and the knight’s body becomes visible to all, sitting at the bottom of the river. The

woman, upon seeing this renews her praying and flings herself down from the cliff, dying and coming to rest beside the knight in another conventional act of chivalric love—a woman’s suicide for her lover. Although the river’s waters must not have remained divided since many knights are said to have drowned trying to retrieve the bodies of the lovers, the visibility of the bodies has remained, mimicking the non-deteriorated state of many saints’ bodies in hagiographies. Although it is through God’s power that the knight’s body is first revealed, and presumably that the two lovers’ bodies remain apparent to those on the cliff, the lovers are martyrs for love not religion. Lancelot is able to retrieve both bodies from the river, and as a result, the lovers receive a proper burial at a local castle.

In addition to the lovers’ relationship being indicated as divinely acceptable through the miracle that occurs, the actions of the husband against the lovers are divinely condemned through the barrenness of the land after the lovers’ deaths. This sets up the standard that a pure love is not to be punished, and this holds true as Lancelot and Guinevere’s relationship only gets into trouble because it shifts from a pure love to a guilty love. Morgan’s many attempts to expose them do not work while their love remains pure, but the results of another

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355 Chaucer, again provides a prime example of this in other romances. His *Legend of Good Women* seems to exalt women who are willing to kill themselves over their lovers, and in *The Franklin’s Tale*, Dorigen’s lament has her spend roughly one hundred lines contemplating suicide as a possible way to avoid the dilemma of betraying her husband and considering the long list of women who have chosen precisely that option.

356 This pseudo-hagiography seems to sit in a period of cultural and literary transition from religious hagiographies, a popular genre of early medieval literature, to the religion of love. The religion of love is the presentation of love in the terms and behaviors of religion, such as demonstrating total devotion to one’s lover, worshipping them, or kneeling before them. The religion of love can be seen in high and late medieval texts, but the example of the two lovers in this *Vulgate* episode seem to blend traditional hagiography with the religion of love, suggesting that this is a transitional piece between the two literary traditions.

357 This is a feat that many other knights have died attempting; although, interestingly, their drowned bodies are absent from the narrative gaze.
of her later magical kidnappings of Lancelot does eventually help enlighten Arthur to the affair toward the end of the Vulgate. Despite the guilty love between Lancelot and Guinevere, which is often attributed as the reason for Camelot’s downfall, the two lovers seem ultimately to return to a pure love as each enters religious life during or after the fall of Camelot in the “Death of Arthur”—Guinevere in a convent and Lancelot in a monastery—where they live out their days.

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358 Although both the Vulgate Cycle and Le Morte Darthur end the Lancelot and Guinevere relationship with each lover joining a religious institution, the specifics between the two versions vary. Malory’s version aligns with the Palatinus Latinus 1967 interpolation in giving Lancelot and Guinevere a final meeting; however, Malory’s Guinevere is far more self-blaming and openly claims hers and Lancelot’s responsibility for the war. As in the interpolation, Guinevere rejects the secular world and, with it, Lancelot’s continued presence in her life, but Malory only has Guinevere reject Lancelot, telling him to go take a wife and be happy, not instruct him to devote his life to God. Instead, Lancelot, scoffing at the idea of making a life with any other woman, independently chooses to seek out a religious order to join. Their parting in Le Morte Darthur is far more bitter, with Guinevere refusing even a final kiss for Lancelot, focused wholly instead on making up for her allegedly sinful life. This is the final living reunion the two lovers are given in Malory, but he also deviates from the Vulgate by having Lancelot come for Guinevere’s corpse which he buries next to King Arthur’s and then spends weeks withering away out of sorrow for the deaths of both Queen Guinevere and King Arthur until he too finally dies.

359 Vulgate manuscript Palatinus Latinus 1967 offers a unique scene of reunion between Guinevere and Lancelot that signals both their continued love and shame at their relationship. In this interpolation, Lancelot comes upon the abbey at which Queen Guinevere now resides. Coming out to meet the newcomer, Guinevere faints from her surprise, and once she awakens and speaks his name, Lancelot, realizing who she is, also faints. After explaining why she has taken the habit, Lancelot reassures her that Mordred’s sons are dead and she need no longer fear and can rule over the land. Guinevere, however, states they both know they “have done things we should not have done” and that she believes they both ought to “spend the rest of our lives in the service of Our Lord.” Although Lancelot weeps at this, he agrees to go find and join a hermitage. They part a few days later, on good terms, her having forgiven Lancelot his sins as he requested. After his departure, Guinevere is told to have been extensively devout in her mass and matins attendance and her praying, so much that her strenuous praying contributes to her death after only a year. “The Death of Arthur,” Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation, ed. and trans. Norris J. Lacy, vol. 4 (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995), e158, n. 2.
At the narrative point that Lancelot liberates the two lovers’ corpses from the water, the purity of Lancelot’s and Guinevere’s love is important, and it gives their love moral acceptability when Morgan attempts to reveal their relationship to the Arthurian court as part of her revenge plot. This plays out once Lancelot fulfills his oath and returns as Morgan’s prisoner. Although the completion of his quest may at first appear to be the end of Lancelot’s forced separation from Guinevere, part of his reputation as a knight is that he upholds his oaths; so, after this period of freedom and adventure, Lancelot returns semi-willingly to his captivity. Lancelot willingly makes the choice to uphold his chivalric obligation by fulfilling his oath to Morgan, despite its contradiction with his personal desire for freedom. In this way, his choice is both made from free will and is coerced, since, were he to not return, he would be betraying his oath and would damage his chivalric reputation. However, because Morgan, a character of ill-repute in the text, is the only other party in the agreement, Lancelot could have logistically gotten away with breaking his oath and no one knowing or, if Morgan did tell, no one believing. This suggests that Lancelot is internally motivated to uphold chivalric standards and not just motivated by the external factor of shame.360

Morgan has few of the same concerns over honor and reputation as Lancelot does, and she happily returns him to his imprisonment upon his return. Although Morgan’s imprisonment of Lancelot is already causing Guinevere to suffer—when she learns this news about Lancelot “ful malade a certes” [“she was then truly ill”]—this is not enough for

360 This indicates that chivalric culture works both as a shame culture and a guilt culture, relying on internalized guilt as much as externalized shame for any violations of chivalric expectations. For more on the chivalric code in medieval romance and how it mirrors historical changes in cultural class roles, see Robert Rouse, “Historical Context: The Middle Ages and the Code of Chivalry,” in Handbook of Arthurian Romance: King Arthur’s Court in Medieval European Literature, eds. Leah Tether and Johnny McFadyen (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 13-24.
Morgan, who seeks to destroy Guinevere totally. Morgan taunts Lancelot in an attempt to get him to reveal the secret of his love, but finds him resolute in keeping his secret. Although Morgan is almost certain about his love for Guinevere, she wants absolute proof in the form of a confession, which, once made, Lancelot could not publicly deny without lying (and thus sacrificing his honor that he cherishes). Morgan turns her attentions, once again, to his emerald ring, which she recognizes as the queen’s. Although she asks for the ring many times, Lancelot continually refuses her that as well, and Morgan settles on obtaining it “a force” [“by force”]. While this sounds more ominous than it is, the phrase does accurately suggest that Morgan’s methods circumvent the need for Lancelot’s consent. After having her requests repeatedly denied, Morgan once again turns to magic to get her way, but when her magic fails her, due to the ring’s magical property of being impervious against magical theft, she uses a pseudo-magical solution instead:

Quant Morgue vit que Lancelos ne li donroit l’anel ne par force ne par proiere, si laisse la parole atant ester et fist samblant une grant piece que cure n’en avoit et dist que tot ce avoit ele fet por lui essayer. En totes les manieres qui apartienent a enchantemens essaia Morgue a avoir l’anel ne onques mestier n’i orent. Lors prist une herbe que l’en apele sopite: si n’est nus home que, s’il en avoit gosté, ki jamés finest de dormir tant que l’en l’esveillast a force. Cele herbe li dona Morgue a veivre.

[When Morgan saw that Lancelot would not give her the ring willingly, she gave up asking for it, claiming for a long while that she had no interest in it and had merely been testing him. By every means that witchcraft allowed, Morgan tried to secure the ring, but to no avail. Then she took an herb called soporite, which, once anyone has had a taste of it, puts him into a lasting sleep from which he can be awakened only by force; and this herb she gave to Lancelot in a drink.]  

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362 See note 346 for more about the confusing origins of this ring.  
Unable to accomplish her task directly through magic, Morgan renders Lancelot unable to prevent her from taking the ring with a favorite trick of hers, magically putting Lancelot to sleep. Although the text’s previous characterization of Morgan’s strategy as taking the ring “a force” [“by force”], in actuality she is extremely secretive and subtle in her plan’s execution. She also results to drugging Lancelot only after she has attempted seemingly numerous other methods of witchcraft to obtain the ring. Turning away from brazen attempts, Morgan instead renders Lancelot helpless to protect his magical love token, and while he is in a deep sleep, she removes the ring and replaces it with an identical ring\textsuperscript{365} that had also been the queen’s, but which lacks the same magical properties.\textsuperscript{366} Here, a tiny insight into the magical nature of Lancelot’s ring is revealed as the text contrasts the two rings: “li Lancelot ne pooit estre tenus par enchantement ne par charaie, kar el siege de la pierre avoit .II. figures diverses que nus ne savoit a dire qu’elles senefioient, kar l’en nes pooit veoir se a grant paine non” [“Lancelot’s ring could not be won through spells and bewitchment, because in the stone’s setting there were two strange figures, almost invisible, whose meaning no one could

\textsuperscript{365} This replacement of a stolen magical object with an identical, but non-magical replica, is characteristic of Morgan. In one of the earliest Morgan episodes, she is entrusted with King Arthur’s magical sword, but rather than guarding it, she gives the sword to her own lover, Accolon, in a deceptive plot that intends to have Accolon kill Arthur so he and Morgan may take the throne. When Arthur requests his sword back, Morgan provides him an exact replica that lacks the original’s magical powers, thus leaving him vulnerable in battle.

\textsuperscript{366} The ring allows Lancelot to see through enchantments, and he utilizes it in the Valley of False Lovers episode to reveal that all the challenges he has just overcome to enter the valley were nothing more than enchantments. This seems to parallel the ring in Chrétien’s \textit{Le Chevalier de la Charrette} [The Knight of the Cart], in which Lancelot has a ring that would free a person from enchantment when they peered at the ring. The ring in \textit{Le Chevalier de la Charrette} is identified as a gift from a fairy who raised Lancelot rather than a love-token though, which aligns with the \textit{Vulgate’s} original identification of the ring discussed here as coming from the Lady of the Lake; however, by this point in the \textit{Vulgate} narrative, the source of the ring has been changed to Lancelot’s love, Queen Guinevere.
Three stages in Morgan’s attempts can be parsed and their efficacy evaluated: requesting the ring (failure because Lancelot refuses), stealing it through witchcraft (failure because the ring is magically protected), stealing it through trickery (success because she finds a loophole in the ring’s magical protection). The explicit ineffectuality of Morgan’s direct magic, which we know to be extensive and powerful, reinforces that her use of the magic is morally wrong. It is only when she goes outside of direct magical means, using an herb to put Lancelot to sleep and physically replacing the ring, that she is successful in her attempts, but even then her ultimate goal of using it to expose Lancelot and Guinevere does not come to fruition how she plans. Although the herb drink may be considered magical, its only function is to put him to sleep, not to take the ring; the physical act of removing the ring must be done by Morgan’s own hand, not through “enchantement ne…charaie” [“spells and bewitchment”].

The use of an herb to cause the magical sleep fits into the longer tradition of Morgan le Fay as a healer (healing magic generally involves herbal and other natural remedies). Her knowledge of herbal properties and ability to use them in her magic aligns with representations of her in earlier texts such as the *Vita Merlini*. Using an herb has natural magical undertones, but historically, healing magic’s reliance on natural, herbal ingredients did not preclude it from official condemnation by church authorities under the auspice that the results of magic had to come from demonic assistance. The text provides

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368 See the earlier discussion in chapter two (n. 174) of natural and learned magic and its connection to Queen Isolde who, in Béroul’s *Tristan* version, draws upon an herbal tradition for her potion, much like Morgan does here.
information about Morgan’s preparation of the drink, and only two ingredients are consumed by Lancelot—the herb soporite and the strong wine in which it is steeped. This preparation along with the text’s information about the herb’s effects, allows this to be read as a more medicinal than magical action. In characterizing Morgan’s use of the herb on Lancelot, Carolyne Larrington says that Morgan “employs drugs” thus distancing the magical nature of Morgan’s actions from the herb.\(^{370}\) Larrington fits this in which the thirteenth-century trend of the “debasement of Morgan’s magical powers.”\(^{371}\) In conjunction with this thirteenth-century downgraded alteration to the form and function of Morgan’s magic, her fundamental role in the Arthurian narrative shifts from a positive healer to a lecherous, maleficent figure.

Morgan’s success in finally securing Lancelot’s ring is because of the long game she is willing to play in order to calm Lancelot’s suspicions of her desire for the ring. She pauses her requests for it, claims that it was all a test, and seemingly lets the matter rest, all in order to deceive him. She turns to witchcraft, but when that fails “si la destempra de fort vin et por samblant qu’ele le volsist aaisier li mist desos le chief l’oreillier qu’ele li avoit mis com il parti del Val as Faus Amans, quant ele le mena en prison” \[“she steeped it \{the herb\} in a strong wine, and pretending she wanted to make him comfortable, placed under Lancelot’s head the pillow that she had placed there when she had led him off to prison from the Valley of False Lovers”\].\(^{372}\) Her attention to Lancelot’s comfort lulls him into a more trusting state,


\(^{371}\) Larrington, *King Arthur’s Enchantresses*, 18-19. She also references a more dramatic instance of this trend in which Morgan enhances the severity of Alexander’s wounds with poison in order to manipulate him into promising her to do whatever she asks in exchange for her healing of him. Not only does this episode demonstrate a dark, unscrupulous side of Morgan, but her subsequent drugging of Alexander to put him to sleep so she can kidnap him establishes a clear pattern of behavior for her character.

\(^{372}\) Micha, ed. *Lancelot*, I: XXIX, 349; Lacy, ed. and Rosenberg, trans., “Lancelot, Part III,” *Lancelot-Grail* 2:323. This is the first mention of this pillow which the text attributes to
and indeed he does not suspect anything once he is awakened. Morgan’s secrecy is told to be in self-preservation since “bien savoit que, w’il s’apercevoit, que nus ne le porroit garder que il ne se coroçast” [“she well knew that, if he were aware of it, nothing could hold back his wrath”]. Whether this is a reference to the possibility that Lancelot might harm Morgan or that his wrath could overcome her magic is unclear; however, the statement makes clear the strength of his love for Guinevere and his attachment to the love token which she provided to him.

Morgan, once in possession of this ring, uses it to further her attempt to disrupt Lancelot’s relationship with Guinevere by exposing them to Arthur’s court. After observing him for a time after her theft to ensure he did not suspect anything, Morgan sends the ring in the care of one of her maidens to King Arthur. In a wise move, the maiden first makes Arthur promise her no harm in a more chivalric binding way of saying “don’t shoot the messenger.” Once her safety has been secured, the maiden makes a public declaration:

Dist si haut que tuit et totes l’ont entendue: <<Rois Artus, je vois aport noveles de Lancelot del Lac et sachies que vos ne le verrois jamés en vostre ostel, ne vos ne comppains que vos aiés, kar il s’en vet en tel lieu ou il ne sera mie trovés legieren. Et neporquant s’il estoit trovés, ne voldroit il noient, kar je os bien afichier que jamés ne li pendra escu al col.>>

[Speaking loudly enough to be heard by everyone, ‘King Arthur, I bring you news of Lancelot of the Lake. Know that neither you nor any companion of yours will ever see him at your court again, for he has gone away to a place where he cannot easily be found. Nevertheless, if he were found, it would be to no avail, for I daresay he will never again bear a shield.’]374

being part of Lancelot’s original kidnapping but is not mentioned in that portion of the narrative.

Although the first half of this message appears truthful, a reference to Lancelot’s imprisonment by Morgan in a faraway place, the second portion does not align with the state in which Lancelot was when the maiden departed from Morgan. As intended, this news of Lancelot distresses the court, and particularly Guinevere who “est anguoissose a demesure, si ne puet plus demorer entre les gens, kar ele crient k’il l’en meschiece” [“overwhelmed with anguish, could not stay with people, for she feared a disaster”]. This visceral response of Guinevere plays exactly into Morgan’s plan, and the maiden, expecting Guinevere’s reaction, bars her from departing the room, demanding that if the queen leaves, no further information will be divulged. Desiring more detail about Lancelot, Arthur orders Guinevere to remain.

The maiden tells a fully fabricated story designed to bring shame to Lancelot, and more importantly, Guinevere. The maiden tells the court:

Il fu voirs que Lancelos, quant il se parti de la Dolerose Tor, se combati a un des meillors chevaliers del mond; si fu navrés d’un glaive par mi le cors et perdi tant del sanc per cele plaie qu’il cuida bien morir. Et por ce se fist confés tot en oiance de si vil pechié et si orible comme de son seignor, ki ci est, qu’il avoit longuement honi et de sa feme, et issi me command ail que je le deisse en ceste cort, kar je estoie en la place ou il se fist confés.

[What happened is that Lancelot, when he left the Dolorous Tower, went into battle with one of the best knights in the world. He was wounded by a sword through his body and lost so much blood from the wound that he believed he was going to die. He therefore confessed, in public, to a base and horrible sin: that he had long brought shame to his lord, here present, and to his wife. I was in the room when he made his confession, and he bade me bring news of it to court.] This narrative has been carefully designed for maximum rhetorical effect upon its hearers.

Knowing that Guinevere would be present in the audience, the information that Lancelot was

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so gravely wounded would be certain to cause her the distress that Morgan desires, but furthermore, the revelation of the betrayal of Arthur by both Lancelot and Guinevere is crafted to harm Guinevere (Arthur becomes collateral damage in this). The martial elements of the narrative align with Lancelot’s reputation for engaging in fierce battles, lending it authenticity. Lancelot’s need to confess when he believed death was upon him, comes across as the reasonable course of action for a good Christian knight. The maiden’s lies about witnessing these events provides a “first-hand account” legitimacy to her story, as does the detail—Lancelot’s last words to Sir Gawain—which she offers up as evidence that Lancelot requested her to pass on this account. The maiden states that out of his need for penance, after making this public confession, Lancelot swore an oath to wander “en langes et nus piés, ne jamés n’avroie escu a col ne arme vestue” [“barefoot and in rough woolens, never carrying a shield or wearing armor”] and ne girra jamés en une vile c’une nuit” [“never stay in any town more than one night”].

This penitential, nomadic state Lancelot is supposedly subscribing to renders it difficult for anyone to locate him, and it makes the validity of the narrative difficult to confirm independently. This strategic move is effective, and the court is heartbroken at this news of everyone’s favorite knight.

The disruption to Lancelot and Guinevere’s relationship is not yet complete though, and the maiden twists the knife a little harder when she then turns and speaks directly to Guinevere:

Si li tent, boiant tos cels qui sont laiens, l’anel que Morgue avoit osté del dei Lancelot et puis li dist: <<Dame, cui qu’il soit bel ne laid, il me coivent mon message dire, ce poise moi, mais je me parjurroie autrement, kar je jurai sor sains a Lancelot que je vos bailleroie cest anele n vostre main et il le vost rent.>>

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In front of all those present, {she} held out to her the ring that Morgan had taken from Lancelot’s finger. She said, ‘My lady, like it or not, I am duty-bound to state my message. I am sorry, but I would be breaking my oath otherwise, as I swore to Lancelot on holy relics that I would hand you this ring, which he is hereby returning to you.’

Whether the maiden genuinely feels any compassion for what she is doing to Guinevere with her lies is unclear; however, by expressing such compassion, she furthers the projection of herself as the innocent messenger of bad news who comes without an agenda, reinforcing the believability of her statements. The return of Guinevere’s ring serves a dual purpose in Morgan’s disruptive plotting—it both causes emotional suffering for Guinevere since the ring was a love token, a physical symbol of their mutual affections, and it attempts to publicly disclose Guinevere’s relationship with Lancelot to the court. Both results are addressed in the events following the maiden’s public return of the ring to Guinevere.

Already distressed from the harrowing news of Lancelot, Guinevere “atant le prent la roine, mel ele n’a pooir del responder, kar la grant anguoisse qu’ele a al cuer la fet pasmer” [“took it [the ring] but was powerless to respond, for the great anguish in her heart made her faint”]. This dramatic reaction betrays the strength of her feelings toward Lancelot and would seem to make her appear guilty of the affair that the maiden has reported as being confessed from Lancelot’s lips. The courtiers’ respond with pity rather than condemnation, and they rush to comfort Guinevere. Upon awakening, Guinevere allows her public grieving to continue on display, “si se plaint molt durement ne ne laisse ne por le roi ne por nului

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qu’ele ne regret Lancelot” [“and did not let the king or anyone else stop her from weeping and sobbing over Lancelot”].\(^{380}\)

Although her initial instinct had been to conceal her grief at the news of Lancelot, now that it is known that she is so affected, she allows herself to continue her display of emotion but then verbally clarifies her response to those present: “She said that whoever wanted to spread ugly tales could go ahead and talk, but she thought, and wanted everyone to know, that she had never heard news so heartbreaking, apart only from the news about the prisoners at the Saxon Rock.” Rather than attempt to dispute Morgan’s claims outright, Guinevere cunningly presents a more acceptable alternative interpretation of the facts Morgan has had presented to the court. Guinevere also claims that her relationship with Lancelot “ne il a moi amor vilaine” [“never was a guilty love”],\(^{381}\) directly connects to the distinction between guilty and pure love that was so closely examined earlier in Lancelot’s removal of the knight’s and lady’s corpses from the river. Guinevere acknowledges how the accusations and her grief seems to look, but she dismisses it by projecting no concern over what the public might think or say. Her ability to do so is enhanced by Lancelot’s role as her knight, established at the initiation of his first chivalric quest when he had his knighthood finalized at her hand rather than King Arthur’s. Guinevere simultaneously justifies her grieving while subtly reaffirming her loyalty to her husband King Arthur. She clarifies that she is responding to how awful the news is, but also reminds everyone that she was more upset at the news about the prisoners who were captured and held within Saxon Rock, which,

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importantly, included King Arthur. This is an interesting intratextual reference and is enlightening in revealing Guinevere’s own rhetorical navigating in the present scene.

A look back at Guinevere’s response to the news about Saxon Rock reveals the complicated relationship between Guinevere and Arthur as well as a pattern of attributing her publicly performed grief to inaccurate reasons. Lest Arthur be too readily positioned as a victim of Guinevere’s affair with Lancelot, it is worth noting that his capture at Saxon Rock occurs because of his own eagerness to philander. Accounts about the lady Gamille, the lady of the Rock, are contradictory in the text. It first tells that she “si savoit plus d’encantemens que damoisele del païs et moult ert bele et estoit del lignage as Saisnes et ele amoit tant le roi Artu com ele pooit plus amer home et li rois n’en savoit rien” [“knew more about enchantments than any other maiden in the land; she was very beautiful, and of Saxon lineage. She was as much in love with King Arthur as she could possibly be, but the king knew nothing of this”].382 It then contradicts itself, saying that “Et li rois Artus parloit tous les jors a la damoisele del castel et li prioit d’amors et ele n’en avoit cure, et si l’avoit tel conreé qu’il l’amoit outre mesure” [“every day King Arthur spoke to the maiden of the castle, begging her for her love, but she cared nothing for him though she had affected him that he loved her beyond all measure”].383 The lady uses Arthur’s desire for her to lure him into capture, inviting him to “venés anuit jesir o moi enc hele tor” [“come lie with me tonight in this tower”] and agreeing that he “ferai de vous ce que chevaliers doit faire de s’amie”

[“may do with you what a knight should do to his ladylove”].

Her sleeping with him before having him taken prisoner by her knights suggests she does not totally lack interest in him, but whatever interest she may have does not seem to cause any hesitation in her plan. On the same night, Lancelot meets and sleeps with Guinevere, and their joining repairs the shield which the Lady of the Lake had brought, cracked, confirming that Lancelot’s love for her is true.

Upon learning of Arthur’s capture within the Saxon Rock, Guinevere “si en fu moult esbache et trop grant doel en fist et moult li tarde que ele puist parler a Lancelot, que il i meist conseil” [“was overwhelmed by grief and was most impatient to speak to Lancelot, that he might think of a plan.”].

Her grief here is both genuine and truly for Arthur’s situation, showing that she was genuinely upset by the events; and even her thoughts toward wanting Lancelot’s presence center around taking action to free Arthur. When she subsequently learns that Lancelot and the other knights were led away by a maiden and concludes they too are now imprisoned, “si commence moult grant doel a faire” [“she began to grieve most bitterly”]. Her grief here is strong, but the text does not elevate it or denigrate it as more or

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385 Micha, ed. Lancelot, VIII: LVIIIa, 205-6; VIII: LXXa, 444. Lacy, ed. and Rosenberg, trans., “Lancelot, Part II,” Lancelot-Grail 2:168; 2:228. Although the magic of the shield is relevant to their love, it is more prophetic than a form of love magic. The shield foretells the union between them and heals itself once that union has taken place, but it does not induce their love. At most, the shield’s magic facilitates their love by reassuring Guinevere, after they’ve slept together, that she and Lancelot are the two lovers on the shield whose love is now complete. See Hahn, “Feminine Sexuality,” 493 for more on the Split Shield and its symbolism.
less than her original grief over Arthur’s capture and does not distinguish it as being uniquely for Lancelot since he is lumped in with Galehaut, whom Guinevere had also requested participate in developing a rescue plan. In fact, the text seems to signal her grief for all of the prisoners by again mentioning it as part of her reaction the following morning when “pendirent cil les .III. escus as creniax avoec les autres .II.” [“the men of the Rock hung the four shields from the battlements with the other two”], and upon seeing these, “sachiés que ele ot assés dolor et miex amast sa mort que sa vie” [“you may be sure her grief was great, and she would have preferred death to life”].

Her grief is responding to the equal representation of the imprisonment of all the knights, including her husband.

While the battle between Arthur’s forces, led by Sir Yvain, and the Saxons takes place outside Saxon Rock, inside, Lancelot’s grief at his situation leads him to go mad and results in his release, granted out of pity, by the lady of the Rock. Seeing the maddened Lancelot outside her lodging, Guinevere takes him into her care. Her unique ability to calm him hints at their special relationship, for when the lady of Malehaut attempts to bring him into the queen’s lodgings, he reacts with violence, but immediately upon hearing Guinevere’s voice, “si tost com il l’ot, si s’asiet et met ses .II. mains devant ses iex comme hontex” [“he sat down and put both hands before his eyes like one ashamed”]. Guinevere is able to approach him and lead him to a room in her lodging and “et si tost com ele le commande a estre em pais, ja puis ne se muet, si en fait la roine tant que tous li siecles s’en merveille” [“as soon as she ordered him to be calm, he no longer moved, and everyone marveled at her

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The ability of the queen to calm Lancelot when no one else can, justifies her constant presence, but the text breaks from its previous presentations of her grief and here reveals the disparity between the reason for her grief, Lancelot’s madness, and everyone’s belief about the reason for her grief, Arthur’s imprisonment:

Ensi est Lancelos laiens et gist devant la roine; et ele fait toutes les nuis estaindre et chierges et tortins, car la clartés, ce dist, l’ochist, puis le couche avoec lui et fait toute nuit tel duel que merveilles est comment ele dure. Et chascuns quide que che soit proprement por le roi. Ensi dure longuement li duels la roine et la forsenerie Lancelot, tant que .I. jor avint que li Saisne furent venu sor l’ost et la i ot do grant mellees et d’une part et d’autre.

[So Lancelot stayed in that room and lay before the queen. Every night she had all candles and torches extinguished, because the light, she said, caused him great harm; then she shared her bed with him, and grieved so bitterly all night that it was a wonder how she could go on. And everyone believed it was actually for the king. In this way the queen’s grief and Lancelot’s madness went on for a long time, until one day the Saxons attacked the camp and there was great fighting between the two sides.]

The text stops just short of explicitly stating that Guinevere’s grief is for Lancelot, but it nonetheless makes this clear through its statement of what everyone else believed about her grieving. It is to this immense grief, believed to be Guinevere’s expression of her love and devotion to Arthur, that she refers when the maiden uses her ring to publicly expose Guinevere’s relationship and love for Lancelot in front of the full court. The reinvocation of what everyone believes to be her greater grief over Arthur, is her way of reassuring the court that any feelings she may have toward Lancelot are in her role as queen and his as the most valiant knight.

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Her lengthy monologue, praising Lancelot further defends her interactions with Lancelot and more specifically responds to the evidence of the ring that the maiden has presented:

Et tant sache Diex, fete le, et tos li mondes que je n’oi onques a Lancelot ne il a moi amor vilaine…ne ja Diex de m’ame n’ait pitié, s’il ne se laissast anços un des ielx de la teste traire que il deist si grant oltrage com ceste damoisele a ci conté, neis s’il fust de moi et de lui ce que ele a dit; ne ja ne m’escondirai ne de l’anel ne d’autre chose, kar l’anel li donoie et quanque je veasse as autres chevaliers: si voil bien que cil me blasment ki raison i troveront, kar c’est blasmes sans confort.

[‘I want God and everyone to know,’ she said, ‘that between Lancelot and me there never was a guilty love…May God have no mercy on my soul if Lancelot would not have sooner had an eye plucked out than say such an unspeakable thing as this young woman has reported, even if what she said about him and me had been the truth! Nor will I deny anything about the ring or whatever else: I gave him the ring as well as everything I would have denied to other knights. If some people find it reasonable to reproach me, I don’t care; their reproaches are groundless!’] 392

Guinevere attacks the validity of the maiden’s message by referencing Lancelot’s well-known reputation, and declaring that he would be too honorable to say something that would bring harm upon her and discord to Arthur’s court, but she also works to redefine the maiden’s representation of her relationship with Lancelot. The use of the phrase “guilty love”393 harkens the reader back to that specific side-quest and the semi-hagiographic nature of the two lovers’ relationship, thus tying Guinevere and Lancelot’s own relationship to that in the minds of the reader. In doing so, the narrator provides a (temporary) excusal of Guinevere and Lancelot’s relationship which then helps the reader be satisfied with the

393 A general belief of courtly love is that passionate or romantic love does not occur within marriages (although the occasional passionate love pairing, such as Yvain and his wife in Chrétien’s Yvain, Knight of the Lion, seems to offer some exception to this understanding). Guinevere’s claim that no “guilty love” has existed between her and Lancelot does not equate with a declaration of passionate love for Arthur, and only focuses on establishing loyalty to, not love for, her husband.
failure of Morgan’s plan. Morgan acts out of pure malice toward Guinevere, but Guinevere’s successful defense of herself and Lancelot leaves Morgan’s efforts fruitless. Guinevere calls upon Lancelot’s superiority as a knight within the court to justify her gift to him, redefining the ring’s purpose from a love token (implied by Morgan’s maiden) into a generous gift to a worthy knight. Although the audience has previously seen how the ring’s ability to dispel enchantments provides Lancelot with an advantage in his adventures, its magical properties go unnoticed and seem irrelevant in Guinevere and the maiden’s opposing representations of the purpose of the gift. After the ring is returned to Guinevere, its fate becomes unknown, but it does not seem to ever be returned to Lancelot. The original intent of the gift is of course unperceivable within the text as its origins are muddled within the narrative.  

Without any display of hesitation or doubt, the courtiers take Guinevere’s explanation at her word, and even prior to her monologue, they demonstrated little concern regarding her actions in light of the maiden’s accusations, despite clearly believing everything the woman had reported about Lancelot. The text abruptly shuts down any apparent belief in the maiden, claiming, “Ainsi se desraine la roine oiant tos; si a des tiels qui molt l’en present ne li rois n’en est a malaisse de nule rien, ançois tient tot a mensoinge quanque la damoisele dist” [“Thus the queen defended herself before the whole court. There were those who admired her for it, and the king was not in any way perturbed by it but rather held everything the messenger had said to be a lie”]. Guinevere ironically benefits from Morgan’s scheming, gaining the admiration of the court and the trust of Arthur rather than the scorn, shame, and disruption to her affair that Morgan and intended and desired. Arthur furthers Guinevere’s

394 See note 346.
case by responding to her declaration, that, “si li aît Diex, il voldroit que Lancelos l’eust esposee par covenant que il seroit tote sa vie ses compains et vesquit son droit eage” [“so help him God, he would gladly have seen Lancelot marry her {Guinevere}, provided he were his companion all his life and would not die young”].\(^{396}\) Arthur’s statement is revealing, both of his deep desire to have Lancelot as part of his court and of his apparent little care toward Guinevere. Perhaps Arthur’s attitude toward his wife is not unexpected considering his frequent dalliances with other women, but his public declaration that his own relationship with Lancelot is so much more important to him than his marriage, is interesting (and may suggest that he has an awareness of their affair and does not care if it maintains Lancelot’s presence and loyalty within his court). Elevating masculine bonds over even marital ones, Arthur’s declaration is eventually proven useless when, later in the Vulgate, the relationship is publicly confirmed when they are caught together, and Arthur must take action against it.\(^{397}\)

This attempt by Morgan to disrupt Lancelot and Guinevere’s relationship fails, and Morgan intends to hold Lancelot as a prisoner until she elicits a clear confession of his love for Guinevere. This eventually proves difficult because Lancelot is not a cooperative prisoner. Morgan holds no ill will toward Lancelot (aside from some frustration at his stubbornness) and is only holding him to distress Guinevere, whom she hopes will “en preist la mort ou la desverie” [“either die or go mad”] out of despair.\(^{398}\) As such, when Lancelot

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\(^{397}\) Even Arthur’s action in response to the revelation of Lancelot and Guinevere’s affair is motivated more by political necessity than personal investment from Arthur.

begins to despair and stops eating, Morgan feels it necessary to negotiate with him to prevent him from withering away (and so depriving her of her method of upsetting Guinevere). Although Lancelot’s death would certainly distress Guinevere, Morgan’s vehemence in obtaining revenge drives her not only to make Guinevere suffer, but also to distress her in a way that mirrors Guinevere’s own trespasses against Morgan’s love life; this requires Lancelot be alive so that Morgan can separate Guinevere from her lover without turning her into a sympathetic victim.

Her first offer is that he may gain his freedom but in exchange “se vous ne me jurez sor sainz que vos n’enterrois en la maison le roi Artu devant un an et que vos ne tenders campagnie ne a home ne a feme de sa maison une hore eintier” [“you must swear on holy relics that for a whole year you will not enter the house of King Arthur and that you will not spend a single hour in the company of any man or woman of his household”].\textsuperscript{399} This demand is aimed at both keeping Lancelot from Guinevere and depriving Guinevere of any second-hand knowledge of Lancelot, which might have provided comfort to her in his absence. Lancelot refuses these terms, so Morgan revises her demand, insisting that he swear “Que vos n’enterroiz de ci a Noël en liu ou la roine soit” [“that between now and Christmas you will not enter any place where the queen is”].\textsuperscript{400} Again he refuses to make such an oath for the thought of it alone causes him such pain “que par un poi que li cuers ne li est partis el ventre” [“that his heart almost dropped out of him”],\textsuperscript{401} but this does not deter Morgan.

As has become her trademark, she uses a magical drink to affect his sleep:

Mes por ce qu’ele ne le poet fere mengier, si li a mis poisons en son beivre que furent confites a conjurement et a charies: si li troblerent la cervelle tant que la nuit li fu avis en son dormant qu’il trovoit la roine sa dame gisant avec un chevalier. Et il corut a s’espee, si le voloit ocire, quant la roine sailoit sus et disoit: <<Lancelos, que volez cest chevalier ocire? Ne seez ja si hardis que i metois la main, kar je sui soe. Et gardés que jamés, si chier com vos avez vostre cors, ne venés en liu ou je soie.>>

[Since she could not make him eat, she put a potion into his drink that was brewed with magic spells; and it so muddled his brain that in his sleep that night he dreamt he found the queen in bed with another knight. He ran for his sword, wanting to kill him, when she jumped up and said, ‘Lancelot, why do you want to kill this knight? Don’t be so bold as to put your hand on him! Don’t you see I am his! And take care, if you value your life, never to enter any place where I am.’] 402

Once again, having failed to get her way with Lancelot through requests and demands, Morgan relies on magical manipulation to ensure her success. The magic of the potion confuses Lancelot and creates a realistic dream; the combination of the two effects is that Lancelot, after awakening, cannot discern it from reality. The potion affects his reality, working by blending fiction into his memory so that he believes this episode with the queen had actually occurred. She sets him up to awaken in the same setting which he dreamed, and to believe that he was attempting to leave her prison without her permission, thus violating his former oath to return and remain in her captivity. This leads him to accept Morgan’s offer. Even as Morgan’s magical interference appears successful, a specific line explaining why Morgan used this magic, undercuts her success. The text specifies that “Ensi le fist Morgue songier por lui fere hair la roine” [“Morgan made him have such a dream in order to make him hate the queen”]. 403 yet Lancelot’s response is one of sadness, not hatred, at the

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belief that Guinevere had banned him from her presence. Morgan, whose first lover was revealed to be indifferent to her, wants Lancelot to hate Guinevere in order to cause her emotional distress. Lancelot, being so in love with Guinevere, cannot hate her though, and instead, “Et lors est si dolens a poi que il n’enrage…mes encore est il plus dolens de la defense que la roine li avoit fete qu’il n’est del chevalier, kar il ne voe mie a fere tel hardemnet que jamés mete le pié la ou ele soit” [“he was so crushed that he almost lost his wits…but he was even more crushed by the queen’s prohibition than he was by the presence of the knight, for he could not swear to be so brave as never to set foot where she would be”].

His reaction is one of pain and heartache, and the lack of hatred or abandonment of his love (which is what Morgan wanted) serves as evidence of his love’s trueness, which stands in contrast to how each of Morgan’s lovers treated her.

Morgan’s magical disruption to Lancelot and Guinevere’s relationship is temporarily effective because of the oath she tricks Lancelot into making; however, no matter what magic she employs, she remains unable to disrupt their love for one another. Guinevere’s ultimate trust in Lancelot’s love and honor is stalwart against Morgan’s attempt to sow discord through the falsehood of Lancelot’s confession conveyed by the maiden at Arthur’s court. In turn, despite succumbing to Morgan’s magically crafted delusion, Lancelot remains steadfast in his love. At every turn, Morgan acts out of malice and hatred; her motivations are selfish, and she shows a disregard for the collateral damage that could result from her varied attempts at targeting Guinevere. This episode is the first of many times Morgan kidnaps Lancelot, frequently in an attempt to distress Guinevere and/or reveal their relationship to the Arthurian

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court; however, some instances also indicate that Morgan herself may have held some romantic interest in Lancelot, but whether this interest exists from genuine emotions for him or from a desire to steal his affections from Guinevere in furtherance of her efforts to hurt Guinevere is unclear. This first possibility is discussed more in the following chapter on the magical facilitation of love.

**Morgan’s and the Queens’ Cooperative Kidnapping**

Another of Morgan’s magical kidnappings of Lancelot is a collaborative effort between Morgan and three other queens; however, it too fails in its efforts.\(^{405}\) In this episode, we see how the condemnation of employing love disrupting magic falls not only on the direct magical practitioner (Morgan) but also her three co-conspirator queens, who, although complicit in Morgan’s magic, work none of their own. This episode demonstrates Morgan using magic to disrupt a love relationship and magic being employed to attempt to facilitate love. The disruption of love is clear: magic is administered to put Lancelot to sleep and kidnap him, and his kidnapping is leverage to force a stop to the love between Lancelot and Guinevere. The motivation of the women, and therefore, their utilization of the magic, is to become Lancelot’s paramour, which is an attempt to facilitate a love relationship with him. Although the four queens all seek the same end goal, and cooperate in Lancelot’s kidnapping, ultimately, this is intended to be a competition in which one of them would emerge.

victorious, having been selected by Lancelot. When independent of other motivations, the facilitation of love relationships, discussed more in the following chapter, tends to be portrayed positively; however, the immorality of the women’s intent to disrupt Lancelot’s existing relationship here overrides any positive facilitation of love. The narrative’s moral evaluation, expressed through Lancelot’s condemnation of the women, is made on the basis of the women’s selfish intentions and extends to the magic they employ as well. The references to the women in this episode group the three queens together indistinguishably and set Morgan apart as the one who both comes up with the idea for and enacts the love magic. Despite Morgan’s spotlight role in this, all four of the queens agree to and are actively engaged in the kidnapping and cajoling of Lancelot, all four were to be considered in Lancelot’s choice of paramour (had he cooperated with them), and so, all four share Lancelot’s scorn and reprimand for the magic deployed against him.

While Lancelot is sleeping under an apple tree, the four queens discover him and decide one of them will claim his love. This set-up is distinct from other love magic pairings because multiple women are fighting to claim Lancelot like a commodified prize. Although other instances have competing parties (King Mark, Isolde’s husband-to-be; Igraine’s husband the duke; and Guinevere, Lancelot’s love), there has only been one person attempting to utilize love magic to gain the affection of the victim (although other people may have been involved in the plot). In this scenario, we see four different women longing and competing for Lancelot, futilely, yet it is only one of them—Morgan le Fay—who uses magic, although all four women are directly involved and stand to benefit.

To cease the quarrelling, Morgan le Fay takes charge, deciding, “I shall put an inchauntement uppone hym that he shall nat awake of all this seven owres, and then I woll
lede hym away unto my castell. And whan he is surely within my holde, I shall take the
inchauntement frome hym, and than lette hym chose which of us he wolle have unto
paramour.”

The last phrase of this statement of intent demonstrates that Morgan le Fay’s
magical intervention is not love-inducing or a violation of free will since she plans for
Lancelot to “chose” which of the four women will be his “paramour.”

Later dialogue in the
episode reveals that the women are aware of Lancelot’s love and devotion to Guinevere and
that they intend to permanently separate Lancelot from Guinevere through making him
choose one of them. If Lancelot were to marry one of the four queens, that would end his
relationship with Guinevere. If he were to take one of them as a mistress, Guinevere would
be furious (as we see in other episodes in which she scorns Lancelot out of jealousy).

Upon awakening in the castle, Lancelot is aware that some enchantment must be
involved in his arrival there and is told by a damsel that he will learn more the following
morning. During a visit by the four queens, Morgan le Fay introduces them all and demands
Lancelot choose one:

‘Sir knight,’ the foure quenys seyde, ‘thous muste undirstonde thou art oure
presonere, and we know the well that thou art Sir Lanucnelot de Lake, Kynge Banis
sonne. And because that we undirstonde youre wothynesse, that thou art the noblest
knight lvyng, and also we know well there can be no lady have thy love but one, and
that is Quene Gwenyvere, now thou shalt hir love lose for ever, and she thyne. For hit
behovyth the now to chose one of us foure, for I am Quene Morgan le Fay, queen of
the londe of Gore, and here is the Quene of North Galys, and the Quene of Estlonde,
and the Quene of the Oute Iles. Now chose one of us, whyche that thou wolte have to
thy paramour, other ellys to dye in this preson.”

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407 The term “paramour” leaves it unclear if, at this point, she is imagining Lancelot taking
one of them as a mistress or a wife, since the term could mean either in Middle English.
Lancelot’s later response to the damsel’s questioning of his bachelorhood, however, draws a
distinction between the titles of wife and paramour, implying that Lancelot believed the
queens’ use of “paramour” to mean mistress or lover rather than wife.
The narration presents “the foure quenys” as his captors and the source of the demand, but Morgan le Fay’s role as the speaker on behalf the group is emphasized through her first-person reference within the dialogue. Similarly, Morgan is the only one of the queens who is identified to Lancelot (and the audience) by name; the other queens are identified only through their connection to the lands of which they are queen. The queens engage in aggressive measures to get Lancelot to agree to their demand, including uncomfortable accommodations. He is placed in a “chambir colde” and during the night “he laye…withoute ony conforte,” even before he is presented with their demands. The only purpose in making him uncomfortable at this point is to enhance his understanding of the consequences presented to him (dying in the prison) if he refuses their choice. Although he claims “this is an harde case…that other I must dye other to chose one of you,” this is actually an easy decision for Lancelot because his devotion to Guinevere is resolute. Without any contemplation of his options, he continues, “Yet had I lever dye in this preson with worship than to have one of you to my paramoure magré myne hede. And therefore ye be answeryd: I woll none of you, for ye be false enchaunters.”

Not only does Lancelot refuse to select one of the queens, he also condemns all four as enchanters, positioning this as the reason for his refusal. His blanket condemnation of the women rests the responsibility (and immorality) of using love magic upon all of them indiscriminately; despite not actively wielding magic, the other three queens become guilty through their complicity in and encouragement of the magic’s usage. The only enchantment

\[409\] Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 194.
\[410\] Malory’s own experiences in prison for treason during the War of Roses would have given him a keen understanding of the discomforts of imprisonment.
\[411\] Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 194.
involved in this episode is a sleeping enchantment, although it is this magic that allows Lancelot’s kidnapping to occur. Lancelot’s condemnation marks this instance of magic as immoral. Despite his bias, Lancelot’s position as the protagonist in the narrative, and Morgan le Fay’s continued presentation as an antagonist, encourages the reader to accept Lancelot’s moral evaluation of the magic as accurate. Employing magic to put someone to sleep is not inherently immoral (as seen when Nyneve does so to Pelleas), but the selfish use of magic to disrupt the love relationship of Guinevere and Lancelot through his kidnapping is.

These are only a few of the many attempts by Morgan le Fay to disrupt or reveal the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere (and by extension between Arthur and Guinevere), and holding Lancelot prisoner is a favorite tactic of Morgan. Although Malory tends to portray Morgan’s various kidnappings of Lancelot as motivated by her hatred for Guinevere and Arthur, the Vulgate Cycle additionally represents her as striving to, unsuccessfully, gain Lancelot’s affections through her imprisonments of him. These episodes will be discussed further in the following chapter on love facilitating magic.

**Magical Drinking Horns Keep No Secrets**

In Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur*, Morgan le Fay also attempts to disrupt Lancelot and Guinevere’s relationship by gifting a magical drinking horn to King Arthur. The magical property of the horn, that only a wife true to her husband would successfully be able to drink from it, was a direct and deliberate effort to reveal Guinevere’s infidelity. Due to Sir Lameroke’s interruption of this plan, the horn never reaches Arthur’s court and thus Morgan’s intended plan fails; however, Lameroke repurposes the object by redirecting the gift to King Mark in an attempt to enact the same plan upon Sir Trystrames and Queen Isode.
In this episode, both Morgan and Lameroke attempt magical disruption of a love relationship, and both fail, albeit for different reasons. The text is brief in describing the horn’s origins and purpose, mentioning only that it comes from Morgan le Fay, but it expounds upon the horn’s magical properties:

They mette with a knyght that was sente fro Dame Morgan la Fay unto Kynge Arthure. And this knyght had a fayre horne harneyste with golde, and the horne had suche a vertu that there myght no lady nothir jantyllwoman drynke of that horne but yf she were trew to her husbande; and if she were false she shoulde spylle all the drynke, and if she were trew to her lorde she myght drynke thereof pesiblé. And because of the queen Gwenyvere and in the dispyte of Sir Launcelot this horne was sente unto Kynge Arthure.\(^{412}\)

The use of magical drinking horns and magical mantels as chastity tests is a well-established tradition in medieval romance.\(^{413}\) The horn tests if a woman is “trew to her husbande” or “if she were false.”\(^{414}\) The term “trew” is an adjectival form of the Middle English noun “treuth” which holds layered meanings including reference to sexual fidelity to one’s spouse, to the marriage vow, and emotional “sincerity in love.”\(^{415}\) As such, the magic of the horn then possibly evaluates not only a woman’s physical fidelity to her husband, but also her emotional fidelity. This presents a problem in the face of the standards of chivalric love, by which many married women have emotional affairs with knights without ever violating the physical bounds of their marriage. This is further preceded by Morgan’s interpretation of a “false lover” as one who has betrayed his or her lover “even in thought or desire” when she creates \textit{Le Val Sans Return} in earlier \textit{Vulgate Cycle} text (discussed earlier). Since the horn

\(^{412}\) Malory, \textit{Le Morte Darthur}, 344.
\(^{413}\) See note 310.
\(^{414}\) Malory, \textit{Le Morte Darthur}, 344.
\(^{415}\) Middle English Dictionary, “trueth 1(a) and 2(a).”
comes from Morgan, it is reasonable to presume that her own definition of a false lover has been imbued in the magical horn’s evaluation of the ladies who drink from it.

Regardless of whether Morgan imbued the horn with its magical properties or was simply in possession of it as a pre-existing magical object, Morgan chooses to send the horn, planning for its magic to reveal Guinevere’s infidelity. Revealing the affair to King Arthur is not intended to benefit or protect him in any way (if anything it will cause problems for him), meaning that Morgan’s actions stand only to benefit herself, making them selfish and immoral. She wants to hurt Guinevere and, although she holds no malice toward Lancelot, she seems fine with him becoming collateral damage in her plans.

The horn, a gilded object of value, never makes it to King Arthur’s court; instead its carrier is intercepted by Sir Lameroke, who, upon questioning the knight escorting the horn, learns of its “vertu” and purpose. Whereas Morgan’s motivations are selfish and immoral, Lameroke’s actions are simultaneously selfish (and thus immoral) and morally corrective of Morgan le Fay’s. Upon encountering the knight carrying the horn, “by forse Sir Lameroke made that knyght to telle all the cause why he bare the horne, and so he tolde hym all hole.”\footnote{Malory, \textit{Le Morte Darthur}, 344.} The full disclosure of the knight to Sir Lameroke indicates that Lameroke is aware of the same information about the horn’s abilities and disruptive purpose as the audience. Lameroke then threatens the knight into carrying the horn to King Mark’s court instead:

“‘Now shalt thou bere this horne,’ seyde Sir Lamerok, ‘to Kynge Marke, other chose to dye. For in the syspyte of Sir Trystrames, thou shalt bere hit hym, that horne, and sey that I sente hit hym for to assay his lady, and yf she be trew he shall preve her.’”\footnote{Malory, \textit{Le Morte Darthur}, 344.} Although acting with
malintent, Lameroke’s redirection of the horn serves as the text’s mechanism for the failure for Morgan’s disruptive attack on the Arthurian court, preventing the horn’s magic from revealing Guinevere’s dalliances. Selfishly, Lameroke chooses not to stop the horn’s delivery completely, but rather redirect its delivery to King Mark in an effort to reveal Trystrames and Isode’s betrayal. Like Morgan, Lameroke is not acting out of interest for the King’s wellbeing but is seeking revenge on one of the two lovers (Tristan). Prior to this, Lameroke had vowed to Trystrames that “I shall quyte you and ere I se my tyme” after Trystrames defeated him on horseback and then refused to engage him in battle on foot. The term “quyte” is again repeated by Trystrames, after the horn has done its damage in King Mark’s court, when he determines to repay Lameroke’s villainy: “Also Syr Trystrames was passing wroth that Sir Lameroke sent that horne unto Kynge Marke, for welle he knew that hit was done in the dispyte of hym, and therefore he thought to quyte Sir Lameroke.” The term’s definitions are revealing: “to take revenge,” “requite,” “to take vengeance, avenge” “inflict retributions,” “to answer, retort.” Each of these definitions indicates a reactionary response, that “quyteing” is an action that is the result of an actual or perceived transgression. In the interactions of Tristan and Lameroke, Trystrames’s denial of Lameroke’s request to battle on foot initiates the subsequent “quyteing” between them—Lameroke’s attempt to disgrace Trystrames and Isode, and Trystrames’s determination to “quyte” Lameroke in return. Whether Trystrames was in the right or not to deny Lameroke’s request for battle on foot is irrelevant, but the interaction provides valuable context to understand Lameroke’s motivation for sending the horn to King Mark as selfish and thus immoral.

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418 Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 344.
419 Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 344.
420 Middle English Dictionary, “quiten.”
Although the horn does reveal the disloyalty of Isode to her husband, and is thus successful in that function, the plan does not play out as Lameroke had intended. The magical nature of the horn that is supposed to fulfill Lameroke’s revenge plan, ends up being the salvation of Isode and the other ninety-six women it exposes. Angry at the women’s disloyalty, King Mark responds violently: “‘Alas!’ syde Kynge Marke, ‘this is a grete dyspyte,’ and sore a grete othe that she [Isode] be brente and the other ladyes also.” Just as Lancelot was an instrument of Morgan’s scheming against Guinevere and Arthur, not a target, Isode and the other ladies are simply would-be collateral damage in Lameroke’s efforts to “quyte” Trystrames. The magical “vertu” of the horn, combined with its origins as a gift from Morgan le Fay, are enough for the barons to distrust it and demand clemency for the ladies:

Than the barowns gadred them togedryrs and seyde playnly they wolde nat have tho ladyes brente for an horne made by sorsery that cam frorne “the falsist sorseres and wyczce most that is now lyvyng.” For that horne dud never good, but caused stryff and bate, and allway in her dayes she was an enemy to all trew lovers. So there were many knyghtes made theire avowe that and ever they mette wyth Morgan le Fay that they wolde show her shorte curtesy.

As a result, Lameroke’s intention to harm Trystrames through the revelation of Trystrames and Isode’s relationship fails; however, the residual effects of this episode do lead to the ultimate capturing of Trystrames with Isode in flagrante delicto and the almost execution of Trystrames. Lameroke’s actions both fail and succeed; he succeeds in using the horn to reveal the relationship, yet the lack of consequences as a result, means that Lameroke’s attempt at “quyteing” Trystrames fails.

421 A hundred other ladies are also made to drink from it alongside Isode and of the hundred and one, only four were found “that dranke clene.” Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 344.
422 Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 344.
423 Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 344.
The result of Trystrames’s naked capture is the culmination of the many attempts in *Morte Darthur* to reveal the relationship, and it does accomplish Lameroke’s broader intentions to cause problems for Trystrames; however, it also temporarily leads to more freedom in the relationship between Trystrames and Isode rather than a disruption. Trystrames, escaping from his bounds, disarms his betrayer, Sir Andred and uses Andred’s own sword to smite him, but when more than a hundred people come to Sir Andred’s side and Trystrames remembers his nakedness, he escapes, returning later to rescue Isode from the “lazar-cote” [leper’s house] and take her to the safety of the forest. This arrangement only lasts a short time, and King Mark kidnaps her back, and Trystrames is forced to go abroad.\(^{424}\) While abroad, Trystrames and Lameroke are reunited, and the horn episode is recalled as Trystrames condemns Lameroke’s actions, saying, “‘ye put many ladyes to a repreff whan ye sent the horne from Morgan le Fay unto Kynge Marke. And hit sholde have gone to Kynge Arthure, whereas ye dud that in dispyte of me.’”\(^{425}\) Lameroke’s lack of rebuttal and remorse at this accusation confirms his retributive motives for sending the horn to King Mark; however, Lameroke’s statement also reveals the tension and rivalry between the two knights’ loyalties to different courts: “‘Well,’ seyde he, ‘and hit were to do agayne, so wolde I do, for I had lever stryff and debate felle in King Markys courte rither than in Kynge Arthurs courte, for the honour of bothe courtes be nat lyke.’”\(^{426}\) Despite Lameroke’s appeal to a more noble reason for his actions—the protection of the Arthurian court from the strife the horn would inevitably cause—Trystrames calls him out, clarifying that the although this statement about the courts may be true, “that that was done was done for dispyte of me. But all youre malice,

\(^{425}\) Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, 351.
I thanke God, hurte nat gretly,” emphasizing Lameroke’s motivations rather than the results as significant in the act’s wrongness and implying a connection between the immoral motivation and the failure of the plan.427 At this, the two men reconcile over their new, common enemy on the isle and set aside their “quyteing” exchanges. As so often happens in medieval romances, the potential harm that the women in the narrative had been subjected to, as a resulting of the men’s quarrelling, is forgotten in light of their reunion and mutual acknowledgement of each other’s abilities and nobility.

James Wade specifically expounds on the golden horn as an example of a negative gift, asserting “that it is actually a negative gift is revealed not only in the malevolent intentions of its bestowal, but also in its effects.”428 He discusses supernatural gifts given by both fairy or elf mistresses and human sorceresses, arguing that these gifts, while often valuable are generally “dangerous gifts”—those that hold as much potential for loss as they do for gain—or “negative gifts”—those that are ill-intentioned and meant to harm. The destruction the horn causes within the court, the mass burning ordered by Mark, and the need for the barons to overrule him, marks this gift as fulfilling Wade’s definition of a “negative gift”: “they are purely malevolent offerings that can be distinguished from dangerous gifts in that, despite their initial allure, they contain within them no possibility of reward—they are intended solely to entrap, to lead knights astray, or to bring them to physical or spiritual ruin.”429 The horn is certainly intended for negative purposes (whether Morgan’s or Lameroke’s) and has no real possibility of bringing about a reward for King Mark or the women who must drink from it. Strife is the only thing it can truly produce, for if a woman

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427 Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 352.
429 Wade, Fairies in Medieval Romance, 118.
cannot drink from it, she is accused of being disloyal, yet there is no reward for her proven loyalty if she can drink from the horn as this is expected of her. For the men and the court involved, a revelation of disloyalty by the wives is disruptive and shameful since it reveals their own status as cuckolds, yet even if all the women are shown to be faithful, the need to test them reveals a distrust of the women and insecurity in their own chivalric masculinity.

The significance of the two terms describing how the horn can judge a woman, “trew” or “false,” also adds to the courtiers’ condemnation of Morgan le Fay, whom they refer to as the “falsist sorseres and wycche.” The label “false” can mean a general sense of “deception, treachery, fraud, wrong-doing,” but in light of the term’s application to the women drinking from the horn, this description of Morgan also seems to carry a jab at her romantic endeavors. On the surface, the barons in the court are referencing Morgan as a deceitful, wicked woman in order to discredit the results of her gift, the horn, yet Morgan’s own history with Accolan—her exploited and then killed lover—her many attempts to steal Lancelot’s affections, and her general disdain for most knights, is also alluded to through their use of the same term—“false”—which would be applied to the women of King Mark’s court. Morgan has the audacity to be unashamedly open about her romantic and sexual desires in the text, and this itself is a condemnable transgression in the minds of the barons and perhaps of Malory. Her overt sexuality combined with the power afforded her by her magic makes her dangerous to the court, and despite the barons’ negating of her horn’s revelations, the harm she can cause is still witnessed in this episode. Although in some medieval literature, Morgan le Fay is presented as a fay, or fairy, she is more arguably a

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sorceress figure in both the Vulgate Cycle and Morte Darthur as she has clear parentage and learns her magic rather than having it originate from her status as a magical being.

The Disruptive Divinatory Dwarf

Sir Lameroke is not the only figure to attempt to disrupt the relationship between Tristan and Isolde. Although often paired up with one or more jealous, plotting courtiers, an evil dwarf with no clear motivation is a driving force in efforts to disrupt the relationship between Tristan and Isolde. While the name of the dwarf differs in the various versions—unnamed in Thomas of Britain’s Tristran; Frocin in Béroul’s The Romance of Tristan; and Melot petit von Aquitain in Gottfried von Strassburg’s Tristan und Isold—the core function of the dwarf as an interfering agent in the Tristan/Isolde relationship remains consistent, as does his reliance on his courtly reputation for divination to gain credibility with King Mark. Vernon J. Harward, Jr argues in his 1958 study that many of the dwarfs that appear in Arthurian romances have their prototype roots in the mythology of Celtic dwarfs, but that the medieval authors of these romances have watered down the supernatural abilities of dwarfs.431 Despite Tristan and Isolde’s relationship being adulterous, and therefore wrong, the two lovers have no control over their emotional attachment to each other due to the mutually binding love potion they accidentally consumed (which was discussed in chapter two); the narratives present the dwarf’s actions as malevolent and evil,432 even while excusing the lovers’ adultery on the grounds that they were magically impelled to it.

431 Harward, Dwarfs of Arthurian Romance, 4-5.
432 Scholarship on Arthurian dwarves is extremely limited. In addition to Harward’s book, dwarves have been taken up as a topic of research by Megan G. Leitch, who considers their role as marginalized characters who “are sources of information, and often, more specifically, of ethical advice and/or judgment.” Megan G. Leitch, “The Servants of
Although the methods of the dwarf and the reason which Mark trusted him are obscured in Béroul’s version by the fragmentary nature of the text, which begins *in media res* in the lovers’ rendezvous scene, the narrator later confirms that the dwarf of Tintagel is an active magic user. The fragmentary nature of Thomas of Britain’s *Tristram* reveals little about the dwarf aside from informing us that while the lovers were rendezvousing “servient…li rois, que li nains i amene” [“the king appeared, led there by his dwarf”]. This reveals two significant pieces of information about the dwarf; first, that he had some type of committed, subordinate relationship to King Mark as indicated by the possessive. Béroul’s version, similarly fragmentary, is also missing the lead up to the dwarf’s deception but does provide more information about King Mark’s reaction toward the dwarf after Tristan and Isolde successfully deceive him into believing their meeting to be innocent. I have begun with a brief examination of the dwarf in Thomas of Britain’s version, which is contemporary with Béroul’s, because it provides the vital lovers’ rendezvous section of the narrative that is absent from Béroul’s fragmentary text. However, the majority of this section utilizes Béroul’s text because of its more explicit identification of the dwarf as magical.

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Chivalry? Dwarves and Porters in Malory and the Middle English Gawain Romances,” *Arthuriara* 27 no. 1 (2017): 3-27; here 3. Leitch’s research does not include the Tristan texts or the dwarf figure in them though. Christine Marie Neufeld has taken a disabilities studies approach to examining medieval dwarves in literature in “A Dwarf in King Arthur’s Court: Perceiving Disability in Arthurian Romance,” *Arthuriara* 25, no. 4 (2015): 25-35. Although Neufeld looks further back than Malory, into the French tradition, she too omits discussion of the Tristan dwarf. Albrecht Classen also applies disability studies to his examination of dwarves; he is one of the few scholars who specifically engages with the dwarf in the Tristan narratives, considering the malicious representation of the dwarf and its connection to medieval perspectives of disability. Albrecht Classen, “The Marginalized Figure of the Dwarf and the Leper,” *Studi Medievales* 58, no. 2 (2017): 675-96.

Thomas of Britain’s opening starts with the lovers in a precarious situation, which has been arranged by the dwarf to out their affair to King Mark. Aware that Mark sits in a tree above watching them, Tristan and Isolde carry on a conversation lamenting the falsities being spread in the court about a love-affair between them, in order to deter Mark from realizing their romantic intentions for meeting. Of course, these rumors are actually true, but their acting skills ensure that King Mark comes away from his spying with the belief that they are both loyal and trustworthy and that any in the court who say otherwise are lying. Mark, who had been treating both lovers with great suspicion and disfavor due to the rumors,

De la pitié q’au cor li prist,
Qu’il ne plorast ne s’en tenist
Por nul avoir; molt a grant duel,
Molt het le nain de Tintaguel.

[he was so overcome by pity
that he could not help crying.
His sorrow was so great,
and he hated the dwarf of Tintagel.]434

Although the dwarf’s plotting is absent from Thomas’s fragmentary text, the reader gets a recap of the dwarf’s role in the scheme through the reactionary reflection of King Mark, who is caught up in his grief and anger. The dwarf, here introduced only as “le nain de Tintaguel,” is presumably a resident in Cornwall, specifically hailing from the coastline town of Tintagel, a common name-place in Arthurian literature. This makes the dwarf one of the kingdom’s subjects, and thus he would also be subject to Mark’s punishment. In his anger at what he believes to be the dwarf’s deception, Mark monologues a litany of charges against the dwarf with an accompanying series of brutal punishments he intends to mete out onto him:

En c'est arbre me fist monter,
Il ne me pout plus ahonter;
De mon nevo me fist entendre
Mençonge, porqoi ferai pendre.
Por ce me fist metre en aïr,
De ma mollier faire hair.
Ge l’en crui et si fis que fous.
Li gerredon l’en sera sous:
Se je le puis as poinz tenir,
Par feu ferai son cors fenir.
Par moi avra plus dure fin
Que ne fist faire Costentin
A Segoçon, qu’il escolla
Qant o sa feme le trova…
Or ne laira qu’au nain ne donge
O s’espee sis a merite
Par lui n’iert mais trafison dite.

[He made me climb this tree
And could not have disgraced me more completely.
He made me believe a lie
About my nephew, and for that I will have him hanged,
For he stirred up my anger and made my wife hate me.
I believed him and thus acted the fool.
He will get what is due him:
If I get my hands on him,
I will have him burned to death!
He will meet a worse fate at my hands than that inflicted by Constantine on Segoncin,
whom he had castrated when he found him with his wife…
Now, with his sword, he would not fail
to give the dwarf his due,
so that never again would he speak evil!]435

Mark understands the dwarf to be deceptive, malicious, and even treasonous. The dwarf’s actions in trying to reveal the love-affair to Mark are characterized negatively through the only (albeit biased) commentary this text provides—that of King Mark who has been the victim of this alleged trickery.

In Béroul’s version, the text shifts after Mark’s diatribe against the dwarf and his subsequent promise to reconcile himself with both Tristan and Isolde, turning to a narrated account of the dwarf, who is named as “nain boçu Frocin” [the hunchbacked dwarf Frocin].

436 Frocin is outside and looks up at the night sky where it is revealed to him through his knowledge of divination that his life is in danger from King Mark. The narrator provides several clear statements characterizing Frocin here, including calling him “Li nains Frocins, plains de voisdie” [the malicious dwarf Frocin].

437 The more objective position of the narrator as compared to King Mark solidifies the reader’s understanding of Frocin as a negative character whose actions are to be condemned because of their malicious intent, despite the truth of his allegations regarding Tristan and Isolde. The narrator also makes clear Frocin’s skill in astrological divination, exposing not only Frocin’s current reading of the stars that reveals King Mark’s anger to him, but also elucidating on Frocin skill: “Il savoit bien que ert a estre / Qant il oiet un enfant nester, / Les poinz contot toz de sa vie” [“He knew the future, / and when he saw a baby born / he could foretell its entire life”].

438 This foreknowledge allows Frocin to escape from Cornwall to Wales, much to King Mark’s chagrin. In Béroul’s text, the dwarf Frocin is clearly tied to magic and has divinatory skills, but we cannot be certain whether it is his magic or his role as belonging to the court and/or King Mark that first establishes the king’s trust in Frocin’s accusations against Tristan and

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439 Frocin appears to have belonged to the court and/or to King Mark, as evidenced by the possessive pronoun later used: “Ne pout son nain trover li rois” [“The king was unable to find his dwarf”]. Béroul, *The Romance of Tristran*, ll. 385; Lacy, *Béroul: The Romance of Tristran*, ll. 385. Although some translators have implied this same connection in Thomas of Britain’s version, translating “que li nains I amene” as “led there by his dwarf” and “Li rois
Isolde. If he has a reputation within the court for divination—the magical practice of uncovering unknown knowledge, particularly of the future—it would make sense that Mark would trust Frocin’s word about a future meeting between the two lovers.

Frocin’s magic is not necessarily carried across in all other versions of the text though. Harward asserts that “Thomas…has deliberately divested the creature of his occult powers,” yet though the brief mention of the dwarf in the text omits any mention of the occult, this lacking of the supernatural element could be because of the location in the text at which the surviving fragments begin, not necessarily from an intentional revision of the character. Haward relies on the 1902 edition by Bedier, which seems to draw from multiple versions to fill in the full narrative of Tristan and Isolde rather than translating just the fragmentary version of Thomas of Britain.440

The fragmentary nature of both Béroul’s and Thomas’s versions prevents us from learning more about the dwarf within these narratives; however, Gottfried’s version presents a far more fleshed out depiction of the dwarf’s interference in Tristan and Isolde’s relationship. While the condemnation of Melot’s interference in Tristan and Isolde’s affair may seem contradictory to the text’s prior condemnation of the love magic on which their relationship is based, it is not. The narrator clearly portrays the love inducing magic (the potion, discussed in chapter two) in a negative light, and positions the lovers as innocent victims of it. As a result, the condemnation of the love magic does not contradict the condemnation of Melot’s actions because both can be viewed as morally wrong. This is

because the relationship between Tristan and Isolde is outside of the bounds of human moral judgement due to the suspension of their free will (which in theological terms then also absolves them of responsibility for their emotions toward one another). Furthermore, Melot’s own actions (like his courtier partner, Marjodoc’s) are selfishly motivated and not done in the best interest of the court, so there is no moral justification behind his plotting to reveal their affair.

Gottfried’s dwarf, Melot petit von Aquitaine, is identified as both a trusted member of the court and a skilled diviner:

\[
\text{ein getwerc was in dem hove da,}\\
\text{daz selbe solte namen han}\\
\text{Melot petit von Aquitan}\\
\text{und kunde ein teil, also man giht,}\\
\text{umbe verholne geschih}\\
\text{an dem gestirne nahtes sehen.}
\]

[There was a dwarf at court, said to go by the name of Melot le petit of Aquitaine, who had some skill in reding the secrets of the stars, so it was alleged.]\textsuperscript{441}

Gottfried’s interpolation interrupts the narrative at this point for him to comment:

\[
\text{nun vinde ich aber niht von im}\\
\text{an demn weren mære,}\\
\text{wan daz ez kündic wære,}\\
\text{listic unde rederic}\\
\text{Daz was dem künge heinlich}\\
\text{und ouch der kemenaten.”}
\]

[I do not find anything about him [the dwarf] in the authentic version of the tale other than that he was cunning, artful, and eloquent. He was one of the king’s familiars and had admittance to the Queen’s apartment.]\textsuperscript{442}

The term Gottfried uses, “heinlich,” although translated by Gentry as “familiar” has a more secretive nature to its meaning; not only does it suggest that the dwarf was in the confidence

\textsuperscript{441} Gottfried von Strassburg, \textit{Tristan und Isold}, ll. 14238-43; Gentry, \textit{Tristan and Isolde}, 188.  
\textsuperscript{442} Gottfried von Strassburg, \textit{Tristan und Isold}, ll. 14246-51; Gentry, \textit{Tristan and Isolde}, 188.
of the king—“familiar” with him—but also that there was something secretive about their relationship. While Gottfried’s use of the first person in the first sentence of this makes clear that he, as the author, is acknowledging his source material, the second sentence, which tells of the dwarf’s position in court, is unclear if it is a continuation of Gottfried’s comment on what information was in the “authentic version” or if this is his own description of the dwarf, thus easing the reader back into the narrative. However, Gottfried’s authorial authority, inserted through his interjection, puts a permanent stamp on Melot’s character as being skilled in deceit. Harward has a more positive interpretation on Gottfried’s characterization of Melot, arguing that the description of Melot’s skill with language suggests that he served as a court entertainer, but agrees that the dwarf “enjoyed the confidence of the king and…possessed highly respected powers of divination.”

This representation of Melot is only further reinforced by his plotting with the conniving courtier Marjodoc to bring about the downfall of Tristan and Isolde. Although Marjodoc’s motivation is clear—he pines for Isolde and is jealous of Tristan’s relationship with her—the explanation for Melot’s willingness to be involved in the scheme is less personal. Beyond Marjodoc’s promise that if Melot were to provide proof of the affair, he would gain Mark’s favor and be rewarded, Melot has no personal investment in the scheme, yet he takes a leading role in the plan, and eventually in receiving the blame. Furthermore, gaining Mark’s favor seems a shaky motivation since Melot appears to already be trusted by the king, even to the point of being allowed access to the chambers of the queen. Although ultimately unsuccessful in his plan to reveal the affair to Mark, Melot does succeed in

disrupting the relationship between Tristan and Isolde. His attempts are deliberate, and
described in language that positions him as the hunter and the lovers as his prey:

Da kerte ouch ez spate unde vrøo
sine lüge und sine lage zuo:
ez leite sine vare
an rede und an gebare
ze iegelichen stunden
und hæte ouch schiere ervunden
die liebe an den gelieben zwein;
wan si hæten under ein
so süeze gebærde,
daz Melot die bewærde
der minnen al zehant da vant,
und seite ouch Marken al zehant,
daz binamen da minne wære.

[And so Melot applied his lies and snares to this task, morning and night. He laid his
traps in word and gesture at all hours of the day and had soon ascertained that they
were lovers, for they behaved towards each other with such tenderness that Melot at
once found the proofs of love in them and told King Mark without loss of time that it
was assuredly a case of love.] 444

Not only are Melot’s deceptive strategies described as “lage” and “vare” (“snares” and
“traps”), but his lies are listed as if they too are weapons in his hunt. Notably, the form of the
hunt represented is passive—trapping—rather than a more active hunt. The use of snares and
traps involves deception of the prey, usually through camouflage of the traps, in order to lure
the animal into willingly entering the weapon and being caught. This is in contrast to the
more commonly represented form of hunting in medieval romances—the active hunt in
which the hunter pursues a knowing prey which has the opportunity to run, hide, or fight
back. The active hunt is considered a noble act and a marker of masculinity, so the metaphor
of snares and traps to describe the dwarf’s hunt for proof the lovers’ involvement is markedly

444 Gottfried, Tristan und Isold, ll. 14261-73; Gentry, Tristan and Isolde, 188.
less noble and more deceptive than confronting them directly and giving them a chance to defend themselves.

Melot’s informing Mark of his conclusions leads to a clear disruption in the relationship between Tristan and Isolde. In response to Melot’s accusations, Mark requests that Tristan not be anywhere that the ladies of the court gather in order to protect against a rumor in the court about Tristan and the Queen. Tristan complies with the request, but the separation between Tristan and Isolde results in great suffering for both of them. The interruption of their relationship has emotional effects which also manifest physically; unfortunately for them, the physical symptoms of their grief from separation serve as further evidence to Mark of their affections for one another. Gottfried spends a lengthy paragraph describing the effects on the lovers, which include “truire unde clage” [“grief and despondency”] and “leit” [“sorrow”].

The connection between the two is once again enforced through the unity of their suffering. Gottfried makes no distinction between the symptoms of the two lovers; instead they are mirrors, both experiencing the same pain and the same physical reactions to their grief. The section describing their joint reactions at being separated employs two rhetorical strategies to show that although their love has been physically disrupted by Melot’s actions, their emotional connection has not been. The passage frequently lumps the two lovers together using grammatically plural pronouns to emphasize the unity in their reactions, and when the two are named individually in this passage, it is through grammatically paired lines that invert the role of the two names:

\[
\begin{align*}
der \text{ man bleichete durch daz wip,} \\
daz wip bleichete durch den \text{ man;}
\end{align*}
\]
\[
\begin{align*}
durch \text{ Isote Tristan,}
\end{align*}
\]
\[
\begin{align*}
durch \text{ Tristranden Isot}
\end{align*}
\]

\footnote{Gottfried, *Tristan und Isold*, ll. 14308; 14310.}
This mirroring of the lovers shows the interconnectedness of their emotional responses; it is implied that this connection is part of the bond forged by the love potion. This is further supported by the narrator’s following commentary that echoes the language used to describe the effects of the love potion when it was first consumed, referencing both their suffering and the inseparability of the two lovers’ emotions. The suffering Melot causes is condemned through his negative portrayal in the text. Beyond Gottfried’s initial description of Melot, after the plot has been set into motion, the narrator provides a parenthetical epithet for Melot—“daz vertane getwerc, / des valandes antewerc” [“that cursed dwarf and tool of the Devil”]—that morally condemns him and his actions. Joan Tasker Grimbert also connects Tristan and Isolde’s success against Melot and courtiers to the bad intentions of those who try to expose them: “But Tristran—and especially Yseut—are more than a match for their enemies who, though they are in the right, apparently do not even have God on their side, no doubt because they are motivated by spite and jealousy.”

The juxtaposition of Melot’s role as an agent of the devil against Tristan’s explicit call out to God to help him navigate Melot’s trap further establishes the text’s condemnation of Melot and excusal of Tristan and Isolde from blame for their situation. After recognizing the forms of Melot and King Mark hidden in a tree above his rendezvous spot with Isolde, the text tells Tristan’s prayer:

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447 Gottfried *Tristan und Isolde*, ll. 14511-12; Gentry, *Tristan and Isolde*, 191.
Tristan repeatedly addresses God in his silent prayer and connects his and Isolde’s escape from detection to God’s generous virtues of mercy, goodness, and protection. The result of this encounter is exactly as Tristan hopes and prays for—Isolde realizes they have observers and uses the opportunity to convince King Mark of the innocence of her relationship with Tristan. It is not only Tristan’s immediate and unquestioning request for God’s protection, indicating that he considers himself and Isolde the victims in this scenario. Furthermore, the

[\textsuperscript{449}Gottfried, }\textit{Tristan und Isolde}, ll. 14637-56; Gentry, }\textit{Tristan and Isolde}, 193-94. It is worth noting that although the translation says “our lives and our honor” for line 14655, the order of these in the original text places honor (“ere) first and lives (“leben”) second.]
receipt of the exact result he requests, indicating God’s fulfillment of Tristan’s prayer, demonstrates the text’s moral acceptance of Tristan and Isolde as innocent parties in the narrative and reinforces the deviousness and immorality in Melot’s plot.

Once Isolde becomes aware of the ambush, she too calls on God for protection, albeit in a more concise and direct prayer that echoes Tristan’s:

beschirme uns, here trehtin!
hilf uns, daz wir mit weren
von hinnen müezen keren;
herre, bewar in unde mich!

[Protect us, O Lord. Help us to leave this place with honor! Lord, watch over him and me!]

Like Tristan, Isolde requests the Lord’s protection and displays concern over the potential erosion of their honor because of this trap. Just as Tristan’s request to God that he make Isolde aware of the ambush, Isolde’s request for God to watch over them seems to be fulfilled, and they come out of the situation not only without incriminating themselves, but also having fooled King Mark into believing their total innocence and into turning on his dwarf Melot.

Despite the failure of his ambush and the resultant loss of the king’s trust, Melot and the mastermind Marjodoc do not give up on their attempts to reveal the affair between Tristan and Isolde, and Melot is directly involved in additional plans to prove the affair. Although these other efforts—including setting up the lovers alone in a room with flour spread between their beds to evidence any movement between the beds—are intended to and do disrupt Tristan and Isolde’s relationship, the involvement of magic in Melot’s efforts, such as his divinatory skill, does not play a role in these subsequent efforts as it did in his

\[\text{\textsuperscript{450}}\text{Gottfried, } Tristan und Isold, ll. 14706-09; Gentry, } Tristan and Isolde, 194.\]
riverside ambush. However, the text continues to vilify Melot, providing an additional moniker for him—“dem slangen Melote [“Melot the Snake”].\(^{451}\) Although Marjodoc gets a parallel moniker—“dem hunde Marjodo” [“Marjodoc the Cur”],\(^{452}\) it is Melot’s nickname that holds symbolic connection to the devil, creating a celestial condemnation of him while Marjodoc’s is more of a terrestrial condemnation. Both monikers contain animal comparisons, but while snakes are associated with the demonic and frequently presented as negative symbols in medieval literature, Marjodoc’s representation as a dog, seems less severe, particularly since dogs are not especially negative animals in medieval romances.

Although Melot’s efforts fail, the disruption to Tristan and Isolde’s relationship is off-and-on-again until it becomes permanent at the end of the narrative. Mark’s ever-wavering trust in Isolde’s faithfulness leads to the frequent separation and subsequent reunification of Tristan and Isolde over and over again until Tristan finally leaves the land to marry Isolde of the White Hands (a third Isolde in the narrative). Melot is only directly responsible for the lovers’ separation in the first episode of Mark’s suspicion in the narrative, but it is because of Melot’s actions that Mark’s suspicions are raised in the first place. Without going too deep into the “what if” game with the narrative, based on Mark’s limited emotional intelligence and lack of awareness, we might reasonably assume that had Melot (and Marjodoc) never raised Mark’s suspicions, Mark would have likely never discovered Tristan and Isolde’s relationship on his own. Because of this, Melot, and his use of divinatory knowledge to assist him, can be held responsible for the temporary disruption of Tristan and Isolde’s love in the


\(^{452}\) Gottfried, *Tristan und Isolde*, ll. 15101; Gentry, *Tristan and Isolde*, 199. Literally, “hunde” translates as “dog” rather than “cur.” The association of Marjodoc as a dog may have, however, invoking an allusion to intimidating and threatening dogs in classical literature, such as Cerberus, the three headed hound that guards the underworld in Greek mythology.
narrative episode in which he is involved, as well as the long-term disruptions that follow as a result of Mark’s never fully regained trust of the pair.

**A Defensive Magical Disruption of Love**

Although the magical attempts to disrupt love examined so far in this chapter largely emerge out of selfish motivations, the use of magic by the Lady of the Lake Nyneve in *Le Morte Darthur* to protect herself from Merlin, presents an interesting contrast to the other instances.\(^{453}\) In *Le Morte Darthur*, Nyneve resorts to magic to halt Merlin’s romantic pursuits of her. Despite her reasonable motivation of self-protection, the action is condemned for its larger effects on the kingdom. Brought to Arthur’s court by King Pellinore, Nyneve becomes the recipient of Merlin’s affections and romantic overtures. The tone of the narrative presents this episode with a focus on Merlin’s emotions and struggles, casting Nyneve as the villainous woman (despite her many positive portrayals later on in *Le Morte Darthur*). After extensive and unwanted romantic attentions from Merlin, Nyneve fears him because he is a devil’s child and wants her virginity, so she utilizes magic to trap him in a stone tomb.

The text introduces Merlin’s affections saying, “hit befelle that Merlyon felle in dotage on the damesell that Kynge Pellynore brought to courte; and she was one of the damesels of the Lady of the Laake, that hyght Nyneve.”\(^{454}\) Nyneve’s identity is secondary here to Merlin’s experience of this attraction. The narrative positions Merlin as the victim of his romantic interests. The term “felle” implies a lack of Merlin’s control over the

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\(^{453}\) Spellings of Merlin’s name vary widely, including Merlyn, Merlion, and Merlyon, even within *Le Morte Darthur*, so I have standardized it to “Merlin” except when quoting from the original texts or from scholarship.

development of his romantic emotions, and “dotage” is a specific form of love that is characterized through foolishness and obsession over the object of the affections. The narrative immediately makes clear the intensity of Merlin’s pursuit of Nyneve, continuing on to explain, “But Merlion wolde nat lette her have no reste, but allwayes he wolde be wyth her.” This constant, suffocating presence of Merlin positions him as the aggressor in the relationship, yet Nyneve’s actions, which seem like an act of self-defense, are presented more negatively than Merlin’s incessant attentions toward her. The narrator presents Nyneve as deceptive: “And ever she made Merlion good chere tylle sche had lerned of hym all maner of thing that sche desired, ans he was assorted upon hir, that he might nat be from hir.” This description depicts Nyneve as leading Merlin on through her “good chere” for the purpose of learning magic from him and suggests that it was her behavior that incites his affections to the point of obsession. At this point, it is not clearly stated that Nyneve is uninterested in romance with Merlin, but the implication is present through the lack of any comment about reciprocation of his “dotage.” This first paragraph, which introduces Merlin’s affections and Nyneve’s initial response, doubles as a general summary of the trajectory of their relationship in which Merlin hangs on Nyneve, and she tolerates him, either out of fear or desire to learn his magic.

Merlin, with his prophetic abilities, is aware of his impending imprisonment, but is rendered helpless to avoid it. Before departing from the court with Nyneve, Merlin tells King Arthur that “but for all his craftes he scholde be putte into the erthe quyk” and gives the king

See Holbrook, “Nymue,” 769-70 for discussion on Merlin’s romantic/sexual interest in Nyneve and for speculation about Nymue’s motives in her “receptive behavior.”
advice for the future.⁴⁵⁸ Although Arthur inquires why Merlin, knowing through his prophetic knowledge of what will befall him, does not simply prevent it from happening, Merlin simply says “nay…hit woll not be,” accepting his fate as inevitable.⁴⁵⁹ Merlin’s knowledge of the future, which originates from God (as opposed to his knowledge of the past and present which was from his paternal demonic heritage), is rendered useless in Merlin’s own capacity to prevent his downfall. Despite his magical powers and divinatory knowledge, he has no authority to alter the future, only to have knowledge of it; for him to be able to alter the future he sees through his prophecies would be to position Merlin’s will above God’s since the future Merlin gets to see is that of the divine plan. This suggests that while prophetic knowledge can be used to warn of events to come, a divine plan does not allow for the events to be altered. This is supported by Merlin’s warning to Arthur that his sword and scabbard would be stolen by a women whom he trusts, which has absolutely no impact on the events to follow (Morgan le Fay’s theft of Arthur’s sword and scabbard). Although Merlin knows the future, his mortal limitation is his inability to change it.

When Nyneve departs from the court, Merlin “went with her evermore wheresoever she yeode.”⁴⁶⁰ Away from the court, Merlin’s predatory behavior intensifies as he attempts to seclude Nyneve and aspires to take her virginity. The text depicts an increasing aggressiveness in Merlin’s affections, saying, “And oftynymes Merlyon wolde have had hir prevayly away by his substyle crauftes.”⁴⁶¹ Here, the first clear indication of Nyneve’s fear of Merlin is presented as she, in response to Merlin’s attempts to physically isolate her, “made

hym to swere that he sholde never do none inchaumente uppon hir if he wolde have his will,” a promise he agrees to make.\textsuperscript{462} This specific promise reveals Nyneve’s vulnerability, whether real or self-perceived, as both a woman and a non-magical practitioner. Nyneve is deeply concerned by the possibility of Merlin using his magical power to violate her free will (and her body). The oath does not specify anything about sexual violation, and indeed it provides Nyneve with a broader protection from Merlin’s magic; however, there is an implied danger of sexual assault. Merlin’s attentions to her and his resulting behaviors are of a sexual nature and make her uncomfortable.

After a brief visit to Lancelot’s parents, Merlin and Nyneve again depart and travel. Once traveling, Merlin’s attentions intensify further, as do Nyneve’s anxieties about them:

And by weyes he shewed hir many wondyrs, and so come into Cornuayle. And always he lay aboute to have hir maydynhode, and she was ever passynge wery of hym and fayne wolde have bene delyverde of hym, for she was aferde of hym for cause he was a devyls son, and she cowed not be skyfte of hym by no meane.\textsuperscript{463}

Merlin’s motivations are clear here, and unlike in courtly romance relationships, Merlin is explicitly seeking sex from Nyneve, as opposed to any type of courtly romance. Although Merlin’s approach to pursuing Nyneve defies the standards of courtly love, in which the man ought to worship his lady and revere her, there is little condemnation of him in the text. What the text does emphasize is that Nyneve’s fear of Merlin seems justified as he is continually trying to “have hir maydynhode.” Although “have” can simply mean “receive,” because of Nyneve’s fear of Merlin, it is better read here as “take” or “obtain” which suggests that Merlin would be willing to use force of some type (magical or physical) to do so. Nyneve is positioned as a victim in this passage, situated precariously, like many other maidens in \textit{Le Malory, Le Morte Darthur}, 99.

\textsuperscript{462} Malory, \textit{Le Morte Darthur}, 99.

\textsuperscript{463} Malory, \textit{Le Morte Darthur}, 100.
Morte Darthur, as needing a knight to rescue her from the unchivalrous man with whom she is forced to travel. That she would have been pleased to be “delyverde of hym” shows that her later actions against Merlin are not necessarily her first choice in method, and that had someone else stepped in to remove Merlin from her presence, she would have been contented with that outcome as well. This speaks significantly to her later motivations for entrapping Merlin in a tomb and supports the idea that she acts not out of malice, but out of fear and in self-defense.

Her fear of Merlin appears two-fold; she fears him because he is intent on obtaining her virginity and she fears his demonic parentage. These fears are intricately connected to his demonic heritage, which gives him unnatural power he could use against her. Considering the oath she elicits from him promising not to use enchantment on her and her anxieties over potential sexual assault, one of these fears seems to be that he might use love-inducing magic on her and violate her free will in addition to her body. In standard courtly love dynamics, women understand how to employ language and courtly conventions to engage in flirtation, while protecting their physical virtue; however, because Merlin is “a devyls son” rather than a nobleman in the court, Nyneve perceives that either these courtly love conventions do not apply to Merlin or that he will not abide by their constraints.\footnote{464} Merlin is a magician, not a knight, and so his existence in the courtly world functions outside of the values laid out in the Arthurian Pentacostal Oath, to which the knights are held. It is only after Merlin incessantly attempts to seduce, coerce, or rape Nyneve that she resorts to magically locking him under a stone:

\footnote{464} For an overview of the medieval variations of Merlin’s devilish parentage, see Anita Obermeier, “Merlin’s Conception by Devil in William Rowley’s Play The Birth of Merlin,” Arthuriana 24, no. 4 (2014): 48-79; specifically 49-57.
And so one a tyme Merlyon ded shew hir in a roche whereas was a grete wonder and wrought by enchauntement that went undir a grete stone. So by hir substyle worchyng she made Merlyon to go undir that stone to latte hir wete of the mervayles there, but she wrought so there for hym that he come never oute for all the craufte he coude do, and so she departed and leffte Merlyon.465

The causal relationship between Merlin’s actions and Nyneve’s response is clear through the phrase “and so” that begins the first sentence describing Nyneve’s actions. This creates a grammatical transition that connects Merlin’s advances and Nyneve’s fear of him—it provides the link to the reason for Nyneve’s actions. Her success comes as the result of a combination of her use of womanly wiles and magic. After Merlin shows her the cliff containing the “great wonder” and “wrought by enchauntement,” it is her “substyle worchyng” that is used to get him to enter the space. Although “substyle” may have a connotation of deception, certainly applicable to its usage in this context, it is a reference to a person’s intellect, cleverness, and skill.466 The term “worchyng” can refer to working magic, but, more frequently, it refers to other labors or even to performing sexual labors.467 The exact details of what Nyneve says or does to convince Merlin to enter the space under the stone are not provided; nevertheless, based on Merlin’s sexual interest in her, it is not far-fetched to assume that Nyneve may have relied on this attraction as part of her persuasion. The text indicates that Merlin enters the space with the intent of telling Nyneve of the marvels that exist, indicating he does so by choice, not magical compulsion. Although Merlin’s intent is to report on the space’s marvels, ironically Merlin, trapped there, is the only marvel associated with this geographical space. The cliffs, previously described as

466 *Middle English Dictionary*, “sotillī, adv.” Also see my earlier discussion of the term “subtle” in descriptions of Queen Isolde’s potion brewing in chapter two.
467 *Middle English Dictionary*, “werken, v.(1).”
“wrought by enchantment,” now become Merlin’s prison which Nyneve “wrought so there for hym.” The same verb, “wrought,” in both accounts of magical creation suggests a connection in the type of magic used to create the existing wonders in the cliff and the magic Nyneve applies to craft Merlin’s prison. Nyneve’s enchantments are so strong that Merlin is unable to escape “for all the craufte he coude do.” His magic, which the audience knows is powerful, is rendered impotent against Nyneve’s entrapment. Nyneve herself learns magic from Merlin, and by teaching her what he knows, he empowered her to eventually use his greatest strength—magic—against him.

The text abruptly changes narrative threads at this point and no explicit moral judgment is provided concerning Nyneve’s feat. Merlin’s foreknowledge of the events suggests that his entrapment is part of the divine plan (of which he has insights through his prophetic abilities), but two other textual moments characterize Nyneve as the villain in this relationship and condemn her actions. The first, which was previously discussed, is the narrative episode’s original depiction of Nyneve as conniving and out to lead on Merlin for the purpose of learning his magical knowledge. The second is revealed through the later discussion between Merlin and Sir Bagdemagus who finds Merlin trapped. Their encounter is brief and somber. Bagdemagus, riding, happens to pass by the same cliff in which Merlin is trapped and hears Merlin’s lamenting. Hoping to assist him, Bagdemagus approaches and attempts to lift the stone but is unable to and halts his efforts when Merlin perceives his presence and informs him that only the one responsible for his entrapment (Nyneve) can release him: “So as Sir Bagdemagus rode to se many adventures, so hit happed hym to com to the roche theras the Lady of the Lake had put Merlyon undir the stone, and there he herde
Although the focus of the encounter is on Merlin, this first sentence places Nyneve in the forefront, reminding the audience that Merlin’s entrapment is her fault. Merlin’s “grete dole” demonstrates his vocal grief at the situation; he is unaware of Sir Bagdemagus’s presence, so the noise he is making is not to get the knight’s attention but rather a vocal outpouring of self-pity. The reminder of Nyneve’s (the Lady of the Lake) role in Merlin’s situation places responsibility for Merlin’s fate solely upon her, omitting any context of what led to his imprisonment. Nyneve’s entrapment of Merlin now defines her character and the stone, which previously was known for its magical wonders. Later, when she is saving Arthur’s life in his battle against Sir Accolon, the Lady of the Lake is presented as “the Damesel of the Lake…that put Merlyon undir the stone” despite the episode having nothing to do with Merlin.

Kenneth Hodges briefly addresses this narrative episode in his article examining Nyneve’s function in presenting chivalry in Malory’s Le Morte. Hodges advocates for Nyneve as an agent of chivalry in the text and as one who exerts agency through her imprisonment of Merlin. Arguing that the new codes of chivalry offer Nyneve justification for her actions against a friend of King Arthur, Hodges goes so far as to claim, “it is justifiable self-defense since Merlin was at fault. Malory takes care to make Nyneve’s innocence clear.” He relies on Malory’s elimination of Merlin’s honorable desire to not take Nyneve against her will and on Malory’s characterization of Merlin’s overwhelming

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468 Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 106.
469 See notes 91 and 365.
470 Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 111.
472 This is included in the French Vulgate version and will be discussed further in chapter four.
love. While I acknowledge the significance of Malory’s increased vilification of Merlin, this evidence speaks more to the text’s representation of Merlin than to the text’s judgement of Nyneve’s actions. It is possible for Malory to both condemn Merlin’s behavior and Nyneve’s use of magic against him. Hodges ignores the text’s continuous connecting of Nyneve’s imprisonment of Merlin with her core identity throughout the rest of the narrative and what this signals regarding the text’s evaluation of her actions.

The text describes Sir Bagdemagus’s efforts to free Merlin: “wherefore Sir Bagdemagus wolde have holpyn hym, and wente unto the grete stone, and hit was so hevy that an honord men might nat lyffte hit up. Whan Merlyon wyste that he was there, he bade hym leve his labour, for all was in vayne: for he might never be holpyn but by hir that put hym there.” The immense weight of the stone seems to be part of the enchantment, since it is stated that Nyneve would be able to free Merlin when even a hundred knights could not. The verb “holpyn” to describe efforts to free Merlin, positions Merlin as a victim. Helping someone is a positive action, which implies that any efforts to relieve Merlin from his stone imprisonment are positive. Merlin’s awareness of and reconciliation to his fate is clear as he tells Sir Bagdemagus to cease his rescue attempt since it is “in vayne” and only Nyneve can release him from the stone. Not only is Nyneve then positioned as the party responsible for Merlin’s suffering, but also for her lack of action in releasing him from the prison. Regardless of Merlin’s actions toward her, his value to the court situates him as a positive character in the overall narrative, and as a result, Nyneve’s self-protective actions remain tainted for the reader. The audience is reminded of her role in Merlin’s permanent absence from the Arthurian court, and its impact by depriving the court of Merlin’s magical

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knowledge. Interestingly, although many scholars have argued for Lancelot and Guinevere’s relationship as a major contributing factor to Camelot’s downfall, none seem to extend this blame to Nyneve for how she deprives the court of Merlin; this lack of scholars placing responsibility on Nyneve for her contributions to weakening Camelot may be because she is largely a helpful figure for the court, wending her magic for its benefit, and even saving King Arthur’s life early on from one of Morgan le Fay’s plots. The narrative’s condemnation of her character is not as strong as it is for others examined in this chapter, yet the branding of her character in the narrative with the epithet of the one “that put Merlyon undir the stone” does not seem to portray her course of action positively either.

The Magical Love Triangle, Part II

In the “Pelleas and Ettarde” episode of Morte Darthur, not only does Nyneve’s magic induce Ettarde’s love for Pelleas, but it disrupts Pelleas’s love for Ettarde. Significantly, by this point in the narrative, Nyneve has already demonstrated her advanced magical abilities when, being sexually pursued by Merlin, she magically imprisons him.\(^{474}\) Heng, like other scholars, connects Nyneve’s treatment of Merlin to her interference in Pelleas and Ettarde’s one-sided relationship. She writes:

Having refused to be constructed as a beloved object in the frame of relations proposed by Merlin, Nyneve eventually improvises a construction of her own, with the acquisition of the knight Pelleas for a husband. She does this in a display of her own form of prowess, in playful imitation of the typical chivalric pattern of rescue. Her winning her knight through the defeat of the initial contender for his love is as much a manifestation of feminine desire acting for itself as an independent force in the world, as it is a dispensation of exact justice to two mortals deadlocked by their emotions. To deliver Pelleas from the excesses of Ettarde’s cruelty and pride, she enchants him, turning his love away from Ettarde and toward herself, thereby fully transacting Merlin’s role by completing the very spell she made Merlin promise never

\(^{474}\) This episode between Nyneve and Merlin is discussed later in this chapter.
to cast on her, and gaining what she had been unwilling to surrender before. Pelleas is thus a twice-enchanted subject, bound by a spell of magic, and one of emotion.\textsuperscript{475}

Although Heng’s argument gives a much-deserved amount of agency to Nyneve for her magical influence on the situation, it also suggests an overarching scheme by Nyneve for her self-benefit that the text just doesn’t support. By paralleling the “constructions” of Nyneve’s magical efforts to induce Ettarde’s love and disrupt Pelleas’s love with Merlin’s sexual pursuits of Nyneve, Heng draws an equivalency between the intentions of Merlin and Nyneve. However, Merlin’s plan is to obtain Nyneve’s virginity (and probably her affections, although he is less focused on those) to fulfill his own desire despite Nyneve’s disinterest in him. Nyneve in contrast is presented as acting in the best interest of Sir Pelleas. While some superficial parallels between Nyneve’s position with Merlin and Ettarde’s position with Sir Pelleas can be made, the behaviors of the two men are vastly different.\textsuperscript{476} I agree with Heng though, that Nyneve enacts a “rescue” of Pelleas in a reversal of the traditional chivalric gender roles. Nyneve has already proven herself capable of using magic to defend herself from Merlin, a (demonic hybrid) man who is more powerful than a knight, and so her active role as rescuer in this episode fits with the trajectory of her character development. Despite the flipped gender roles, the institution of chivalry is not threatened by her actions because of two reasons: first, her magic is working to uphold and reinforce the expectations of chivalry, and second, at the end of her righting of the situation, she happily marries Sir Pelleas, an act which shifts her primary role in the text from enchantress to wife.

Heng continually implies that Nyneve acted the entire time with the intention of gaining Pelleas for herself, stealing him away from Ettarde. Heng indicates this perspective

\textsuperscript{475} Heng, “Enchanted Ground,” \textit{Arthurian Women}, 105-6.
\textsuperscript{476} See my discussion in Chapter two of Pelleas’s courtly wooing of Ettarde.
through the paralleling of Merlin’s plan with Nyneve’s actions; the framing of Nyneve as “winning” Sir Pelleas from “the initial contender for his love” (Ettarde); and explicitly describing the enchantment on Pelleas as “turning his love away from Ettarde and toward herself.” This suggests that Nyneve is magically compelling Pelleas’s love for her. I fundamentally disagree with this assertion and will revisit and further dispute it in chapter four when I address the love facilitating aspect of this episode. Furthermore, it is inaccurate to position Ettarde as a “contender” for Pelleas’s affections since she outright rejects him; one cannot contend for a prize if they don’t want it and are not trying to achieve it. The analogy of a battle between the two women that Heng hints at here does not work because Nyneve’s intentions are to punish Ettarde and save Pelleas, not to secure Pelleas as her own, and Ettarde’s intentions are not to win Pelleas, but to get rid of him. Heng is correct though in characterizing Nyneve’s (love disrupting) magic as the reason Pelleas stops loving Ettarde.

When Pelleas wakes up from his magically enchanted sleep, he no longer pines for Ettarde’s love; this presents both a reversal of the two nobles’ roles in the relationship and an example of a second possible function of love magic—the disruption of love. Pelleas is much happier after his love for Ettarde is magically removed. The text offers no qualification of a divine endorsement of this function of Nyneve’s love magic, as there was for the induction of Ettarde’s love. In an earlier discussion with Sir Gawain, Ettarde lays out the premise that a highborn man with great martial skill is worthy of any woman’s love. She says this to reassure Gawain, who has told her that there is a woman whom he loves but who does not return his affections. Ettarde tells him “Sche is to blame…and she woll nat love you, for ye that be so well-borne a man and suche a man of prouesse, there is no lady in this worlde to
good for you.” This, ironically describes exactly the perspective that Nyneve takes in choosing to intervene in the situation between Pelleas and Ettarde. When she first learns of the situation from one of Sir Pelleas’s knights, Nyneve states what she will do if the knight brings the mournful Sir Pelleas to her: “Brynge me to hym…and y woll waraunte his lyfe. He shall nat dye for love, and she that hath caused hym so to love, she shall be in as evylle plyte as he is or hit be longe to, for hit is no joy of suche a proude lady that woll nat have no mercy of suche a valynte knyght.” Her promise is twofold: the second portion, to put the lady in a situation equal to Sir Pelleas’s, has already been addressed in chapter two, but the first portion, to save Sir Pelleas from dying for/from love, is part of the disrupting function of Nyneve’s love magic.

Once Ettarde is suffering from love for Pelleas, Nyneve awakens him, only for it to be revealed that “he hated hir more than ony woman on lyve” and orders her away. The specific language of his hatred echoes that of Ettarde’s, when she responded to Gawain’s false claim that he had slain Pelleas, saying that although it was a shame since he was such a good knight, she “of all men on lyve I hated hym moste.” There is no commentary on this moment like there is for Ettarde’s sudden realization of her love for Pelleas, but it fulfills Nyneve’s earlier promise to save Pelleas from dying for love and in essence, heals him from his love sickness. It is interesting, because her love enchantment has already forced Ettarde to love Pelleas, that there is no imperative need for her to disrupt Pelleas’s own love since, now that it would be reciprocated, he would no longer be in danger of dying from it. Nonetheless,

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477 Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 133.
478 Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 135.
479 Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 136.
480 Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 133.
Nyeneve has judged Ettarde as unworthy of the love of such a good knight and used her love magic to enact justice by, not only inducing Ettarde’s love, but simultaneously releasing Pelleas from his own. His free will remains intact; there is no language of struggle or control here, and it seems clear that he is making choices based on his own desires.

This is indicated clearly in the following moment when Nyeneve tells Pelleas to depart the country and that “ye shall love a lady that woll love you.” Nyeneve’s statement only excludes Ettarde from Pelleas’s options for love and does not, as Heng suggests, dictate that Nyneve be the lady he loves. Not only does this re-emphasize Pelleas’s new freedom to enter into a love relationship that is more balanced, but his response, that “I woll well” demonstrates his agreement with this suggestion. His agreement indicates that he is taking this suggestion of his own free will, unlike Ettarde’s previous struggle to resist her new magically induced love for Pelleas. Prior to his departure, Pelleas utters one final line that re-emphasizes the divine endorsement of Nyneve’s actions in her magic: “And now suche grace God hath sente me that I hate hir as much as I have loved hir.” This once again shows that God has allowed this love magic to work, yet in comparison to Nyneve’s previous justification of her magic against Ettarde as “the ryghteuouse jugemente of God,” the disruption of Pelleas’s love is from God’s grace rather than his judgement. This juxtaposition of the divine attitudes toward Ettarde and Pelleas reinforces Nyneve’s and the narrative’s presentation of Ettarde as cruel and in the wrong and of Pelleas as worthy and in

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481 Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 136.
482 This is discussed more in chapter four in regards to the love facilitating magic that leads to (but does not force) Pelleas’s relationship with Nyneve, but it is worth noting here as well that it is Pelleas who first names Nyneve in the capacity of his new lady love by ordering his belongings be sent wherever she resides.
483 Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 136.
the right. Nyneve’s use of magic against Ettarde is justified because it serves as a moral correction to Ettarde’s unchivalric behavior,\textsuperscript{484} and her use of magic on Pelleas is intended to help him and prevent him from becoming \textit{mal marié}, or badly married.\textsuperscript{485} Nyneve performs this magic with selfless motivations, intending to save Pelleas from his impending death from lovesickness. Despite her own resulting relationship with Pelleas, Nyneve is not performing this magic for the purpose of gaining his love (which would be selfish), but to morally correct the larger chivalric dynamic and to rescue a good knight from his own emotions (which is selfless).

Although one might argue that the removal of an emotion from another is a violation of free will, just as the induction of an emotion is, the words of Pelleas indicate that his new emotion is not against his desires. The conscious awareness of Ettarde to her new emotions, indicated by her despair at their change, shows that even when magic is employed to change emotions and violate free will, it does not change the person’s innate desires. If then, the removal of Pelleas’ love was against his desires, we could expect to see a similar reaction to Ettarde’s, but instead Pelleas refers to his changed emotional state (love into hatred) as “grace God hath sente me.” Beyond connecting this change to God, the ultimate being of goodness, the term “grace” gives insight into Pelleas’ positive perspective of the situation.

\textsuperscript{484} See discussion of the love inducing magic used on Ettarde in chapter two.
\textsuperscript{485} A \textit{mal mariée} is a badly married woman, and is a common trope in medieval romances, but in this case, were Pelleas’s love to continue, it would be he who suffers in the marriage. Ettarde first does not love him and then, only loves him because she is magically induced to do so. Although Nyneve claims this is the will of God (see chapter two), she also appears to believe that a magically induced love is not good enough for Pelleas and that he would be better off without Ettarde completely. This follows the general trajectory of magically induced love which (aside from Ettarde’s experience leading to her death) ends up either being temporary in nature (Lancelot, Bohort, and Igraine) or leads to the lovers’ long-suffering unhappiness (in \textit{Tristan and Isolde}).
God’s grace can refer to both the divine gift of forgiveness or to a secular “material favor or benefit from God,”

indicating that Pelleas considers his hatred for Ettarde to be a benefit, not a detriment and that it is not against his desire.

The final sentence of the episode reveals Ettarde’s fate with the proclamation, “So this lady Ettarde dyed for sorow.”

This ending further reinforces Sir Pelleas’s knightly worthiness by showing the strength of his character. Although he suffered so greatly that his knights feared his death, he persisted in his pursuit of Ettarde and did not succumb to his love sickness. Nyneve’s love inducing and love disrupting magic applications seem to invert the emotions of Ettarde and Pelleas in a 1:1 exchange,

meaning that Ettarde suffers no more or less than Pelleas did, and so her succumbing to death from her emotions indicates a weaker fortitude than Pelleas possessed.

Although Pelleas’s life was potentially in danger when Nyneve intervened—it is unclear if the statement of Pelleas’ knight that “he woll never arysye

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486 “grace, n.” _Middle English Dictionary_, 1(a) and 2(a).
487 Malory, _Le Morte Darthur_, 136.
488 Through its comparative phrasing (“as much as”), Pelleas’s final line creates an algebraic equivalence between the amount and strength of his former love for Ettarde and his current hatred for her. Because the episode has already clearly established the strength of Pelleas’s love earlier in the episode through his willingness to be continually humiliated and defeated for love, the narrative needs no further description of his hatred than equivalizing its strength to this former love. This balancing of people’s love and hatred also harkens back to the language of Nyneve’s promise and its implications for the strength of love magically induced in Ettarde. The measured nature involved in these changing emotions relies on a specific balance—the weight of love and hatred never change, only the location of those emotions is reassigned through magic.
489 For more on the gendered nature of dying for love in medieval romances, see Gaunt, _Love and Death_, 138. The introduction of _An Anthology of Medieval Love Debate Poetry_, ed. and trans. Barbara K. Altmann and R. Barton Palmer (see note 181), discusses the love debate genre as one that takes up the questions of love, including the debate of whether men or women suffer more in love. In addition to a brief treatment of the _Romance of the Rose_ as a love debate text, Altmann and Palmer include Chaucer’s _Legend of Good Women_ in their anthology because of its prologue which includes a debate between Chaucer, the God of Love, and his queen, Alceste.
oute of his bedde tyll he be dede” means that Pelleas is actively dying and is thus in bed ill or that he simply refuses to ever arise from bed again—Pelleas only enters this state of desolation after Sir Gawain’s betrayal is added to the scorn Lady Ettarde heaps upon him.

Although God is referenced in relation to Pelleas’ changed emotions, it is in gratitude rather than justification. Because the standards of courtly love establish Pelleas as the protagonist and Ettarde as the antagonist in the relationship, the use of love magic to disrupt the love (of Pelleas) in their relationship is acceptable, and because it does not violate free will (like the induction of Ettarde’s love for Pelleas), it requires no divine justification. In the next chapter, on love facilitating magic, I discuss how Nyneve’s magic facilitates love between herself and Pelleas at the conclusion of this narrative episode.

**Conclusion**

Even when a love relationship is adulterous, the selfish disruption of love is presented as a morally inappropriate act in medieval romances. Although the relationships between Lancelot and Guinevere and between Tristan and Isolde hold the potential to destabilize the court, the many attempts to reveal and interfere with these relationships are condemned within the texts. This is because these magical attempts stem from immoral (selfish) motivations, meant to benefit only the magical practitioner. The magic is seen as wrong because the reason for using it is wrong. Morgan le Fay, Sir Lamerokke, and Melot are all represented negatively in their magical attempts to disrupt love because their guiding motivations are selfish—they act without intention of protecting the court or the kings, but instead intend to benefit themselves. This holds true even in the justifiable case of Nyneve’s

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entrapment of Merlin, in which she performs her disruptive magic in self-defense. While it may seem reasonable that Nyneve use magic to defend herself against Merlin’s aggressive sexual pursuit of her, her performance of magic is enacted out of her own need to protect her maidenhood, not for the benefit of anyone else, and so she too is condemned for it. In contrast, Nyneve’s disruption of Sir Pelleas’s love for Ettarde was performed for his benefit, not her own, and thus is morally acceptable, even though the result does ultimately benefit her as well. Medieval romances judge the morality of love-disrupting magic based on the motives of the magical practitioner for using the magic. If the magic is performed selflessly, for the benefit of others, it is a morally acceptable, but if it is performed for selfish reasons, benefiting only oneself, it is morally unacceptable.

This same framework for moral evaluation is applied to love facilitating magic, which in chapter four often intersects with love disrupting magic due to the complex interests and intentions of characters. We have seen that magic was historically condemned regardless of its intentions, but that medieval romances provide a space in which authors can construct a variety of possible situations and explore the moral implications of love magic in its various functions and forms. Love inducing magic gains a blanket condemnation for its violation of free will, the element that defines our humanity, with individual instances becoming acceptable only when marked with explicitly divine approval. With the issue of free will violations out of the way, love disrupting magic moves from being subject to a general condemnation to being evaluated more individually on the grounds of the reasons it is employed. The desire to disrupt someone’s love tends to be for one’s own gain, which leads to the majority of love disrupting magic being deemed as immoral; however, occasionally, love disrupting magic is performed for moral intentions, when employed for the benefit of
others besides the magical practitioner. Love facilitating magic, morally evaluated in the
same way as love disrupting magic, trends the opposite way. Because magically assisting
love is usually beneficial for someone else (generally one’s lover), it is designated as selfless
and moral. However, some instances of selfish love facilitating magic do occur when the
magic facilitates a love that is one-sided; these attempts are not only selfish and immoral, but
they fail to be effective.
Chapter 4

Can You Feel the Love Tonight: Love Facilitating Magic
Much like love disrupting magic, the morality of love facilitating magic in medieval romances is evaluated with consideration of the user’s motivations. The magical facilitation of love is distinct from love inducing magic (discussed in chapter two) because the magic is not exerting control over a person’s emotions or free will, and its purpose is to assist in the creation or maintenance of a developing or pre-existing relationship but not to create love through magic. Love facilitating magic is more commonly perceived as morally positive in medieval romances than love disrupting magic. This is logical since the motivations for utilizing the two functions differ, and it is the reasons of the magical practitioner that determine the text’s evaluation of the magic.

I first examine examples of morally acceptable instances of magically facilitated love, several of which continue discussions of narrative episodes addressed in previous chapters. The final installation of Nyneve’s love magic trifecta in Malory’s “Pelleas and Ettrande” narrative examines how Nyneve’s magic facilitates her own relationship with Pelleas. The Vulgate version of Merlin’s imprisonment by Viviane contrasts the role of love magic to that in the Le Morte Darthur (discussed in chapter three). From there, I shift to investigate how the Vulgate offers a degree of moral acceptability to Morgan’s magical imprisonment of knights in the Valley of Lovers because of the benefits it provides for other women. I then turn to an examination of love facilitation magic that is represented as immoral. I examine one of Morgan’s kidnappings of Lancelot, in which she attempts to secure his love for herself, and I demonstrate how her selfish motivations lead to the love facilitating magic she employs being represented as immoral. Building on the immorality of Morgan’s magical attempt for Lancelot’s love, I introduce a new magical practitioner from Le Morte Darthur, Hallewes the Sorceress, whose only appearance in the text is a magical effort to claim
Lancelot as her own. Finally, I complicate the discussion of the morality of love facilitating magic in an analysis of a textual moment in which Guinevere is rumored to be practicing love facilitating magic.

Although little is written on the marriage between Nyneve and Pelleas that results from the cumulation of her love magic, Holbrook gives a small aside to it as part of her scholarship on Nyneve. The relationship between Nyneve and Pelleas is important because it is an original addition by Malory to the longer Ettarde/Pelleas dynamic. Holbrook raises the question of why Malory elects to insert Nyneve into this episode, but offers no potential answers, remarking instead on the success of Malory’s addition: “Malory has sketched Nymue as clever, firmly opinioned, quick to intervene where warranted, capable of receiving and returning love equally, and, like Malory’s other passionate heroines, constant to the one man she loves.” Holbrook also acknowledges the later mentions of Nyneve and Pelleas’s marriage, through which Malory builds on the positive character traits of Nyneve first seen in her kindness to Pelleas. Nyneve’s continued role throughout the text as a helper for the Arthurian court, in combination with her character frequently appearing in conjunction with her husband Pelleas, highlights the positive nature of their marriage in the story.

Malory’s Nyneve is also the woman responsible for Merlin’s entombment in Le Morte Darthur (discussed in chapter three), but the earlier Vulgate version presents the character of Viviane as Merlin’s lover-jailer instead. Viviane’s motivations are also vastly different, and her use of magic on Merlin, while meant to benefit herself, is also done to promote their mutual love. Anne Berthelot traces the development of the Viviane/Nyneve

491 Holbrook, “Nymue, the Chief Lady of the Lake,” 773.
character, emphasizing how presentations of her become demonized. Elspeth Kennedy briefly mentions the Viviane/Merlin relationship; while she states that in the Vulgate “Merlin’s diabolical nature is emphasized, but neutralized through the Lady of the Lake’s imprisonment of him,” she does not discuss Viviane’s actions any further. In another of her articles though, Kennedy discusses the incorporation of the goddess Diana in connection to Viviane’s conception and birth and details the blending of this pre-Christian element with the Christian approach of the Vulgate. Annie Combes notes the significance of Viviane’s imprisonment because it juxtaposes the negative trajectory of Merlin’s life with the positive direction Arthur’s takes after the two characters meet. The most thorough examination of Viviane and Merlin’s relationship comes from Carolyne Larrington. She positions Viviane’s educational training within the larger tradition of literate Arthurian sorceresses and considers how Viviane applies her literacy within her magic, including the recording of spells she learns from Merlin and utilizing magic on her groin to protect her virginity. Larrington

496 Larrington, King Arthur’s Enchantresses, 15. Sommer, ed. Vulgate Version, 3:22; translation in Lacy and Rosenberg, ed., “Lancelot, Part I,” Lancelot-Grail, 12. This telling of the interactions between Merlin and Ninianne (an alternate spelling of Viviane used in this episode) appears in the Prose Lancelot portion of the Vulgate while the exchanges discussed in this chapter are drawn from the fuller account provided in the Prose Merlin portion. The Prose Lancelot account of the relationship seems to offer a summary of the events, but clearly is referencing the same female character (Ninianne/Viviane) since she too is identified as responsible for Merlin’s imprisonment.
also dedicates an entire chapter of her book *King Arthur's Enchantresses* to investigate Merlin’s students of magic, among whom (perhaps exclusively) are Morgan le Fay and Viviane, the Lady of the Lake.\textsuperscript{497} Importantly, she observes that it is Viviane, the “good” sorceress rather than Morgan the malevolent sorceress, whose relationship leads to Merlin’s ruin, despite both women being lovers and students of Merlin’s.\textsuperscript{498}

Larrington also expounds on the power of enchantresses who magically imprison men, including Morgan and Viviane, as part of her argument about gender transgressive characters in medieval romances. Both Morgan and Viviane defy the “stock female roles” in Arthurian literature, and Larrington asserts that “enchantresses…independent of male control, educated, autonomous…can operate to support the Arthurian status quo (as does Malory’s Lady of the Lake) or to challenge and interrogate it.”\textsuperscript{499} Stacy L. Hahn, writing on feminine sexuality, also examines both characters, contrasting Morgan’s lustful and sexually brazen behavior with the Lady of the Lake’s more reserved approach to love, which includes her role as facilitator between Lancelot (her adopted son) and Guinevere. She reinforces the elevated role of the Lady of the Lake, asserting “The Split Shield emphasizes the spiritual nature of love (unlike the magic potions that coerce sexual relations upon a reluctant male for the purpose of generating the species).”\textsuperscript{500} Hahn compares the safe space the Lady of the

\textsuperscript{497} Larrington, *King Arthur’s Enchantresses*, 97. Larrington identifies these two sorceresses as Merlin’s students but suggests that there are perhaps three students if Viviane and the Lady of the Lake are examined as separate characters.

\textsuperscript{498} Larrington, *King Arthur’s Enchantresses*, 97.

\textsuperscript{499} Carolyne Larrington, “Gender/Queer Studies,” in *Handbook of Arthurian Romance: King Arthur’s Court in Medieval European Literature*, eds. Leah Tether and Johnny McFadyen (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 259-72. See also Larrington, *King Arthur’s Enchantresses*, 22-3, which discusses the theme of enclosure and specifically mentions both Viviane’s and Morgan’s imprisonments of their lovers.

\textsuperscript{500} Hahn, “Feminine Sexuality,” 501.
Lake offers to Lancelot and his kin with Morgan’s Valley of No Return/Valley of False Lovers which she identifies as “a feminine space,” and argues that “by confining men within her private space, Morgain upsets the social order by removing chivalry from love and defining love on her on [sic] terms.” Hahn characterizes Morgan “as an agent against fin’amor by trying to bring harm to her rival, Guinevere.” Although this statement is accurate as it relates to Morgan’s magical love disrupting actions, it unfairly reduces the complexity of her character. Representing Morgan so simplistically is done at the expense of any consideration for her own emotional motivations, including her apparent love for Lancelot in the kidnapping episode discussed in this chapter. Hahn does not ignore this episode completely, instead favoring the inclusion only of the role it plays in generating Lancelot’s murals that eventually contribute to the revelation of his and Guinevere’s affair.

Hahn concludes her examination of the various expressions of feminine sexuality in the *Lancelot-Grail Cycle* with the juxtaposition of femininity that is acceptable within the chivalric framework with femininity that is too transgressive, and thus threatening. Maureen Fries also compares Morgan to the Lady of the Lake and argues that although both were traditionally benevolent, healing figures, Morgan’s character is reduced from “a lovely, learned and potent woman” to “a destructive sorceress who entraps men sexually rather than healing them.” Fries specifically connects Morgan’s betrayal by her lover and her subsequent search for revenge (including the Valley of False Lovers) to this trajectory of her character development in Arthurian literature.

504 Fries, “Female Heroes, Heroines, and Counter-Heroes,” 69.
The final sorceress of this chapter, Hallewes, receives little narrative space, appearing only once for a brief episode in Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur*, but scholars do take interest in her and appear entranced by the unique grotesqueness of her willingness to engage in necrophilia in order to claim Lancelot as her own. Janet Knepper examines the excess of Hallewes’s love for Lancelot, which drives her to the extreme measures of necrophilia and subsequent dying from heartbreak. She also connects Hallewes’s intended treatment of Lancelot’s (dead) body—which would not decay due to the planned embalming—with the veneration of relics, but clarifying “that worship is transgressive.” Knepper, one of the few critics willing to analyze the significance of the necrophilia more closely, proposes that it may be Malory’s strategy for minimizing the killing done by knights by demonstrating that “necrophilia is far worse, far more disgusting than plain killing.” Furthermore, she examines the emotional mindset of Hallewes that might be driving her to take such an approach toward Lancelot and its gender transgressive nature.

Although Hallewes is the final sorceress in this chapter, it is a discussion of Guinevere that concludes the chapter as I delve into an examination of the accusations of love magic made against her. These accusations are not formal charges, but are rumors, recounted to Lancelot in the form of gossip about his and Guinevere’s relationship. Little

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scholarly work addresses this small moment in which Guinevere is considered as a user of love magic. Donald Hoffman’s argument in “Guinevere the Enchantress,” responds the categorization framework proposed by Maureen Fries in which Arthurian women fulfill the role of Heroine (which is Guinevere), Female Hero, or Counter-Hero (one of which is Morgan), and utilizes a small discussion of Guinevere’s ties to magic that are produced through the purported rumors of her magic use.

Each of the instances of love facilitating magic in this chapter reveals a new layer to the existence of love magic in medieval romances. Nyneve’s magic is selfless, a tool of divine justice, and demonstrates the connection between all three functions of love magic. Viviane’s creation of a magical prison for Merlin blends a selfish desire for control with their mutual desires for love, showing that selfless behaviors can offer a modicum of mitigation for the immorality of selfish magic. Morgan’s Valley of False Lovers demonstrates the possibility of multiple, complex motivations driving the use of love magic, and elicits differing, gendered perspectives on the magic’s morality. In contrast, Morgan’s purely selfish employment of magic to manipulate Lancelot into returning her affections is morally condemned, but also reveals how her love generates an unwillingness to inhibit Lancelot’s free will through love inducing magic. Hallewes, the most maligned of the enchantresses, is vilified for her necrophilic approach to love magic, but her grief-stricken death offers her a position in the literary tradition of martyrs for love. Finally, the rumors about Guinevere’s

This theme, however, has become popular in modern Arthurian adaptations, including the BBC’s Merlin, in which Gwen is (falsely) accused of using magic, and in Kiersten White’s novel The Guinevere Deception, the first book of her Camelot Rising trilogy, in which Guinevere is an undercover magical body guard for Arthur.
magical connections depict how accusations of magic could endanger a person’s reputation as much or more than actually practicing magic.

The Magical Love Triangle, Part III

The most morally acceptable example of performed love facilitating magic comes in the final stage of the Ettarde and Pelleas episode from Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur* which has been discussed both in chapters two and three. With its use of love facilitating magic, this narrative episode offers itself up as a trifecta of the three functions of love magic. In the first part, Nyneve used love inducing magic to force Lady Ettarde into loving Sir Pelleas, a noble knight who had been pursuing her affections to no avail. In the next portion of the narrative, Nyneve uses magic to disrupt Pelleas’s overwhelming love for Ettarde, leaving him free from his need to court her. This also reverses their situation, re-positioning Ettarde as the unrequited suitor and Pelleas as the uninterested subject of affection. The story does not conclude with the karma-filled moment of Pelleas’s scorching of Ettarde though; rather, an epilogue-style happily-ever-after ending tells the reader that Pelleas leaves the land with Nyneve and the two enter into a relationship of their own. This relationship has been made possible through the magic Nyneve has wrought. The magic gives Pelleas the freedom to shift his affections from Ettarde to Nyneve, who recognizes his worthiness as a knight. No new magic is performed for this to occur, but the magic that disrupted Pelleas’s love for Ettarde here doubles as love facilitating magic because of its assistance in Nyneve’s own relationship. Although Nyneve, unlike Ettarde, acknowledges Pelleas as deserving of a noble lady’s love, there is no sign that her own desire for him motivates her actions. Instead, she continually frames her magical intervention in the Pelleas and Ettarde dynamic as a type of
rescue, prompted by the need to save Pelleas’s life, which is in danger from his lovesickness. This reading aligns with Holbrook’s interpretation of Nyneve’s actions; she remarks, “the imprecise syntax of the narrative does not tell the reader whether Nymue enchanted Pelleas into loving her as well as into hating Ettarde, but Nymue’s motives do not seem selfish, and since she had started to act on Pelleas’s behalf even before she met him, she cannot be accused of having manipulated the situation in her favor.”\textsuperscript{510} While I agree that Nyneve’s motives are not self-serving (and that this makes them moral within the text’s representation), I assert that the text reinforces the idea that Pelleas’s love for Nyneve is of his own free will, not induced through enchantment.

As he departs, Pelleas orders his possessions to be brought to wherever the Lady of the Lake Nyneve “wolde assyngne them,” indicating his newly forged connection with her is something he intends to continue.\textsuperscript{511} The narrative episode ends with telling the reader that “the Damesel of the Lake rejoysed Sir Pelleas, and loved togedyrs duryng theire lyfe dayes.”\textsuperscript{512} This use of the term “rejoysed” indicates that Nyneve marries Pelleas, which is confirmed in the grammatical joining of the two in the following clause; not only do the love “togedrys” but rather than referring to the duration of their lives separately, their lives are combined into the jointly possessed “lyfe days.” This contrasts starkly with the one-sided nature of Pelleas’s previous affections for Ettarde, who returned his love with hate. The phrase “loved togedrys” signifies the mutual, reciprocal love that existed between Nyneve and Pelleas. In this way, Nyneve’s magic \textit{facilitates} love by paving the way for her own

\textsuperscript{510} Holbrook, “Nymue, the Chief Lady of the Lake,” 772.
\textsuperscript{511} Malory, \textit{Le Morte Darthur}, 136.
\textsuperscript{512} Malory, \textit{Le Morte Darthur}, 136.
relationship with Pelleas, but does not inhibit him from freely making the choice to be with her.

The love magic Nyneve uses only removes free will through one of its functions—the induction of Ettarde’s love for Pelleas. The text makes this evident through Ettarde’s own reaction and then justifies this violation of free will through the explicit explanation that it is the “ryghteous jugemente of God.” The other two functions of love magic—the disruption of Pelleas’s love for Ettarde and the facilitation of Pelleas’s eventual love for and marriage with Nyneve—do not remove or inhibit anyone’s free will, and as such do not require a justification relying on divine approval. This distinction between the functions of love magic and their impediment or lack of on free will helps to explain the larger trend of medieval romance authors’ indication of divine endorsement when love-inducing magic is successfully used in a narrative (as chapter one argued) but not when other iterations of love magic appear.

Kenneth Hodges develops an argument that women in Arthurian literature could participate in chivalric culture, and more importantly women “who associate with the Round Table…must be recognized as participating in knightly culture.” He provides a list of women who were active in historical martial activity and suggests that women in Arthurian literature can also take on these knightly roles. Building on this premise, he claims, “Malory does not present any women skilled at combat, so the examples of women using their strength of fight for (or against) justice come from magicians, primarily Morgan le Fay and Nyneve.” The many uses of magic, related to love or not, by these and other sorceresses in

514 Hodges, *Forging Chivalric Communities*, 41.
515 Hodges, *Forging Chivalric Communities*, 41.
Malory’s text supports Hodges’s argument. More significantly though, if we frame Nyneve’s actions as fulfilling a chivalric role as a knight would, then we can understand Pelleas’s selection of her for his wife as her earned reward. If magic in her weapon, Nyneve has wielded it well, bringing justice to an unchivalric situation. Just as an honorable knight who rescues a lady from a discourteous knight is likely to end up with the love of the lady by the end of the episode, Nyneve, who rescues Pelleas from a discourteous lady, earns his love through her demonstrated magical prowess.

The next two examples present somewhat more problematic, albeit still morally acceptable, versions of love facilitating magic. Like Nyneve’s love magic, the love facilitating magic in these examples is wielded by women—Viviane upon Merlin and Morgan le Fay upon her own lover and the lovers of other women—but whereas Nyneve engages magic to restore a man’s liberty in love, Viviane and Morgan both use it to physically detain lovers in the furtherance of love relationships, including their own and those of other women.

**Viviane’s Imprisonment of Merlin**

Predating Malory’s version of Merlin’s imprisonment (discussed in the previous chapter) is the version presented in the *Vulgate Cycle*. Rather than the imprisonment being a form of self-defense against Merlin’s aggressive sexual pursuits, as Malory’s narrative goes, the imprisonment in the *Vulgate Cycle* is a way for Viviane to keep Merlin for herself, both as a lover and a source of magical knowledge. Despite these intentions, the mutual nature of their love relationship makes Viviane’s use of love facilitating magic on Merlin more morally acceptable since she is not acting directly against his desires, which are to be with
her. The line between Merlin’s desires and his fate does get somewhat blurred within the

The line between Merlin’s desires and his fate does get somewhat blurred within the
text, leaving it unclear exactly how much free will Merlin retains to exert in his relationship.

Before ever meeting Viviane, Merlin recounts a prophecy about himself and her, foretelling
his own eventual entombment at her hands. Because Merlin’s prophetic abilities come
directly from God, his knowledge of his fate is knowledge of God’s plan for the future. This
is important because despite being a powerful magician, Merlin is unable to prevent his own
fate of which he is aware because of his prophetic abilities. This suggests that he lacks free
will regarding his participation in a relationship with Viviane. Even without Merlin’s free
will, this would be considered a divinely endorsed relationship because it is part of God’s
plan (revealed to Merlin who discloses it to Master Blaise who records it), thus rendering the
deprivation of his free will as morally acceptable. Furthermore, it is not Viviane’s magic that
would be considered responsible for removing Merlin’s free will. The divine promise made
to Viviane’s father by Diana and approved by God is the source of Merlin’s fate; Viviane’s
use of magic on Merlin only fulfills the promise that predated her existence.

The foundation for Merlin’s magical imprisonment is established early in “Lestoire
de Merlin” [“The Story of Merlin”] portion of the Vulgate Cycle, when Merlin, fully aware
of what is to come in his future, meets the twelve-year old Viviane and enters into an oath
with her that in exchange for her love he will teach her his magic. His prophetic account to
Blaise lays out what will happen to him, providing a script for his future interactions with
Viviane. Although Merlin’s prophecy is, characteristically, symbolically representational of
its actors, the particular roles into which he casts himself and Viviane are interesting. Merlin
is presented as the lion, an animal which throughout the Vulgate Cycle is representative of
strong, brave, good men of King Arthur’s court.\textsuperscript{516} In contrast, Vivian is represented by the wolf.\textsuperscript{517} Unlike the lion, who plays both positive and negative roles in Christian tradition, the wolf does not have a good reputation in the Christian biblical narrative, and it is commonly understood as a figure of deceit and destruction.\textsuperscript{518} This negative use of the wolf may also be a carryover from Early English literature in which anti-Christian villains of narratives were often characterized as wolves.\textsuperscript{519} The use of these two particular animals as representative of Merlin and Vivian provide insight into the author’s coming vilification of Vivian for her containment of Merlin.

Before departing from Blaise, Merlin sets down his prophecy that “car ia uenu est el pais qui le lion saluage doit loier de cerceles qui ne seront de fer ne de fust ne dargent ne dor ne de plon. si en sera si estroit loies que mouoir ne se porra” [“the wolf has already come into the land who is to bind the lion with rings that are not of iron or wood or silver or gold or lead, and the lion will be bound so tightly that he cannot move”].\textsuperscript{520} Although Blaise

\textsuperscript{516} See discussion of Galahad’s conception in chapter two.
\textsuperscript{517} See Laura Gelfand, “Women and Wolves (and she-wolves),” Presentation at Utah State University Center for Women and Gender, January 22, 2018, video, 57:20, https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cwg_brownbags/2/ for discussion on the late medieval and early modern associations of women and wolves.
\textsuperscript{518} The well-known idiom “a wolf in sheep’s clothing,” which refers to someone who is deceitful and dangerous although they appear harmless comes from Matthew 7:15 which reads in the Vulgate Bible, “adventite a falsis prophetis qui veniunt ad vos in vestimentis ovium intrinsecus autem sunt lupi rapaces” [“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves”]. Although it is Merlin, not Vivian, who is the prophet, the association between her and the wolf is appropriate. In the larger pattern of representing Christ’s followers as lambs, wolves then take on the allegorical role of the destroyer of good Christians. See Luke 10:3, Matthew 10:16, Acts 20:29, and Ezekiel 22:27 for examples.
\textsuperscript{519} Grendel’s mother in Beowulf is referred to as a wolf multiple times and in coordination with a variety of other descriptors; the heathen villain in The Life of St. Edmund is also depicted as a wolf as he approaches Edmund’s lands to launch his attack.
questions how this is possible when a lion is stronger and should be able to overcome a wolf, Merlin clarifies that, despite Blaise’s accuracy, this will indeed occur and that “que ceste prophesie chiet sor moi. & si sai bien que iou ne me saurai garder” [“this prophecy befalls me, and I know very well that I cannot keep myself from it”].\(^{521}\) Merlin makes the statement indicating that despite his foreknowledge of Viviane’s entrapment, he will be powerless to prevent it; hence how the weaker wolf is able to succeed over the legendary lion.

Acting from both démesure love for Merlin and a greed for his knowledge of magic, Viviane’s motivations are selfish and go against the standards of courtly love in medieval romances—women kidnapping knights is not playing by the rules of love, but are slightly redeemed because Merlin also desires to be with her and complies to her requests. Although Merlin allows himself to succumb to Viviane’s charm and even returns her affections, Merlin gets no choice in all this and cannot take any measures to avoid his fate. More detail about the reason for this inability to act is revealed during the first description the text provides of Viviane. Merlin makes his way to her without any reason or prompt. This impulsive (and compulsive) journey supports his prior prophetic assertion that he cannot avoid his fate. The text then offers its reader some background information about this maiden, who has not yet been revealed to be the wolf of whom Merlin prophesized:

Cele pucele dont ie vous di estoit fille a vn uauassor dun moult haut lignage qui auoit non dyonas. si vint maintes fois a lui parler dyane la dieuesse del bois & fu auoec lui maint ior car il estoit ses filleus. & quant ele sen parti si li douna doun qui moult bien li auera. & li dist dyonas. iou te croi & li dieu de la lune & des estoiles si face que li premiers enfes que tu auras femele soit tant couoitie del plus sage homme terrien apres ma mort que au tans vertiger de la bloie bertaigne commenchera a regner & quil li enseng la grignor partie de son sens par force dingremanchie en tel maniere quil soit si sougis a lui des quil laura ueue quil nait sor lui pooir de faire riens contre sa

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The maiden I am telling you about was the daughter of a vavasor of very high birth named Dyonas. When he was young, quite often Diana, goddess of the wood, came to talk with him and spent many a day with him, for he was her godson. Once, as she left, she gave him a gift that proved to be of great worth to him. And she said to him, “Dyonas, I trust you. And may the God of the moon and stars grant that, after my death, when Vortigern of Great Britain begins to reign, your first girl-child be sought after by the wisest, most learned man on earth, that he may teach her everything she asks—all through the power of necromancy, so that he might be so much under her sway from the moment he sees her that he lacks the power to do anything against her will.” Thus Diana gave her gift to Dyonas, and as soon as she had given it, it was granted."

This description alludes to the period of transition into which this narrative is set—Christianity’s takeover of England from pagans. Positioned as a pre-episode to the time in which the Vulgate Cycle narrative is taking place, Dyonas is “vint” [“young”] when Diana makes him this promise. Having Diana as the source is the first indication that this episode is set in a pre-Christian period in England; this is supported by Diana’s own reference to her death and to “the God of the moon and stars.” The shift in power from Diana, a Roman goddess (also associated with the moon), to this new god is a reference to the cultural shift from pagan religion to Christianity. The Vulgate furthermore positions Diana’s power as inferior to that of the Christian God whom she references. Diana, although a goddess, is presented as mortal, and even her promised gift to Dyonas is framed as a type of appeal to

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524 Kennedy attributes the inclusion of Diana in the narrative by highlighting that the text identifies her as a noble queen (from Virgil’s time) whose hobby was hunting, “but was regarded as a goddess by the ignorant people.” She also connects the “rationalizing attitude” (as she deems this approach to the text’s navigating of Diana’s non-Christian divinity) to the involvement of Merlin, who “could provide a ‘rational’ explanation in thirteenth century terms for nearly all the necessary marvels.” Kennedy, “The Role of the Supernatural,” 176.
the (Christian) God “of the moon and stars” who will replace her. The final line of the quotation above suggests some type of third-party approval of Diana’s gift (presumably from the new God to which she alludes). The language of time in this line—the immediate granting of the gift—has to refer to the approval of the gift rather than the giving of the gift because the text then tells us that it is only once Dyonas is grown up and well-accomplished that he takes a wife and has a daughter. The duration of many years between the gift-promising moment and the point at which the promise is fulfilled with the daughter shows that the phrase “as soon as she had given it, it was granted” must refer to approval for these events to happen, not the actual occurrence of the events.

Diana is not only associated with the woods, as the text explicitly states, but she is also known for her virginity and being a protector during childbirth. Her connection with both maidenhood and motherhood is particularly relevant considering it is love which binds Viviane with Merlin; Diana’s gift to Dyonas is child-related as well. The child is not necessarily Diana’s gift; Diana’s determination that the girl-child will be able to have control over “the wisest, most learned man on earth” and can learn whatever she desires from him is the more unique part of Diana’s gift. Whether the daughter’s ability to entrance Merlin (who fulfills the requirement of “the wisest, most learned man on earth”) comes from Diana’s power as a goddess or the will of the Christian God who is worshipped during the time of the Vulgate narrative, the divine authority over these events compels them to occur regardless of Merlin’s ability to foresee them. The exact promise Diana makes contains two sub-actions, the first is that Merlin, who we understand as fulfilling the role of “wisest, most learned man on earth” will seek out the daughter—this provides the explanation that had previously been missing in the text for why Merlin goes looking for the maiden without any prompting or
apparent motivating events occurring. Once Merlin finds the daughter, Viviane, then the second sub-action of Diana’s promise kicks in, and he is entranced by her, succumbing to her every whim.

Viviane is only a child of twelve years when Merlin seeks her, and when he first encounters her, it is already apparent how little self-control he retains in his interactions with her. After disguising himself in the countenance of “moult biau uallet” [“a most handsome youth”] he approaches a bright spring Viviane often frequented.

Et quant merlins la uit si laremira moult anchois quil dist mot. si dist que moult seroit fols se il sendormoit en son pechie quil en perdist son sens & son sauoir por auoir le deduit dune damoisele & lui honir & dieu perdre. Qvant merlins ot asses pense si sauanche & la toutes fois saluee.

[And when Merlin saw her, he looked at her for a long time before he said a word. And he said to himself that he would be most unwise to fall asleep in sin and lose his mind and his knowledge just to know the delights of a young lady, to shame her and to lose God. After Merlin had long been deep in thought, he went forward and greeted her nevertheless.]

The text is unclear if Merlin was aware that Viviane often came to the spring and intentionally went there or if this was done by Merlin without his awareness of the spring’s significance. Merlin appears to want to resist his pull toward the young woman, actively advising himself against it and showing awareness of the immoral nature of his desire for her, as well as the potential consequences of acting on his desire. Yet, all of this contemplation and awareness does nothing to prevent him from introducing himself to her as has been

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525 This age is significant because of the possibility of menarche that would mark her transition into child-bearing age. Additionally, the age of consent for women was twelve (and men fourteen) established under the canon law for of mutual consent marriages, put forth c. 1140 in the Decretum Gratiani.
promised by Diana and allowed by God. It is particularly interesting that Merlin seems to believe one of the consequences of acting on his desires would be the loss of his prophetic knowledge, which was granted to him by God. Two elements of his ruminations signal this belief to the reader; the first, is his self-advice not to “fall asleep in sin” so that he does not “lose his mind and his knowledge.” Although men losing their wits due to excessive love in medieval romances is not rare,\(^5\) the knowledge that Merlin holds is unique and so what he has to lose is much more valuable than what the average man has in his mind. The second is his fear that were he to give in, he would “lose God.” Again, to lose God more generally might just be a reference to spiritual disconnect due to sin, but in Merlin’s case, his prophetic knowledge comes directly from God, so to lose God would be to lose his knowledge of future events.\(^6\) In fact, no loss of his magical abilities seems to occur. This is logical because were he to lose that knowledge, the second portion of Diana’s promise could not be fulfilled. Additionally, Diana’s entire promise is granted by God himself, thereby leaving no reason for Merlin to be punished since he is not acting through free will. Without free will,

\(^5\) Lancelot is a particularly prime example of this trope as he goes mad and becomes a wild man upon being rejected by Guinevere and as a result of his overwhelming, obsessive love for her. See Sylvia Huot, *Madness in Medieval French Literature: Identities Found and Lost* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Gwynth E. Hood, “Medieval Love-Madness and Divine Love” (see note 258); John F. Plummer, “Frenzy and Females: Subject Formation in Opposition to The Other in the Prose *Lancelot,*” *Arthuriana* 6, no. 4 (1996): 45-51; Jacqueline Schaeffer, “Specularity in the Medieval *Folie Tristan* Poems, or Madness as Metadiscourse,” *Neophilologus* 77 (1993): 355-68; and Penelope Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar’s Children: Conventions of Madness in Middle English Literature* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974). The tradition of Merlin Sylvestris, the wild man in the woods, is also echoed here as Merlin’s civilized nature is under threat.

\(^6\) This is all established in Merlin’s conception narrative, in which demons facilitate his conception and birth in a plot to use him as a propaganda machine to corrupt humans. In furtherance of their intentions, the demons enable Merlin with knowledge of all that has happened in the past and all that is present. In a move that counters the demons’ plot and restores free will to Merlin, God chooses to gift him knowledge of the future and to allow him to choose which way he will use his gifts.
Merlin is also relieved of responsibility for his actions. In fact, his ponderings over what to do upon encountering Viviane show morally good intents despite what he ends up doing (assumedly because he is compelled to by fate).

Merlin utilizes his magic and the promise of its knowledge to secure Viviane’s love, tantalizing her with reports that he can “leuer chi” [“raise a castle right here”], “iou iroie bien desor cel estance que ia mon piet ni moilleroie” [“walk across that pond without getting my feet wet”], “coure vne riuiere par la ou onques nauoit eue coru. ne taut ne quant” [“make a river flow over there where no water has ever run before”], and do even more “giues” [“tricks”]. Viviane inquires about learning the things that Merlin knows, and using this opportunity, Merlin strikes a deal with Viviane that he will demonstrate “vne partie de mes giues” [“a few of my tricks”] in exchange for her “couent que uostre amor soit moie” [“oath that your love will be mine.”] Viviane agrees to his offer, and the trick he produces—a full court and castle—does not disappoint, so she declares to Merlin, “vous aues tant fet que ie sui toute vostre” [“you have done enough to make me yours!”]. She goes on to insist on being educated in the art of his tricks and learns that beyond the magic he has shown to her, he possesses knowledge of “toutes les coses que len fait” [“everything that everyone does”] and “de celes choses qui sont auenir” [“things that are yet to come”]. In an indication that

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their relationship goes beyond Viviane’s greed for Merlin’s knowledge,\textsuperscript{534} the two enjoy some time together before Merlin teaches her how to make things, such as a river, appear (as he had done with the castle, orchard, and courtiers in his demonstration) before he temporarily departs to conduct other business.

At this point in the narrative, magic has only been used as a lure to gain Viviane’s oath of love—the magic Merlin performed in no way inhibited Viviane’s free will; the power involved in Diana’s promise is not clearly magical, but instead it is a divinely-ordained fate brought about through the powers of God and the goddess Diana rather than any earthly love magic. However, when the Vulgate Cycle picks the love story of Merlin and Viviane back up, almost a year later in the narrative, a more crystalized application of magic to facilitate love develops. Before returning to her, Merlin uses the last of his freedom to say his goodbyes, first to Arthur and the Arthurian court and then to Master Blaise. Again, Merlin demonstrates his foreknowledge of his ultimate fate and his helplessness to prevent it. He informs King Arthur that this is the last time they will see each other, and later, when leaving Blaise, tells him “que chest la daarraine foys. quar il seiourneroit aucu samie. ne si nauroit iamais pooir de li laissier ne daler ne de uenir a son uoiloir” [“that it was the last time, for he was going to stay with his lady, and he would never have the power to leave her or to come and go as he wished”].\textsuperscript{535} When Blaise once more appeals to Merlin simply not to go since, if he does, he will not return, Merlin explains why he must, citing several connected reasons: “quar iou li ai en conuent. & iou sui si souspris de samour que iou ne men porroie partir. et iou li ai apris &

\textsuperscript{534} This echoes Eve’s greed for knowledge in the Garden of Eden, and the downfall of man that results.

enseignie tout le ens que elle set. & encore en saura elle plus. quar iou ne men puis departir”
[“for I have sworn an oath to her. And I am so overwhelmed by love for her that I could not leave her. And I have shown her and taught her all the knowledge she has, and she will yet know more, for I cannot leave her”]. 536 A variety of motivations bind Merlin to his task: first, the matter of honor that requires the fulfillment of an oath that is given; second, his démesure love for Viviane compels him to go to and remain with her (this is also part of Diana’s promise about Viviane); and thirdly, Merlin’s apparent need to continue educating Viviane, which ties into the oath he made to her and also fulfills the rest of Diana’s promise.

As soon as Merlin and Viviane are reunited, they appear happy together, suggesting mutual affection between them. Unlike Nyneve’s interactions with Merlin in Malory’s Le Morte Darthur (discussed in the previous chapter), Viviane’s are pleasant and desired; the text recounts that when Merlin returned to her, she “moult grant ioie li fist. et il a lui. & demourerent en samble grant partie del tamps” [“was very glad to see him, as he was to see her. And they tarried together for a long time”]. 537 Viviane is dually motivated by her love for Merlin and her lust for his knowledge. After he returns to her, Viviane bombards him with questions “grant paries de ses afaires & il len dist tant & enseigna quil en fu puis tenus pour fol. & est encore” [“about a great many things he knew how to do, and he taught her so much that he was later taken for a fool—and still is”]. 538 The characterization of Merlin as a fool, both then and now, seems to shame him for the role he plays in equipping Viviane with

the knowledge she needs to later trap him. It also implies that both in his time and at the time when the Vulgate Cycle is being written, people viewed him as foolish. The phrase to be “taken for a fool” also refers to being obviously deceived or swindled, which Merlin certainly is by Viviane. The final caveat that he “still is” gives a timelessness to his imprisonment, reminding the audience that even now Merlin remains in that same trap. However, his lack of free will excuses his behavior, as his foolishness is not by choice, but is simply in line with his divine fate.

Demonstrating her keen interest in learning from Merlin, Vivaine’s deluge of inquiries comes “right away,” but this interest in knowledge appears balanced with, not greater than, her affections for Merlin. The first thing the text signals upon Merlin’s return is their emotional reactions and that they spend a great deal of time together; it is only after establishing this that the text moves to tell of Viviane’s quest for Merlin’s knowledge. Merlin is both a source of love and information for Viviane, and she worries about losing him. It is this concern that drives her to formulate a plot to “le porroit detemir a tout iours mais” [“keep him forever”], and with sparse subtlety she begins to insistently ask Merlin “comment iou porroie homme enserrer sans tour & sans mur & sans fer par enchantement. si que iamais nen issist se par moi non” [“how I might keep a man imprisoned without a tower or walls or irons, but through wizardry, so that he could never get away but through me”].539 It is here that she demonstrates her desire to use magic to facilitate her love with Merlin by containing him to belong to her forevermore. Understanding the power offered through magic, Viviane pursues a magical, rather than physical method of imprisonment for Merlin.

Illustrating his awareness of and resignation to what will happen, Merlin expresses sadness but explains that “iou sui si souspris de uostre amour que a force me conuient faire uostre uolente” [“I am so overcome by love of you that I must do your will”]. The irony here is that because of his love for Viviane, Merlin is already constrained to not leave her if it were against her will, yet she cannot trust the devotion of his love (divinely destined as it may be) as sufficient enough to ensure Merlin’s continued presence. Only the use of magic to facilitate the permanence of her relationship with Merlin can satisfy her anxieties over keeping him. Nevertheless, she responds positively to his avowal of his love for her; she shows physical affection through a hug and confirms their mutual affections. She said, “que bien doit il estre siens. Des que elle est sieue” [“that he had to belong to her, for she was his”]. Reinforcing her own love for him, she goes on to remind him of the sacrifices she has made because of her love for him and how he is ever-present in her mind. She concludes with the question to Merlin, “Et des que ie uous aim. et uous mames. nest il dont bien drois que vous fachies mes volentes. et iou les vostres” [“and since I love you and you love me, isn’t it right that you should do my will and I yours?”], which he answers in the affirmative. This agreement of consensual, reciprocal fulfillment of the other’s will, negates any violation of the lovers’ free will because each has agreed to do as the other

541 This type of anxiety over the loss of a lover and the use of magic to remedy it can also be seen in Morgan’s Valley of False Lovers, discussed in the previous chapter and later in this chapter.
desires. However, this agreement is made within the framework of their already existing relationship and its corresponding oath that they entered when Merlin first met Viviane and taught her magic, and thus Merlin, by his first oath—to ask nothing more than Viviane’s love—cannot make any further requests of his will from Viviane.

Merlin asks for and receives Viviane request: “veul que vous meseignies afaire vn biau lieu bien conuenable. que iou puisse fermer par art si fort quil ne puist estre desfair. & serons illec moi & vous quant il nous plaira en ioie et en deduit” [“for you to teach me how to make a very beautiful, proper place that I can make so strong with magic that it cannot be undone. And we’ll stay there, you and I, in joy and delight whenever we wish”]. Merlin, bound both by divine mandate and by his own oath to Viviane to do as she desires, immediately agrees. The request itself reveals Viviane’s inner thoughts: she desires both the knowledge of magic that would allow her to construct such a place, and to reside in it with Merlin, suggesting she is motivated by her love of him and perhaps, too, by her fear of losing him. In describing her vision for this place, Viviane switches to first-person plural pronouns, making the experience a shared one between herself and Merlin. They are both to “serons illec” [“stay there”] and be happy and surrounded in pleasantness “quant il nous plaira” [“whenever we wish”]. As idyllic and romantic as this depiction sounds, it belies the inequality built into both the intent and execution of this magical space. The second phrase, “quant il nous plaira” [“whenever we wish”], gives the impression that Merlin may come and

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544 Merlin’s free will in entering this agreement may perhaps be questioned considering his role in Diana’s promise to Viviane’s father deems him apparently unable to do anything but Viviane’s will; however, the destiny that has been placed upon Merlin is a result of divine will and is distinct from although connected to the love facilitating magic in this episode.

go as he desires and that the two lovers would each get choice in the matter, yet the entire purpose of the space is to prevent Merlin from being able to “get away” from Viviane. The space is first imagined as a containment facility, and this is revealed in Viviane’s first, and perhaps most honest, description of what she wants—a place she “might keep a man imprisoned.” Viviane wants to control Merlin and all access to him; this is clarified when he offers to make such a place for her, and she rejects his offer, saying “iou ne veul mie que vous le fachies. mais vous le menseigneries a faire. & iou le ferai…adont plus a ma uolente” [“I don’t want you to do it, but you will teach me how to do it and I’ll do it…more to my liking”]. Viviane not only wants the space created, but also wants total knowledge of and control over its creation and management, establishing her as the only avenue through which Merlin can seek release.

After learning how from Merlin Viviane crafts his prison, sometime later, while he is asleep on her lap in a lovely spot within the Forest of Broceliande. Viviane “si commencha sez enchantemens” [“began to cast her spells”] making a beautiful and comfortable prison for Merlin. The result of her work is stunning, and Merlin, upon waking finds himself “en la plus bele tour del monde. et se trouua couchie en la plus bele couche ou il eust onques geu” [“in the most beautiful tower in the world, and he found himself lying in the most beautiful

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546 This is somewhat of a reversal of the common set-up in medieval romances of a man jealously imprisoning his love (often his wife) in order to keep her completely to himself. Whereas those narratives often begin with this imprisonment and tell of the lady’s escape or circumnavigation of her prison’s isolation with a new lover, Merlin’s imprisonment is the ending of his narrative and the final result of his love.
bed he had ever lain in”]. Despite her imprisonment of Merlin, Viviane is careful to make the prison comfortable and beautiful—it is a space crafted out of her love and to facilitate her love, not a punishment for Merlin. “Lestoire de Merlin” offers no details about the magic which Viviane employs beyond a description of its results, other texts offer some specifics though, articulating more clearly the mechanics of the magic. The plural form of “enchantmens” in the French suggests that multiple layers of magic were involved in creating the space, presumably at least two in order to both create the illusion of the castle and to constrain Merlin within it. The beauty of Merlin’s prison stands in stark contrast with Nyneve’s imprisonment of him in Le Morte Darthur when she traps him inside a stone tomb. Whereas Nyneve used her magic to disrupt Merlin’s love for her and protect herself, Viviane is applying magic to benefit her relationship with Merlin and facilitate their continuance of their love. Although seemingly not upset—perhaps his long knowledge that this would occur helped prepare him—Merlin does appeal to Viviane that “deceu maues se vous ne demoures auec moi quar nus a pooir fors vous de ceste tour desfaire” [“you have indeed tricked me if you do not stay with me, for no one but you has the power to undo this tower”]. This again appears to be a point which Malory’s version adapts; in Le Morte Darthur Nyneve is similarly positioned as the only person with the power to free Merlin from his captivity.

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550 This form of the beautiful and comfortable prison is also reflected in Morgan’s kidnapping of Lancelot, discussed later in this chapter.
551 See Berthelot, “From Niniane to Nimüe,” 95 for discussion of the Vulgate Suite and its depiction of Niniane employing a magic circle to contain Merlin and her creation of a “prison of air” that harkens back to fairy realm imagery because of its hawthorn tree entrance.
553 Malory, who was writing Le Morte Darthur, while imprisoned for treason during the War of the Roses, intensifies the negative elements of the physical imprisonment in his version of
However, Viviane, acting out of love and not hatred, does not leave Merlin alone; instead she fulfills her promise to visit him frequently so they can be together. Overall, Merlin appears content, or at least resigned, to his situation, and his love for Viviane makes it a marginally positive experience for him; yet, for all his pleasure with Viviane, Merlin lacks the same freedom she enjoys. Movement occurs only at the desire of Viviane, and Merlin’s will, independent of Viviane’s desires, is rendered irrelevant.

The magic used, although imprisoning Merlin, is not malevolent. Viviane’s love for Merlin does not wane once she has him captive and she continues to do the one thing that makes him happy—be with him. This magic facilitates their love by creating a space in which they can be together without any interruption of the outside world and its pressures, which for Merlin would likely have been extensive considering the role he, with his powers, play in Arthurian politics. Merlin’s prophecy of this outcome is shown to be highly accurate, with the wolf (Viviane) binding the lion (Merlin) in a manner that does not rely on physical means—“ne seront de fer ne de fust ne dargent ne dor ne de plon” [“iron or wood or silver or gold or lead”]—and doing so in a way that is so constrictive that “loies…mouoir ne se porra” [“the lion…cannot move”].

Merlin’s own foretelling of his entrapment has been fulfilled.

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events. It is not unreasonable to attribute this alteration in the text’s approach to imprisonment as a reflection of Malory’s own experiences and attitudes towards his situation. His early imprisonment of Merlin in the narrative combined with his editorial elimination of Merlin’s conception narrative shifts the focus more onto the political goings on of the Arthurian court and minimizing the magical ones. These editorial choices, along with others that de-emphasize Lancelot’s role and elevate Arthur, bolstering the Englishness of the text, as Riddy claims. Riddy, “Contextualizing Le Morte Darthur, 64.

Keeping Men in the Valley of False Lovers

Although the deprivation of Merlin from the Arthurian court is a clearly negative result from Viviane’s love facilitating magic, the text presents no solid condemnation of her actions and does not position her as an antagonist. In contrast, the actions of Morgan le Fay, who similarly utilizes magic to imprison her lover (and others), are represented as far more morally complicated. Although Morgan’s love disrupting magic is condemned in the narrative, features of the Valley of False Lovers that seem to benefit women’s love relationships stem from benevolent motivations, and in this capacity, the magic is presented as morally positive. In the Valley of False Lovers episode of the Vulgate Cycle, Morgan weaves magic over a valley allowing her to detain any false lovers, including her own, who enter. A portion of this episode involves Morgan employing love disrupting magic to interfere in Lancelot’s relationship with Guinevere and to separate her own lover from his mistress (see chapter three), but beyond Morgan’s disruptive goals, there is also a desire to secure happiness in love for herself and for other women. It is this desire that shapes her design of the Valley of False Lovers. The valley functions as a live trap for unfaithful knightly lovers, capturing them when they enter and not allowing their release if they have been unfaithful in any way to their lover.

The first mention of the valley appears in the advice of a vavasor to the Duke of Clarence about which way to proceed on his journey. The man’s advice reveals a bit about the positioning of the Valley of False Lovers, but he remains cagey about the exact nature of the dangers the valley holds. He explains that no one has returned from the valley and that the road the duke follows lead to Morgan’s chapel where it splits into two roads. The road on the right leads to the Dolorous Tower whereas the road on the left leads to the Valley of No
The duke ignores the warning and chooses to enter the valley, although his squire refuses, agreeing only to wait for him a while at the chapel. The squire’s choice proves to be a wise one since the rules governing the magic would have applied the same test of love’s loyalty to the squire as to his master. As the text tells of the duke entering the valley, we see the obstacles he encounters and heartily fails against—two dragons, a river with a thin board as its crossing way, and three armed knights. Later, when Lancelot enters, he too encounters but easily overcomes each of these obstacles. Through the donning of his magical ring (which will be discussed in depth later on), he reveals that the entire adventure is a magical spell. Only Lancelot is able to defeat these magical challenges, and although he performs martial prowess through his battle with them, it is because of his total devotion in love that he is able to do so. This magical spell functions as a test of the knights to determine if they will be trapped (if disloyal in love) or can defeat the magic (if loyal in love). After the duke’s entrance into the valley, the text recounts the valley’s creation narrative and Morgan’s suffering at her lover’s betrayal; this source of the valley speaks to the love disrupting nature of the magic performed, but the depictions of life within the valley expose the simultaneous love facilitating effects of her magic.

The valley itself is a beautiful natural area, nestled in amongst hills and covered in lush grass with a centrally located natural spring. This layout and lushness of nature in the valley is reminiscent of the *hortus conclusus* (enclosed garden) that was often used in

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557 See chapter three for more discussion of the valley’s creation and Morgan’s love disrupting intentions toward her lover and his mistress.
medieval romances as spaces for lovers’ rendezvous. This initial description lays the setting for love, drawing on literary tropes to signal this to its readers. The space, however, literalizes the concept of the hortus conclusus because it is not just an enclosed space that lends privacy for lovers, but it is also enclosed with magic to the point that the knights are unable to escape. The text specifies this containment saying, “Et li vals estoit clos et fermés de merveillose fermeure, kar li murs i estoit fais si soutilz come de l’air” [“The valley was enclosed and sealed in an extraordinary way, in that the walls were as sheer as air”]. The magical walls allow for a transparent container in which the valley exists, inverting the traditional function of the walls in a hortus conclusus, but the ability of the walls to hide away lovers so they can spend time together away from the rest of society is strongly enacted through Morgan’s magic. The valley’s comforts demonstrate that it is a space for lovers to enjoy, not for the knights to be punished. Morgan’s love disrupting magic, focused on punishment was reserved for the lady with whom her lover betrayed her; here in the valley, the magic is love facilitating and aimed at fostering her relationship with her lover and doing the same for other ladies whose knights had been unfaithful to them (i.e., all two hundred and fifty four knights who entered the valley in the two-decade duration of its existence before Lancelot arrives). Although trapped there, the knights in the valley seem to want for little,

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living “molt beles maisons” [“in very handsome houses”] and keeping up with their spiritual duties using a chapel positioned “tres en l’entrée de la clousture” [“just at the entry of the enclosed valley”].

The chapel in which the priest lives and preaches, a liminal space where the knights of the valley “il ooient tos les jors messe” [“heard Mass every day”], is actually just outside of the magical border. The text does not extrapolate on this spatial oddity except to note “kar issi l’avoit establi Morgue meesmes” [“that is how Morgan herself planned it”]. Whether this design suggests a non-Christian aspect to Morgan’s magic is unclear, but the deliberate exclusion of the priest from the valley is interesting. The official theological stance was the Christian practice (prayers, penance, fasting, etc.) could overcome magic. The rules of Morgan’s magic should not have placed a test upon the priest since he is neither a knight nor a squire, and as a clergyman exists within the religious sector of society rather than the courtly ranks, but perhaps the author of the text did not wish to delve into the complicated tensions between the chastity expected of religious men and the realities of human bodily and emotional natures. The presence of this chapel offers another luxury to

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564 The canonical rules around clerical chastity were contentious from their first appearance and addressed frequently throughout Lateran Council meetings. The specific variations of what type of marriages were or were not allowed differ depending on the time, but the general principle of chastity as the ideal for clergy is fairly consistent throughout canonical mandates. Although the priest in this text is not described in any detail, leaving it unclear if he is married, the complication of having a clergyman’s chastity (emotional or physical) under magical scrutiny could raise some uncomfortable issues for the author to have to deal
the knights within the valley, ensuring that their spiritual welfare need not suffer because of their physical location.

Despite the comforts afforded within the valley, the reactions of the knights to their captivity seems to vary widely: “Mais assés i avoit de tiels chevaliers qui molt esoient a aise et de tiels i avoit qui trop avoient anui” [“there were many knights who were very much at ease there, and there were also those who suffered greatly”].565 The happiness of the knights seems to be connected to the social relationships they are able to maintain while in the valley: “kar que s’amie pooit laiens amener, si remanoit avec lui, ou escuier s’il l’eust” [“whoever could bring his lover in with him, kept her, or kept his squire if he had one”].566 Squires are subject to the same test of faithfulness in love as the knights; however, since squires could be quite young in age, a caveat existed that allowed them to depart had they never yet loved. The ladies who remain with their knightly lovers do so completely willingly though and can come and go from the valley as they please, but the men must remain stationary, awaiting their lover’s return. In this way, Morgan’s magic is flipping the script on the traditional courtly love roles in which the knights frequently arrive and depart from the ladies while engaging in chivalric life and earning martial renown. The text does not conceal the suffering that some knights in the valley endure despite the comforts it offers them and many are said to have died as “que del grant duel qu’il avoient que de la longue prison que d’autre malage” [“the outcome of great sorrow, some from long imprisonment, some from another

with. Having the priest remain outside the magical border circumnavigates any need to more closely examine whether the priest has loved and, if so, was faithful to his lady.

affliction”). Although the valley is a shelter for lovers, it does not seem to prevent genuine emotion and its effects upon its inhabitants. Although it is implied that the sorrow of some knights is from loneliness, due to being captive without the presence of a lady or a squire, the text does not diminish the joy that many find there and tells that “avoir molt des uns et des autres qui por l’amor de lor seignor estoient laiens entré” [“many of both kinds {ladies and squires} who came and stayed because of love for their masters”].

The narrator wraps up his description of the Valley of No Return saying, “Et la prisons de laiens estoit quques plus legiere que l’en ne cuidoit, kar il avoient de boivre et de mengier quanques ill or estoit mestiers a lor devise et si avoient deduit de pres et de tables et d’eschés et dances et karoles tote jor et deduis de vieles et de harpes et d’authres estrumens” [“the prison was much more pleasant than generally thought, for there was no lack of food and drink, and there were outdoor sports and backgammon and chess; there were dances and carols all day long and the delights of fiddles and harps and other instruments”]. The narrator chooses to end his description by telling the readers that the valley did not deserve its bad reputation and reminding us of all the pleasures the valley offered. Like the valley’s echoes of a hortus conclusus, the specific activities recounted in this passage hold cultural connections to courtly love and activities in which lovers would have happily engaged, reminding us of the benefits to romances that the valley offers.

The ladies who love the trapped knights seem to value the service the valley offers—keeping their knights present and loyal. After Lancelot arrives and breaks the magical enchantment over the valley by having never been unfaithful to his lady in action or thought, the reactions of various women demonstrate their distress at Lancelot’s “rescue.” Lancelot’s achievement of breaking the enchantment is a victory amongst the knights and a cruelty to the women; it is only through his own purity of love that he is successful. Unlike the other knights who were trapped within the valley, Lancelot needs no physical containment to remain loyal to his lady. It is unsurprising that he does not seem to fully grasp or empathize with the suffering his victory brings upon the ladies whose knights are now free to leave them once more. Lancelot fails to make a good first impression on the ladies of the valley, first flipping over the bed on which Morgan le Fay is sleeping, in his pursuit of a knight and then killing and bringing the head of the same knight back to Morgan’s tent where the deceased knight’s lover, distraught, attacks Lancelot.

A thin thread of humor is woven into the episode through the visualization of a young lady viciously attacking Lancelot, the knight of such great renown. The scene, however, demonstrates the realities that the women in chivalric romances often seem to face—having their lover killed by another knight in battles that serve only to increase one’s chivalric reputation and not to advance any entities position in actual war. The knight was fleeing from Lancelot, and the entire chase and killing take place within the valley, a space which has been designed to facilitate the romantic elements of chivalry and, resultantly, eliminate the

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570 This episode takes place prior to the love inducing magic episode between Lancelot and Elaine, which was discussed in chapter two.
martial ones; Lancelot, however, brings violence into what is intended as a space for lovers. This interaction presents a microcosm of the larger effects Lancelot’s presence in the valley enacts—because he breaks the enchantment that keeps the knights there, they are rendered free to leave and rejoin society, including engaging in chivalric life which involves dangerous martial activities. The women of the valley are once again at risk of losing their lover, both in a physical and emotional sense, to his chivalric pursuits, and with the knights no longer confined within the valley with their ladies, the same temptations of disloyalty in love are reintroduced to the knights. Lancelot may be a hero to the knights and squires trapped in the valley, but he is no friend to its ladies.

The ladies’ appalled reactions to Lancelot’s success lays bare the positive effects the valley was producing and contribute to a case for the moral acceptability of the magic through which it was created. Each of their criticisms of Lancelot offers additional evidence in support for the magic he eliminated. A brief but heated exchange between the ladies of the valley and Lancelot illustrates the gendered differences in how love is understood within chivalric framework; Lancelot, arguably the most notable lover in the Arthurian canon, seems to have no real sense of how love works when the relationship is realized rather than aspirational. Although he and Guinevere have their moments together, no permanent, public relationship is viable between them, so they are reduced to longing and stolen moments; however, the women in the valley have been able to secure permanent relationships with their knights with the magical facilitation that the space offers by keeping the knights there. The valley is a gynocentric place, designed and controlled by a woman and benefiting other

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572 There are, however, public rumors about their affair, including some that accuse Guinevere of using love magic to secure Lancelot’s fidelity. These rumors, and Lancelot’s response, are discussed later in this chapter.
women. Lancelot, through his destruction of the valley’s magic is not only shattering the magical walls, but the relationships that the women and men have been able to build in a space that shifts the chivalric knightly focus from martial engagement to romance.

The women impugn Lancelot’s character, lodging complaints about his unwelcome behaviors. The lady whose lover Lancelot has slain condemns his character and actions exclaiming, “kar je ne voldroie pas vivre aprè la riens que je onques plus amai, que vos avés ocis comme desloials que vos estes” [“I don’t want to live on after the creature I loved most in life, whom you killed like the faithless scoundrel you are!”] Lancelot, in his pursuit of own chivalric and martial reputation has stolen away love from the lady. Despite her understandable anger toward him, Lancelot shows no sympathy for the emotional pain she is suffering. Although he refrains from harming her when she attacks him, he does so because she is a woman, not because he has any empathy for her distress. After hearing her charges, Lancelot makes no moves to comfort her or even acknowledge the validity of her emotions and reactions; instead, he criticizes the knight he killed as unworthy of the love of any nulu vaillans damoisele” [“worthy young lady”].

The gendered differences in how the valley’s magic is perceived manifest themselves in the varying reactions to the news of the spell being broken and the magical walls dissipated. A young man delivers the news to Morgan, and she learns that it is the same knight now standing in front of her (Lancelot) who is responsible for breaking her enchantment. Her own lover enters at this point and his praises of Lancelot—“Sire, bien soiés

vos venus comme la flors des chevaliers del monde” [“My lord, you are welcome here as the flower of all knighthood”]—coupled with his display of reverence for Lancelot (falling onto his knees) is a visceral demonstration of his gratitude at having the enchantments broken and his perception of himself and the other knights of the valley as victims being rescued.575 Morgan’s contrasting rebuttal offers the feminine perspective: “In non Dieu…mais il soit li mal venus comme li chevaliers del monde ki plus a mal fet” [“In God’s name, unwelcome…as the greatest wrongdoer of all knighthood!”].576 Morgan counters her lover’s exaltations of Lancelot’s achievement by reframing his breaking of her enchantments and freeing of the knights as a wrongdoing because of its harm to the facilitation of the relationships that have benefited from her magic.

The one woman to protest Morgan’s opinion is the lady who led Lancelot to the valley. Morgan explains to her that the harm he has brought affects the many the women in the valley despite the goodness to his lover that his loyalty in love brings:

S’il est loials d’amors, c’est la grans honors et grant joie a s’amie; mais plus de damage i a d’autre part que li preus et la joie ne monte de s’amie, kar il a sainsi de beles damoiseles et de bien amans ki grant piece ont eus lor amis a lor volontés, por ce k’il ne pooient de sainsi issir. Et puis k’il seront hors, si changera molt lor aferes, kar jamais autresi sovent ne seont mes en lor compaignie. Et neporquant li chevaliers a bien deservi k’il soit honorés et prisiés en totes terres por la grant loialté qui es ten lui, kar s’amie, ki qu’ele soit, se puet vanter qu’ele est la miels amee de totes les autres, ne je ne cuidai ja veoir chevalier a nul jor ki n’eust aucune chose mespris en amor. Et tel com il et orendroit le tiegne tos jors mes Diex.

[If he is faithful in love, that is a great honor and a great joy to his lover, but he has brought more harm to us than joy or well-being to her. There are beautiful and loving young ladies in this place who have been fully satisfied by their lovers, because these knights could go nowhere else. Once they are out, things will change and they won’t ever again spend so much time with their ladies. Still, the knight deserves to be

honored and admired in every land for the great loyalty he has; and his lover, whatever she is, may well boast that she is the best loved woman of all. And I never thought I would ever see a knight who had not done something wrong in love! May God keep him forever just as he is now!\textsuperscript{577}

Morgan respects and even agrees that Lancelot’s virtue in his love is worthy of celebration, noting how wonderful it is for his lover,\textsuperscript{578} but she more strongly laments the results of Lancelot’s intrusion into the magical space that she has created to facilitate the love of others whose knights are not so faithful. The magic of the valley allows for women to enjoy the same type of undivided attention and love from their lovers as Lancelot naturally gives to Guinevere. Morgan is correct in thinking that without the magical assistance of the valley, the women will once again be left behind by their knights and will no longer be “grant piece ont eus lor amis a lor volontés” [“fully satisfied by their lovers”]. The truth of her assumption is first hinted at through the reactions of the knights when “cele nuit fu la joie molt grans que li chevalier firent por l’atente de l’endemain” [“the night was filled with the rejoicing of the knights as they awaited the new day”] when they planned to depart from the valley with whatever weapons and steed they had arrived with.\textsuperscript{579} Both the knights’ celebration of their freedom and Morgan’s promise that they could take their weapons and horses with which they had arrived indicate the impending departure of the knights from the physical space of the valley and from the romantic reprieve it offered from the expectations of martial culture.\textsuperscript{580}

\textsuperscript{578} Morgan does not yet realize Lancelot’s identity or that his lover is Guinevere, but once she does learn this, she takes advantage of the situation andkidnaps him with her magic. This kidnapping is discussed in chapter three for its love disrupting intentions.
The following day, after Lancelot has been separated from the other knights by Morgan’s kidnapping, the text presents one more lady who communicates the distress and harm the loss of the valley’s magic has brought for her love relationship. The lady of the castle where the knights rest was not connected to the men inside the Valley of False Lovers, but her lover’s presence was also tied to the magic of the valley. This is significant because it demonstrates the beneficial impact of Morgan’s love facilitating magic outside of even her intended realm of influence. The lord of the castle, later revealed to be Kay of Estral and a fellow knight of the Round Table, wildly celebrates the destruction of the magic of the valley; “si a tel joie k’il chante et saut et est avis au samblant que il fet que onques med si grant joie n’ot” [“he jumped and sang with joy and, to judge by his behavior, he had never been so overjoyed”]. A lady is present at the castle with him and her reaction is completely opposite of his and much more elaborately described:

Mais la dame qui o lui est n’en a mie si grant joie, ançois est si anguoiissose, tantost com ele l’a oï, qu’ele chiet pasmee dedens la coche et jut si durement en pasmions que l’en cuioit qu’ele fust morte. Lors cort li sires meismes por redrecier la dame; et quant ele fu de pasmison relevee, si dist a tote la premiere parole: <<Ha, Lancelot del Lac, jamais de la prison ou tu es ne te laist Diex issir, et s’il avient que tu en isses, de males armes puisse li tuens cors mori ren la premiere besoigne ou tu vendras! Tu m’as geté de ma grant joie et m’as mise a tos jors mes en uel et en poor de perdre ce dont je ne dotoie hui main rien se la mort non.>>

Longuement se dementa la dame en tel manièrie et se claime sovent chaitive, mais al signor en pren sovetni grant pitié, si la enfôrte al plus k’il puet et dist qu’ele soit autresi seure com se li Vals des Amans ne fust widiés. Mes ce ne puet estre. Tant s’est plainte et enflés e ploror et la vois enroee et quasse de ce qu’ele a tant crié, et la nuit aproche.

[The lady with him, however, felt nothing of his happiness, but was so anguished by what she heard that she fainted forthwith and lay so senseless on the couch that they all though she was dead. The lord himself hurried to make her sit up again; and when she came to, her first words were, “Ah, Lancelot of the Lake! May God never let you

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leave the prison where you are! But if you do leave, may you be killed in battle at the first challenge you face! You have robbed me of my happiness and thrown me into a sorrow that will never end, into the fear of losing what, only this morning, I thought death alone could take from me.

For a long while, the lady raved like that, again and again calling herself a sorry wretch, but her husband took pity on her and comforted her as best he could, saying that she should feel as secure as she would if the Valley of False Lovers had not been opened up. But it was to no avail. She grieved and sobbed until she was weary and worn out, and her eyes were red and swollen from weeping and her voice hoarse and broken from shouting; and night was drawing near.]

While Kay’s reaction, is jubilant and exuberant, the text spends little time describing it; however, the lady’s reaction is far more intense in its physical manifestation, duration, and description within the narrative. Besides her fainting spell, a common trope utilized in medieval romances to demonstrate the intensity of either a man or woman’s emotional distress, the lady swears a lengthy curse against Lancelot that demonstrates her desire for him to suffer physically in punishment for the suffering he has caused her. No comfort from her husband can calm her and her distress continues in ways that are visible to all those present and that take a physical toll and leave physical indications (on her eyes and her voice) that are markers of her grief.

It is somewhat unclear at this point in the narrative why she is so upset since she and her husband do not reside in the valley and thus do not seem to have been benefitting from/constrained by its magic. Her husband’s ineffective assurance that she need not worry suggests that a concrete reason for her sorrow does exist, but the reader only comes to understand this reason when Kay explains to the other knights who are curious about her sorrow (it is at this point that his identity is revealed to them as well). He tells them that it has

been “a good seven years since I last stepped outside my door” and that he had always
fiercely loved the lady, but she had only agreed to be his if he “li creantoie un don de quell
ore qu’ele m’en semondroit a fere” [“promised her one favor whenever she might ask for
it”]. ⁵⁸³ and in doing so made a rash promise like so many other Arthurian knights. After they
slept together, she made him fulfill his promise, demanding him to “me request sor le
sairement que je li avoie fet que je n’issise jamés hors de ceste porte jusqu’a cele ore que li
Vlas a Faus Amans seroit widiés, kar ausi me voloit ele metre en sa prison com je l’avoie mis
en la moie” [“take an oath that I would never step outside my door until such time as the
Valley of False Lovers would be emptied, for she wanted me in her prison, as I had her in
mine”]. ⁵⁸⁴ This reveals that even outside of the valley, its magic was facilitating love
relationships. With the emptying of the valley, Kay’s freedom too has been restored, and so
the lady’s grief is at the impending loss of her lover whom she anticipates leaving her and the
castle. Kay notes that “si ma molt grevé et ennuié ce que tant j’ai demoré…mais totes
grevances sont plus legieres la ou l’en le sueffre volentiers” [“it has weighed very heavily on
me that I have been idle so long…but all burdens are lighter when you have taken them on
willingly”]. ⁵⁸⁵ Kay’s statement acknowledges that his situation was by choice (unlike the
knights in the valley who get stuck there) but still demonstrates his discomfort with being
removed from chivalric pursuits for so long. His longing to engage in chivalric life suggests
that the lady’s worry over being left is justified (as was her need to make him promise to stay

in order to have him remain with her this long), and indeed, despite his earlier attempts to reassure her, when Lancelot shows up and leads a charge against Caradoc who intends to challenge King Arthur, Kay happily rides off with him on this adventure (as do all the knights from the valley). The eagerness with which all these knights leave their ladies to engage in chivalric pursuits demonstrates the necessity of the love facilitating magic for the women’s happiness.

Kay’s lady engages in a debate with her nephew Kehedin, one of the freed knights, about the harm and benefits of the valley’s magic, explaining that “De vostre bien…ne me poise il pas, mais de mon damage, kar je ne serai jamais liee a nul jor, ne onques puis ne fui se lieee non que je vin gen cest chastel premierement” (“I am not sorry about your well-being…but about the harm done to me. I cannot ever again be happy. And never since coming to this castle had I been so happy!”). Her own lamentations of her happiness, however, mean little to the knights, including Kehedin, who minimizes her suffering by weighing it against the harm the knights experienced, deciding, “li damages d’une sole dame ne fet pas a contreprisier al damage de .CC. chevaliers et .LIII.” (“the harm done to one lady can’t outweigh the harm done to two hundred fifty-three knights”). His point might make sense, but the narrative has already shown other women who are in similar positions to this lady and suffering harm as well. Each knight who entered and was trapped within the valley had to have been disloyal to his lover, and so there is the potential of harm to each of those

ladies that is left out of Kehedin’s considerations. The lady’s counterargument, however, focuses not on the shared experiences of the many other women affected by the valley’s dissolution but on the state of knights within the valley and the concept of accountability for their actions. Recognizing the personal responsibility each of the knights have for their actions that caused them to be trapped, she declares, “Des chevaliers…ne fust ce mie trop grant damage, kar il le porchaçoient par lor folies, quant il se sentoient de la malvaistié entechié por quoi il estoient enserré el Val, ne a desloial ne doit nus loials fere secors” [“No great harm would have come to the knights…They sought it through their own foolishness; they felt themselves goaded by knavery, and that’s why they were shut away in the Valley! And it’s not the task of a knight who is true to go rescuing one who is not”].\textsuperscript{589} She voices the fact that the narrator, through his positive portrayal of life within the valley, has already shown the reader—the knights held within it do not undergo any undue suffering and can have a comfortable life there. While the knights take on a victim mentality, she holds them accountable for their behavior, pointing out that they elected to enter the valley since plenty of warnings about it seem to exist (as was shown in the duke of Clarence’s approach to and entrance into the valley), and that it was their bad behavior that got them stuck there. She frames their situation as a simple consequence of their actions and highlights that nothing forces or leads them into the valley or their disloyalty except themselves, thus making them fully responsible for being trapped there.

Despite this logical argument that the text completely develops, the knights laugh at her, dismissing her points and encouraging her to “levee et vient hors avec els” [“rise and

come outside with them”] which she does when she “kar bien voit qu’ele ne puet riens gaaignier el doloser” [“saw that she had nothing to gain by lamenting”]. The men do not want to entertain the idea that they deserved their situation and immediately extinguish the possibility of confronting that notion first through laughter and dismissal and then through pressuring the lady to reengage in courtly life and behaviors, thereby further dismissing her suffering. Recognizing a lost cause, she attempts to do as they suggest because she understands that her grief is not benefitting her desire to keep her lover with her, although even as she partakes in the courtly rituals like dinner, she remains unhappy. Unlike so many romances that ignore, silence, or quickly dispose of women’s emotional states, this narrative episode not only gives vivid voice and page space to the lady’s feelings and opinions, it also allows her to continue feeling her genuine emotions even after rejoining the rest of the court and acknowledges her experience as different than the rest of the courtiers’ experiences: “Molt est grans la joie que tuit demainent fors sol la dame” [“Apart from her, everyone was having a very good time”].

The author demonstrates a willingness to engage with the moral complexity of what Lancelot has brought about through his freeing of the knights from the valley; the text recognizes the positive nature of the knights’ freedom, but also meaningfully acknowledges the harms that this causes their ladies. The personal voices and stories of specific women that appear, not just once as a token but multiple times, reinforce the personal nature of the loss they are experiencing. Even the use of the valley’s title as Valley of False Lovers instead of

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Valley of No Return emphasizes the men’s unfaithful behavior over their experience.\textsuperscript{592} All this shapes the reader’s perspective by suggesting and valuing that Morgan’s magical facilitation of love through her Valley of False Lovers serves a positive function for the women of the narrative.

The simultaneous disruption and facilitation of love through Morgan’s magic is also evidenced through Morgan’s consistent compassion for the women in the narrative (except Guinevere), even as she attempts to interfere with Lancelot and Guinevere’s relationship. This care for other women demonstrates that her motives in magically facilitating love are positive, allowing for the valley to have morally positive representations in the text, even as it acknowledges the disadvantages knights suffer by being trapped there. Besides the women in the text who demonstrate the benefit to them that the valley’s magic was offering, Morgan’s own, direct demonstration of concern for women’s emotions illustrates her intent to support women’s needs in love. As Morgan is kidnapping Lancelot after his liberation of the valley’s prisoners, the maiden who had accompanied Lancelot to the valley witnesses Morgan’s act. The maiden later recounts the experience to Sir Yvain, the duke of Clarence,

\textsuperscript{592} Although the valley is frequently referred to simply as the Valley, an abbreviated version of its full title(s), the full name the Valley of No Return is used three times, all prior to its liberation, two of which are in the description telling its two names and telling why it has each name. The name the Valley of False Lovers is also found three times prior to its liberation, with two of those times occurring directly alongside the Valley of No Return in the valley’s description of its names and why it holds them. However, in the episode during which Lancelot enters and frees the valley, neither of the full titles are used, only the abbreviated moniker the Valley. After Lancelot’s breaking of the valley’s magic though, only the title the Valley of False Lovers is applied (six times). This change in how the space is referenced could be because the valley is no longer a place of “No Return” since the spell has been broken, but the knights who were there remain “False Lovers.” Regardless, the text’s choice of one title over another emphasizes the romantic shortcomings of the knights over their experience of being trapped. The valley is also once referred to as the Dolorous Valley, although whether this is intended as a third name for the area or just as a description of the valley is unclear. See Lacy and Rosenberg, “Lancelot, Part, III,” \textit{Lancelot-Grail}, 2:312, n. 2.
and a local lord at whose house they are staying. Her memory of Lancelot’s kidnapping, her own reaction, and Morgan response serve as further evidence that Morgan is concerned for the wellbeing of women in love (with the notable exception of Guinevere whom Morgan hates). The maiden recalls,

Il est voir que Morgue l’en fist anuit porter par traïson, et je me gisoie avec une des puces; et si tost com je m’en aperçui, si sailli emprés et de tant m’avint il bien que je trovai appareillié mon palefroi, si montai sus isnelement et corui tant après que il fu grans jors. Lors m’aperçut Morgue, si vit que je faisoie trop grant duel, et je sai bien que pities l’en prist, et ele s’acosta delés moi et me dis ten l’oreille molt dolcement: ‘<Belé dolce amie, estes vos riena celchevalier, par la foi que vos li devés?>’ Et je li dis: ‘<Certes naie, mais je l’amænæ enc el Val por les proescæ que je li ai veues fere, si me poise que je voi k’il li avient ne mal ne honte.>’ Lors li contai ce que je et vos li avoins veu fere a Escalon le Tenebros; et quant ele l’oï, si se commença a seignior et me dist: ‘<M’aït Diex, damoisele, voirement poës dire k’il n’est chevaliers plus que lui, mes de tant vos asseur k’il metra fin en l’afere mon siegnor Gauvain; et n’aiés pas poor de lui, kar je vos creant loiaument k’il n’avra mal ne que mes cors…Lors m’acola molt dolcement et me proia tant de retornur que je retornai. 

[The truth is, Morgan had him carried off by treachery last night, while I was in bed with one of her maidens. As soon as I understood what was happening, I jumped up and, luckily, found my horse saddles; I mounted right away and rushed after them until broad daylight. Then Morgan noticed me and saw that I was extremely unhappy. Pity, I know, took hold of her, and she rode up beside me and whispered into my ear, ‘Honestly, my dear friend, are you something to the knight over there?’ And I answered, ‘No, not at all, but I took him to the Valley because of the feats of arms that I had seen him perform, and it troubles me to see him face harm and shame.’ Then I recounted what you and I had seen him do at Escalon the Dark; and when she had heard it, she crossed herself and said, ‘As God is my witness, you lady, you have every right to say there is no greater knight than he; and I assure you that he will bring the search for Sir Gawain to a happy end. Don’t be afraid for him; I give you my word that he will come to no more harm than I…Then she gently embraced me and so begged me to go back that I did.]

Even as Morgan is carrying out her vengeance against Guinevere, she shows compassion for the young lady who she thinks may feel love for Lancelot. This is a humanizing moment for

Morgan’s character and supports the idea that her Valley of False Lovers was intended to benefit women (in addition to herself) and protect them from losing their lovers.

When Morgan witnesses the distress of the lady at the sight of Lancelot being carried off, Morgan feels pity and chooses to speak with her. Morgan’s question to the lady whether she [the lady] means something to Lancelot seeks information that could disrupt Morgan’s intentions to harm Guinevere. If the lady answered in the affirmative, then Morgan would lose Lancelot as a tool to harm Guinevere. Rather than recklessly pursuing her plans though, Morgan first checks with the lady to rule out the possibility that it is this maiden who is involved with Lancelot. The question is asked quietly, in a whisper, which ensures discreetness and shows one more way in which Morgan is protecting this maiden. Even after Morgan hears the lady’s answer, she takes care to reassure the lady of Lancelot’s safety. The exchange ends with a physical display of comfort, reinforcing Morgan’s desire to avoid replicating the trauma she herself has experienced as a lover.\textsuperscript{594} This kidnapping, following Lancelot’s liberation of the Valley of False Lovers, is only the first of several times Morgan abducts and imprisoned Lancelot in both the \textit{Vulgate Cycle} and in Malory’s \textit{Le Morte Darthur}. Her intentions for each kidnapping vary; sometimes she is focused on disrupting the love between Lancelot and Guinevere (as was discussed in the previous chapter) and sometimes she employs her magic in an effort to gain Lancelot’s love for herself; often both intentions come into play during a single instance of kidnapping as a result of Morgan’s dual

\textsuperscript{594} Considering Morgan’s own experiences having her lovers ripped from her in various ways, and women playing a role in that pain—Guinevere in breaking up Guyamor and Morgan and the rare beauty with whom Morgan’s more recent lover cheated—it is perhaps unsurprising that Morgan takes care to make sure she herself is not causing undue suffering to another woman through her kidnapping of Lancelot (save the intended suffering of Guinevere).
desires to have Lancelot’s love and to destroy Guinevere, but one or the other of her motives is usually more prominent.

Morgan’s Lackluster Wooing of Lancelot

In a later Vulgate Cycle kidnapping, Morgan le Fay tries and fails to use love facilitating magic to get Lancelot to love her. This episode illustrates how her selfish motivations in this instance of love facilitating magic lead to an implicit narratorial condemnation of its application. At this point in the Vulgate Cycle, Lancelot is no stranger to women aggressively pursuing his affections, and he has already been magically tricked into being intimate with Elaine. Morgan le Fay takes an even more proactive approach in her attempt though and sets twelve maidens the task of actively searching for Lancelot for the purpose of bringing him to her court through the deception that adventures await. In the scene in which one of the maidens does locate Lancelot, she frames her quest negatively and tells Lancelot that “Que vos soiez li tres bien venuz!” (“you released me from the greatest suffering any woman ever endured: I had set off to find you and would never have stopped my wanderings until I did”). Her apparent relief at finding Lancelot, coupled with her comment that her search would have lasted forever until she found him, suggests some compulsion, perhaps magical considering that Morgan is the one who set the maiden’s task. When she brings him to Morgan’s court, at Morgan’s instruction, the maiden removes Lancelot’s armor and serves him dinner. It is toward the end of this meal that Lancelot is, once again, tricked into drinking a magical potion.

In a process reminiscent of what led to Lancelot sleeping with Elaine, Morgan le Fay prepares the potion, but has it given to Lancelot through the hands of the maiden with whom he arrived.\footnote{In the Lancelot and Elaine episode, the ancient lady Brisane prepares the potion but gives it to one of the handmaidens to serve to Lancelot. In this episode, there is a clearer logical reason for this indirect administration of the potion—Lancelot and Morgan have met previously, and Lancelot is well-aware to be cautious around the deceitful Morgan le Fay. Micha, ed., \textit{Lancelot, V: LXXXVI}, 48; Lacy and Kibler, “Lancelot, Part V,” \textit{Lancelot-Grail}, 3:217.} Morgan instructs the maiden: “Et quant il avra Presque mengié, veez ci une poison que je ai por li faité que vos il donrez a boivre, et il la santira douce, si la buvra volentiers et quant il en avra assez beu, si em poorons fair a nostre volenté” [“When he is nearly finished, here is a potion I’ve concocted you’ll give him to drink. He’ll find it sweet and drink it gladly, and once he has drunk it we can do with him as we like”].\footnote{Micha, ed., \textit{Lancelot, V: LXXXVI}, 51; Lacy and Kibler, “Lancelot, Part V,” \textit{Lancelot-Grail}, 3:218.} Morgan’s choice of the plural first-person in discussing the results of the potion demonstrates that she views the maiden to be a conspirator in this plan, yet at a later point, when questioned as to why she has betrayed him and led him into prison, the maiden tells Lancelot that “il le me couvenoit a faire ou autrement je fusse morte” [“I had to do it or be killed”].\footnote{The text simply says that Morgan “si avoit enviées .XII. damoiseles par les estranges terres por querre Lancelot tant qu’eles l’eussent trouvè et avoit dit qu’eles l’anmenassent en leu d’aventures acheiver” [“had sent twelve maidens out through distant lands in quest of Lancelot, telling them when they found him to bring him back with them on the pretense of accomplishing adventures”] Micha, ed., \textit{Lancelot, V: LXXXVI}, 47; Lacy and Kibler, “Lancelot, Part V,” \textit{Lancelot-Grail}, 3:217. Although this reveals Morgan’s authority over twelve women, it lacks any evidence of a death threat used as motivation for the maiden’s searching.} The nuanced truth of this statement is unclear, as the text never tells of or implies Morgan le Fay forcing or threatening the twelve maidens into helping bring Lancelot to her castle.\footnote{Micha, ed., \textit{Lancelot, V: LXXXVI}, 47; Lacy and Kibler, “Lancelot, Part V,” \textit{Lancelot-Grail}, 3:217.} Morgan’s inclusion of the maiden in her explanation of what the potion will allow them to do to
Lancelot (whatever they like) suggests that Morgan herself believes the maiden to be willingly participating in the scheme. This “guilty-by-association” model can be seen in Lancelot’s condemnation of all four queens, who previously kidnapped him, as sorceresses. Furthermore, after hearing Morgan’s plan with the potion, the maiden “cele li otroie, qui bien panse que ainsi porra il bien estre deceuz” [“agreed to this plan, thinking this was just the way to trick him”]. This agreement and independent thought revealed to the reader supports the maiden’s active and willing role in the scheme. There is no indication she is acting against her desires or even with any doubt but, instead, seems eager to participate, actively considering if the method prepared by Morgan would be effective. The lack of clarity as to her personal motivations for taking part in the scheme does not prevent Lancelot from accusing her of betrayal. Lancelot, referring only to her trick to bring him there, does not understand the depth of that betrayal until he escapes and discovers the identity of his captor.

Nonetheless, the maiden plays a significant role in the deception that entraps Lancelot and seems to be assumed, by Morgan, to want or at least have a right, to partake in the spoils of the plot by being able to “do with him [Lancelot] what we like.” This suggestion, which carries overtures of physical, sexual assault, seems to align with Hahn’s assertion that acceptable femininity fits into the “masculine world of chivalry,” but that at “the other extreme [is]...Morgain’s world, where men are reduced to the level of sexual slaves, always at the whim of the possessive and disappointed jailor, who yearns for men’s hearts, but must

600 See discussion in “Morgan and the Queens’ Cooperative Kidnapping” section of chapter three.
make do with their bodies.”  

I concede that Morgan is a figure of unfulfilled romantic and sexual desire, one who wants love and, being unable to secure it, takes physical possession (although not sexual) of the men’s bodies. However, I reject the claim that Morgan sees the men as nothing more than “sexual slaves,” and her behavior and the narrator’s own commentary are examples of her love for these men (such as Lancelot in this episode). Her care toward Lancelot demonstrates that her interest in him is as much or more romantic than it is sexual.

Despite locking him away securely within her castle, Morgan treats Lancelot as an honored guest, providing him with elegant furnishings and placing him in a spacious room that was “chamber fort et grant et large qui avoit bien .X. toises de lé et .XX. de lonc et s ii avoit fenestres de fer qui ouvroient en un jardin; s ii fait faire une couche aussi com se li rois Artus i deust gesir” [“a wide, high, and well-fortified room, which was a good sixty feet wide by a hundred twenty long, with iron-barred windows that opened on a garden. She had a bed set up as if it were for King Arthur himself”].  

Although Lancelot is in a prison, the description of his prison—7,200 square feet of room, a garden view, and a bed fit for a king, literally—sounds more like something out of a modern day luxury vacation brochure. The generous nature of his prison accommodations reflects Morgan’s intentions—she is trying to gain his affections, not punish or harm him; nonetheless, a prison it remains and the physical fortifications of the space, such as the iron-barred windows, combined with the magical

604 For reference, 7,200 square foot modern day homes are generally two-story, 5-6 bedroom, and 5 bath mansions.
muddling of Lancelot’s mind, allow Morgan to keep Lancelot there willingly for the first month and unwillingly after that.

Like the accommodations, Morgan’s magical method of constraining Lancelot, a potion, is also sensually and aesthetically pleasing to Lancelot: “le troeve bonne et douce, si la but volentiers conme cil qui ne set qu’il soit si dolereusement deceuz com il est” [“He found it sweet and good and drank it gladly, for he had no idea he had been so cruelly deceived”].\textsuperscript{605} The adjectives used to depict the qualities of the potion are similar to those describing the last love potion Lancelot drank—administered so he would copulate with Elaine; in both episodes, Lancelot “found [it]/[the potion] sweet and good.”\textsuperscript{606} The potion’s flavor is so pleasing that he drinks it happily, similarly to his eagerness for it in the Elaine episode when he asks for more. Despite the similar properties the two potions seem to possess, the narrative commentary about the two is in stark contrast. In the divinely excused episode of love inducing magic with Elaine, the potion is described positively (in appearance and taste) only, yet in this episode the narrator connects the comment about the cruel deception of Lancelot in the same sentence about Lancelot’s potion consumption.

The potion depletes Lancelot’s strength, and he quickly goes to sleep, allowing Morgan to work more magic to addle Lancelot’s mind. Once Lancelot is sound asleep (an apparent result of the potion), Morgan exits her room “prant une boiste plainne de poudre qu’ele avoit fait por Lancelot, si vint a lui la ou il gisoit si dormiz que a poinne le poïst l’an esvillier. Ele aemplist de poudre tuel d’argent et le mesto u nes Lancelot et il soufle el


cerveil” [“taking a box full of powder she had prepared for Lancelot and came to where he was lying so soundly asleep, he could not be roused. She filled a silver straw with the powder, placed it in Lancelot’s nostril, and whiffed it into his brain”]. No specific information about what the powder is or how it is created is given, but it is clearly a predesigned substance meant to alter Lancelot in some way. Morgan acts through magic to manipulate Lancelot, first through a potion that puts him to sleep and deprives him of his strength and then through this forcible administration of a magical powder. Lancelot immediately reacts to snorting the powder:

> et il s’estant maintenant de l’angoisse qu’il a. Mais tant est endormiz por le boivre qu’il ot beu que a poinnes se pooit il esvillier. Et quant Morgue ot ce fait, si dist a cele qui o lui estoit que or s’est ele bien vengie de lui, <<car je cuit vraiment que il ne revandra jamés en son bon sans tant com la force de ceste poudre li soit el cervel.>>

[He stiffened from the pain he felt, but was so overcome by the brew he had drunk that nothing could awaken him. After Morgan had done this, she said to the maiden with her that now she had avenged herself well, ‘for truly believe he’ll never return to his good senses as long as this powder is working in his brain.’]

The implied effect of the potion is some type of confusion or manipulation of Lancelot’s senses, and in fact, he remains in a confused state, part deception and part magically induced for a month before learning the truth of his imprisonment.

Upon awakening the morning after his potion and powder consumptions, Lancelot has no strength to leave his bed and “si se sant maladies et deshaitiez si qu’il li est avis que la maison tomoie tout entor lui” [“he felt sick and uncomfortable, and though that the house

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was spinning around him”]. After confirming his state by peeking through one of the barred windows, Morgan again coordinates her plot with the assisting maiden, telling her, “Par mon chief, noz poisons sont bien prises, je ne cuit que Lanceloz ait mais pooir de soi lever. Or alez a lui et li demandez comment il est et gardez vos bien que vos ne li dioiz qu’il soit em prison, car je cuit que s’il le savoir, il morroit de duel” [“By my head, our potion is doing the trick: I don’t think Lancelot has strength enough to rise. Go to him and ask how he feels, but be careful not to tell him he’s in prison, because if he realized it, I think he would die of sorrow”]. Morgan’s intentions to facilitate a love match between her and Lancelot are supported in her instructions as well, as she clearly does not want to cause Lancelot’s death, but instead detain him for her own purposes. Lancelot remains ill at the castle for a month before realizing he is actually being held prisoner after asking the maiden when she would take him to the great adventures she had promised. It is then that she explains “de l’oisir est il noianz, car il le couvient remanoir em prison” [“there was no way out, for he must remain a prisoner there”] and claims that she “il le me couvenoit a faire ou autrement je fusse morte” [“had to do it or be killed”]. After this conversation, the text says Lancelot “si demore laienz des le septembre dusqu’au Noël,” [“stayed there from September until Christmas”], this indicates that Lancelot spends a month unknowingly in the prison and

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then about four months aware of his situation. After the Christmas season, Lancelot acquires painting materials through his barred windows from a man painting a mural outside.

Equipped with supplies, Lancelot paints the narrative of his life, with a special emphasis on meeting and loving Guinevere, whose face, once painted, he can admire each day. Lancelot proves to be as talented an artist as he is a knight and even Morgan admires his skill when she peers into his room while he sleeps. Morgan’s habit reveals her care for Lancelot as she checks on him nightly, and is attributed by the narrator to her love for him:

A mienuit vint Morgue laienz comne cele qui toutes les nuiz i venoit, si tost com il estoit endormiz, car ele l’amoit tant conme fame pooit plus amer home pour la grant biauté de lui, si est moult dolente qu’il ne la voloit amer, car ele nel tenoit mie em prison por haïne, mes vaintre le cuidoit par anui, si l’an avoir maintes foiz proié; mais il ne l’an voloit oïr.

[Morgan came there at midnight, as she did each night as soon as he was asleep, for she loved him as much as a woman could love a man for his great beauty; and she was very sad that he refused to love her, because she did not hold him in prison out of hatred, but hoped to vanquish him through persistence. She had often pleaded with him, but he refused to listen.]

Morgan’s intent in kidnapping Lancelot is laid out by the narrator—she is trying to wear him down and gain his love. In stark contrast to her love disrupting magic, this time, Morgan is wielding her magic in an attempt to facilitate love between Lancelot and herself. She does not, however, attempt to induce him to love her; instead, she employs her magic to create a situation she hopes will be conducive to naturally gaining his love, and she capitalizes on the duration of his magical imprisonment to use the non-magical method of pleading to try to

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613 Hahn, “Feminine Sexuality,” 496-97, articulates this trope of the lady watching her desired lover sleep and asserts that “female desire most often is kindled and sustained when men are in a state of vulnerability, either asleep in bed or forced to lie in bed because of wounds or illness.”

secure his affections. This distinguishes Morgan’s magic in this episode as love facilitating rather than love inducing.

The text does not offer an explanation why she does not use love inducing magic to force him into loving her. However, it is reasonable to speculate that, given her previous experiences of her lovers not choosing her (or more accurately, choosing someone/something over her), her desire is for Lancelot to love her freely, to choose her freely, and employing love inducing magic would prevent that. Beyond being an adept magical practitioner, Morgan was also victim to an unwanted (albeit non-magically forced) marriage, so freedom to choose one’s lover seems important to her. In this way, perhaps she embodies and represents the desires of medieval women. Although her motivations are not malevolent—as she means Lancelot no ill will—they are selfish and fail spectacularly with Lancelot refusing even to listen to Morgan’s pleading. Although casting Morgan as the antagonist in this narrative episode, the narrator seems to give an almost sympathetic condemnation to her love facilitating efforts. It is clear, however, that the kidnapping of Lancelot holds an implied “wrongness” and fails, but the narrative acknowledges that Morgan is acting out of love, not hatred, which humanizes her.

Larrington discusses this episode as part of her larger analysis of Morgan as an enchantress, observing that, “Morgan herself only comes to gaze at Lancelot’s beauty at midnight when he is sleeping. The text keeps the pair oddly separate, summarizing, but not

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615 After the Duke of Tintagel is killed as part of Uther’s magical deception to sleep with Igraine (see chapter two), Uther marries Igraine, Igraine’s eldest daughter, Morgause, is married off to King Lot of Orkney (it is they who have Gawain, Agravain, Guerrehet, Gaheriet, and Mordred as sons), and Morgan is taken as wife by King Neutres of Garlot. Morgan’s husband does offer her something valuable—it was he who sent her to a nunnery for education, where she learned about the arts and healing. Sommer, Vulgate Version, 2:73. Translation by Lacy and Pickens, “The Story of Merlin,” Lancelot-Grail, 1:207-08.
depicting, Morgan’s attempts at seduction…the effect is strangely necrophiliac, aligning
Morgan’s desire for the sleeping knight with the perverted desire of the enchantress Hallewes for Lancelot in Malory.” Lancelot’s reaction to learning the identity of his captor is rather impulsively violent, so the secrecy of Morgan’s identity and her observational visitations to Lancelot are highly pragmatic for her plan. Lancelot has already been kidnapped and imprisoned once by Morgan (after freeing the Valley of False Lovers) and distrusts her. Even though it is ineffective, her anonymous pleading for his love stands a far better chance than if she had made identity known. Furthermore, Hallewes’s desires for Lancelot, which are discussed in detail later in this chapter, are only necrophiliac out of a lack for any other possibility of having Lancelot for herself.  

Larrington argues that the narrative’s “strange reticence in bringing the two principal characters together…suggests that Morgan’s passion is a post hoc invention of its author, intended to manoeuvre Lancelot into painting his life story in preparation for Morgan’s revelation to Arthur in the Mort Artu.” Although Morgan’s motivation as love or manipulation is not clarified at the beginning of the episode, there are narratorial hints of her love for Lancelot throughout that suggest her passions are not “a post hoc invention” but rather a more deliberate progression of Morgan’s relationship to Lancelot within the text. In their first encounter, the Valley of False Lovers episode, Morgan, although first being

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616 Larrington, King Arthur’s Enchantresses, 71.
617 Larrington later discusses Morgan in the Tristan en Prose, in which she does plot to kill Lancelot and present Lancelot’s dead body to a “neighboring knight” whom Larrington characterizes as a potential new lover for Morgan, making her presentation of Lancelot’s corpse into a “love token.” This is more convincingly compared to the necrophiliac desires of Hallewes and Pucelé (from Perlesvaus), although here Morgan’s desire for Lancelot’s death is not out of romantic desire for him, but for another knight. King Arthur’s Enchantresses, 75.
618 Larrington, King Arthur’s Enchantresses, 72.
frightened of and then angry at Lancelot, also admits to admiring him. He embodies the loyalty in love that she did not think existed in the world of knighthood, and on which she based the only loophole for her enchantment. Through his pureness in love, Lancelot does destroy her creation, but he also proves to her than a knight can behave faithfully to his lady, something Morgan has repeatedly failed to experience in her own love relationships. It is not that surprising then that in this episode, she holds romantic feelings for Lancelot and wants him for herself. Her nocturnal observations of Lancelot come before her recognition of his paintings, and her earlier conversations with the maiden who brought Lancelot to her also indicate she has romantic (or at least sexual) desire for him. This episode also takes place after the collaborative kidnapping of Lancelot conducted by Morgan and several other queens (discussed in chapter three) which has blended the simultaneous love disrupting and love facilitating functions of love magic, but also indicates another moment of Morgan’s romantic interest in Lancelot prior to this episode.

The narrator provides a nuanced description of Morgan’s love for Lancelot and suggests she lacks the ability to truly love him (say, as Guinevere does); the narrator acknowledges Morgan loves Lancelot, but adverbially modifies her love with the phrase “tant comme fame pooit plus amer home pour la grant biauté de lui” [“as much as a woman could love a man for his great beauty”]. Although Morgan’s motivations are not explicitly negative or malevolent, the love from which she is acting is also not pure and is suggested to be less than true love. The adverbial phrase indicates that Morgan’s love is only for

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619 See Hahn’s assertion about the enhanced desirability of men when they are lying in beds, see note 613.
Lancelot’s “great beauty,” which may include not only his physical beauty but also his societal status attractiveness (his martial abilities and later his painting abilities with which Morgan is impressed). In essence, Morgan’s love is superficial, incited by the generic excellence of Lancelot, rather than being a deep, true love grounded in emotions (and courtly love standards) like Lancelot’s love with Guinevere. Even in the face of Lancelot’s complete shunning of her affections, Morgan demonstrates her admiration for him. Upon finding his paintings, Morgan acknowledges their beauty, showing them to the maiden and crediting Lancelot’s incredible painting skill to his being “destroiz d’amors” [“overwhelmed by love”]. Although Morgan admires Lancelot’s abilities and seeks his love, this does not prevent her from utilizing his decision to personalize his space later on in an effort to once again interfere with Lancelot and Guinevere’s relationship. With thoughts of future deviousness, Morgan declares that she would not think to release Lancelot until he has completely filled the walls of his room with his murals as she knows “qu’il i paindra touz ses fez et tous ses diz et toutes les ouvres de lui et de la roine” [“he’ll depict all his deed and words and all the doings between himself and the queen’”] and she plans to show the paintings to her brother King Arthur at a later date.

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622 Micha, ed., _Lancelot_, V: LXXXVI, 53; Lacy and Kibler, “Lancelot, Part V,” _Lancelot-Grail_, 3:219. In his 60’x120’ room, this means there is nearly 360’ of wall (the exact footage is uncertain since there is an unaccounted-for number of windows in the room as well as a door) for Lancelot to paint before Morgan would consider his release. Much later in the _Vulgate Cycle_ Morgan hosts King Arthur in the same room where Lancelot is held in order to let him see the murals Lancelot has painted as she intends this to reveal to Arthur the affair Guinevere is having with Lancelot.
After spending a lengthy amount of time in Morgan’s prison—“II. yvers et un esté” [“two winters and one summer”]—Lancelot escapes after Easter. 623 Despite his continual paintings that venerate Queen Guinevere and demonstrate his all-consuming love for her, Morgan’s own affections for Lancelot do not seem to diminish over this time, evidenced by her desire to lessen Lancelot’s discomfort at being imprisoned. As spring breaks after Easter, Lancelot watches the garden outside his room begin to bloom: “Et li arbre estoient foillu et chargié de flors et la rose espannisoit chascun jor devant sa fenestre, car Morgain ot fait planter un moult biau vergier, por ce que Lanceloz i fust plus a aise tout esté” [“the trees were in leaf and loaded with flowers, and the rose bloomed each day before his window, for Morgan had had a fine garden planted so that Lancelot would be at ease through the summer”]. 624 Morgan’s planting of such a luscious garden in hopes of bringing some happiness to Lancelot demonstrates her continued efforts to gain his pleasure and her lack of desire for him to suffer (although he did during the winter except for the pleasure his paintings brought him). In an ironic twist, it is a flower from the garden which Morgan planted to help ease Lancelot’s time in prison that first inspires his escape. The redness of the rose reminds him of Guinevere’s “face clere et vermeille” [“bright complexion”] and invigorates him to try one day to claim a particular rose through the bars of his window. 625 He finds he cannot reach the flower because of the bars which he notes “voit forz a

623 Micha, ed., Lancelot, V: LXXXVIII, 60; Lacy and Carroll, “Lancelot, Part VI,” Lancelot-Grail, 3:224. Knowing that Lancelot arrived at the castle in the late autumn in August (realizing his captivity in September), this additional information allows the deduction that Lancelot remained in Morgan’s captivity roughly one and three-quarter years before his escape.
merveilles” [“were wondrously strong”], aghast at being prevented from completing his task, he breaks the bars on the window and escapes outside where he first takes his rose and then finds horses and armor to assist his escape.\textsuperscript{626} It is Lancelot’s love of Guinevere, invoked though his association of her with the rose, that gives him the strength to overcome his prison, but the rose is only there because Morgan is acting out of love for Lancelot when she plants the flowers.

As Lancelot escapes, he inquires with the gateman whose castle it is and apparently only then learns that Morgan le Fay was his captor. This indicates that her previous pleading with him for his love was done without the revelation of her identity. Lancelot is furious at the knowledge he had, once again, been held as Morgan’s prisoner, and although he considers turning back and killing her, her status as a woman and as kin to King Arthur tempers Lancelot’s reaction; instead, he has the gatekeeper deliver the message to Morgan that “Lanceloz del Lac qui de laienz s’en vait la salue si com saluer la doit, si comme la plus desloial del monde. Et bien sache, se ne fust por amor le roi Artus, je feisse de li ce que l’an doit faire de fame desloial et traître” [“Lancelot of the Lake, who is leaving, greets her as he should, as the most disloyal woman in the world. And be assured that had it not been for my love for King Arthur, I would have done to her what one ought to do to a disloyal and traitorous woman”].\textsuperscript{627} Lancelot departs and the gatekeeper immediately awakens Morgan and delivers Lancelot’s message; her reaction reinforces the narrator’s earlier commentary that she was acting out of love, not hatred for Lancelot. Rather than being angry at his


escape, Morgan grieves: “Et quant ele l’antant, si en est trop dolante…et quant ele nel trove, si en est trop dolente…Lors conmença a faire le greingnor duel dou monde” [“When she heard it, she was greatly distressed…when she did not find him [Lancelot], she was extremely sorrowful…then she began the bitterest grieving ever seen”].

This final view of Morgan as grieving her loss of Lancelot paints a sympathetic picture, softening the condemnation of her love facilitating magic, which is indicated through its failure.

**Hallewes the Sorceress and the Kiss of Death**

Morgan is far from the only sorceress who longs for Lancelot and their use of love magic is not always as caring toward the subject of their love as Morgan’s is. In Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur*, Lancelot has a brief, but memorable encounter with a crafty woman named Hallewes the Sorceress, Lady of the Castle Nygurmous (meaning “of necromancy”). She appears only once and in a fairly minor role compared to other magical women like Morgan le Fay or Nyneve, and she, like so many other women in Arthurian literature is smitten with Lancelot. Although she shares many of these similarities with other women, magical or not, in the text, she is unique because of her magical approach to acquiring Lancelot. Marion Wynne-Davies discusses Hallewes, explaining “Hallewes is one of many women in the *Morte Darthur* who desires Sir Launcelot, but she is the only one who contemplates necrophilia.”

Unlike other sorceresses who try to overcome Lancelot’s love for Guinevere as part of their attempt to gain his affections for themselves, Hallewes accepts the fact that Lancelot cannot and will not ever love any women but Guinevere. Her love facilitating magic

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629 Wynne-Davies, *Women and Arthurian Literature*, 60.
as a result is a bit different since she does not bother trying to obtain Lancelot’s favor and love, but instead seeks to possess him for herself in death. Morgan’s magical facilitation of love in both the Valley of False Lovers and the kidnappings of Lancelot is undertaken with the end goal of mutual love between herself and Lancelot; Hallewes simplifies things by attempting only to facilitate her own love for Lancelot, not caring if he would love her in return—dead men make no refusals after all.

Lancelot’s encounter with Hallewes begins like any other adventure—a young maiden finds him in the forest and demands his help. Her brother, Sir Melyot de Logrys was grievously wounded during battle (although he did slay his opponent) and the lady reports to Lancelot:

And there is a lady, a sorseres, that dwellyth in a castel here bysyde, and this day she tolde me my brothirs woundys sholde never be hole tyll I coude fynde a knyght wolde go into the Chapel Perelus, and there he sholde fynde a swerde and a blody cloth that the wounded knyght was lapped in; and a pece of that cloth and that swerde sholde hele my brothir, with that his woundis were serched with the swerde and the cloth.\footnote{\textit{Malory, Le Morte Darthur,} 214.}

Although the information comes from a woman labeled a sorceress,\footnote{In Middle English, the terms “enchauntresse” and “sorseres” are interchangeable; however, the practice of “sorcerie” was somewhat more removed from what is natural and therefore might have more of a learned and/or demonic magic connotation than “enchaunterie.” Middle English Dictionary, “enchauntresse,” “sorseres,” “sorceri(e),” and “enchauntrie.” Despite this, it is interesting that other female magical practitioners, such as Morgan le Fay and Nyneve are referred to as enchantresses, but Hallewes is called a sorceress. Hallewes is also the only one of the three who is not presented with any redeeming qualities (nor is her magic). Hallewes appears in \textit{Le Morte} and not in the \textit{Vulgate}, but is not a character in the Vulgate, although she may be an adaptation of the \textit{Vulgate’s} Helaes de la Forest [sic] Perilleuse (see n. 633).} it is unclear at this point if the stipulations for Melyot’s recovery are set by the sorceress or if she simply has
knowledge of what must be done for the wounds to heal. Lancelot of course takes on the challenge, even more happily since he knows Melyot as a fellow knight of the Round Table. The maiden warns Lancelot of the danger, and the first sign of this is immediate upon Lancelot’s arrival at Chapel Perelus—he sees “many fayre ryche shyldis turned up-so-downe, and many of tho shyldis Sir Launcelot had sene knyghtes bere byforehande.” The chapel’s courtyard presents Lancelot with the challenge of thirty tall knights, who, although armed and ready for a fight, give way to Lancelot once he raises his own shield and sword demonstrating his own intentions to engage in battle with them. Lancelot easily finds and picks up both the cloth and sword from a corpse he finds in the chapel and exits the chapel.

Just as in any good adventure tale, getting in and grabbing the prize is generally less dangerous than escaping with your treasure. It is after he leaves the chapel that he meets Hallewes for the first time. After Lancelot refuses the thirty knights’ orders to part with the sword or die, he meets “a fayre damesell” who also tells him to leave the sword or he will die for it. Despite her apparent beauty, this damsel, revealed to be Hallewes the Sorseres, holds dark ideas about Lancelot. She first taunts him, saying, “thou dyddyste leve that swerde, Quene Gwenyvere sholde thou never se” and then demands, “I require the to kysse me but onys.” Despite Lancelot’s enduring love for Guinevere, offering a single kiss to

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632 Historically and in medieval romances, many female practitioners of magic were connected to healing. Even Morgan le Fay’s original canonical origins posit her as a healing figure.
633 Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, 215. Stephen H. A. Shepherd notes that upside down shields are a marker of disrespect. Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), 171, n. 6. It seems, in the context of the death that the chapel bears, that it is not only a sign of disrespect, but a grim display of how many knights (and which ones) have tried and failed at the chapel.
ladies is not out of the question (he even willingly and passionately kisses Elaine after
discovering her deception), yet Lancelot seems to know better than to do so here and pleads
“nay…that God me forbade” in response to Hallewes’s request.\footnote{Malory, \textit{Le Morte Darthur}, 216.} Having failed in her
attempt to secure his kiss, she gives up her entire plan, explaining to Lancelot:

Well sir…and thou haddyst kyssed me thy lyff days had be done. And now, alas…I
have loste all my laboure, for I ordeyned this chapell for thy sake and for Sir
Gawayne. And onys I had hym within me, and at that tyme he fought with this knyght
that lyeth dede in yondir chapell, Sir Gyliberte the Bastarde, and at that tyme he smote
the lyffte honde of Sir Gyliberte. And Sir Lancelot, now I telle the, I have loved the
this seven yere, but there may no woman have thy love but queen Gwenyvere; and
syththen I myght nat rejoyse the nother to have thy body on lyve, I had kepte no more
joy in this worlde but to have thy body dede. Than wolde I have bawmed hit and
sered hit, and so to have kepte hit my lyve dayes; and dayly I sholde have clypped the
and kyssed the, dispyte of Quene Gwenyvere.\footnote{Knepper, “A Bad Girl,” 236.}

Knepper characterizes this surprisingly forthright confession as the result of Hallewes’s
“(womanish) compulsion to confess” and contrast this with Lancelot’s masculine behaviors
in resisting her various demands.\footnote{638}

There are more than a few problematic things about Hallewes’s use of magic to
facilitate her own love’s desires. First, she is trying to kill Lancelot and would have done so
through her kiss had he given her one. Although no specifics about her deadly kiss are given,
some type of poison or magic is logically involved since Lancelot would die, and she does

\footnote{636 Malory, \textit{Le Morte Darthur}, 216.}
\footnote{637 This is the only mention of Hallewes the Sorceress in Malory and any interactions
between her and Gawain are excluded from \textit{Le Morte Darthur}; however, her mention of
having once had Gawain and the dual purpose of the chapel being for “thy [Lancelot’s] sake
and for Sir Gawayne” suggests that Hallewes holds a similar love and desire for Gawain.
This mention of Gawain may also be a remnant of a previous iteration of Hallewes’s
character from the \textit{Vulgate Cycle}. In the \textit{Vulgate}, Hallewes is not a character, but another
sorceress named Helaes de la Forest Perilleuse (see n. 631) does appear and has a one-time
sexual encounter with Gawain that seems to track with Hallewes’s allusion to him in
Malory’s version. Malory, \textit{Le Morte Darthur}, 216.}
\footnote{638 Knepper, “A Bad Girl,” 236.}
not expect to die with him. She also reveals that the entire chapel was designed for Lancelot (and Sir Gawain), suggesting that she is in fact responsible for Sir Melyot’s wounds not healing. A modern reader might suggest that Hallewes shows an almost pathological obsession with Lancelot not only to pine for him seven years (the duration of time she states to have loved him) but also to desire him so much that she would take some joy in having him, even through necrophilia. Drawing on the physicality of cultural taboos in the work of George Bataille, Knepper asserts that “Hellawes’s desired act of love reveals the connection between love, control, and possession,” but that the embodiment of violent possession of a lover through killing of them is traditionally violence enacted by a male lover upon a woman. Her endless longing and the need to possess him in whatever way she can, leads her to turn to the necrophilic approach. Although it is Hallewes who attempts to enact violence upon Lancelot, this does not change the result of it being the woman who ends up experiencing the violence (Hallewes dies after her plan is thwarted). Lancelot’s greatest weapon against Hallewes is not his sword, but his rejection of her.

Despite Hallewes’s despicable intended use of her sorcery and her apparent necrophiliac tendencies, her affections toward Lancelot appear to be born of genuine emotions. She confesses to having loved him for seven years and has gone to extreme measures to craft this situation in hopes of securing Lancelot as her own. She bemoans the labor she has lost through Lancelot’s victory over the chapel and his refusal to kiss her or do anything else that would have resulted in his death. In contrast to Morgan, who also loves Lancelot but does not wish him harm, Hallewes takes the approach that she would rather

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possess Lancelot as a dead lover than go on without him and have her love unfulfilled. When he rebuffs her declaration and makes a hasty exit, “she toke suche sorow that she deyde within a fourtenyte.” Following the courtly love trope of many women lovers represented in medieval romances, Hallewes dies as a result of her unrequited love and the deep grieving it causes. Hallewes’s love magic is outside the realm of acceptability, and she and her magic are threatening, both to Lancelot and the larger chivalric structure because of her appropriation of that structure for her own selfish, sexual/romantic desires. Nevertheless, by granting Hallewes the death of a martyr for love, the text also positions her among a tradition of true lovers who have died from heartbreak (whether unwillingly or by suicide). This generates a more complex portrait of Hallewes, allowing her to be and act immorally while still eliciting a grain of sympathy for her desperation in love. Yet the aggressiveness of her desire is what dooms her, both in death and in the condemnation of her character. Knepper correlates Hallewes’s necrophilia with larger patterns of women’s sexuality, explaining “Hellawes’s necrophilia only underscores the disgust with which an active, predatory sexuality on the part of woman [sic] was viewed.”

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640 Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 216.
641 A number of classical examples, rewritten into medieval texts, involve women killing themselves for love and/or honor. Chaucer’s Legends of Good Women is a collection of mainly classical women, many of whom commit suicide after the loss of a lover. Within the Arthurian tradition, the Maid of Astolat also dies from love for Lancelot, and her body becomes a self-designed public display. Knepper compares the Stanzaic Morte’s Maid of Ascolot and her deliberate display of her corpse with the necrophilia in which Hallewes intends to engage. Like Hallewes, who in hope it will lead to Lancelot’s death, builds a chivalric challenge for him to participate in, the Maid of Ascolot twists the conventions of chivalry in an attempt to secure Lancelot’s love. While she retains Lancelot’s armor during a tournament in which he competes disguised, she misrepresents her possession of his arms as a chivalric symbol of his love for her. Knepper, “A Bad Girl,” 231.
There is no question that Hallewes’s intended actions are not considered morally acceptable in the text, but Lancelot’s own reaction to hearing her plans reinforces the moral condemnation of her magical plan. The expressed opinion of Lancelot, as a hero of the narrative, helps to guide the readership to judgement of Hallewes. After exclaiming “Jesu preserve me frome your subtyle crauftys!” he immediately mounts his horse and rides off without waiting for her response. Lancelot’s lack of confrontation with Hallewes and his abrupt departure immediately after the disclosure of her plans for him suggest he is fleeing and is both appalled and afraid at the thought of his escaped fate. The only response to her plans that Lancelot does provide is an exclaimed prayer asking for Jesus’s protection against the wickedness Hallewes intends. Her plans to kill Lancelot, embalm and dehydrate his body, and keep his body to kiss and embrace it, are reframed in Lancelot’s prayer as “subtyle crauftys,” as a euphemism for her sorcery, even though there is actually little that is subtle about Hallewes and her intentions. Wynne-Davies also comments on the lack of subtlety in Hallewes’s actions and words, but seems to interpret Lancelot’s use of the term “subtyle” in a more literal sense, noting “this seems a rather odd description of her actions since Hallewes does not attempt to trick the knight…Her words are not particularly subtle either in narrative or allegorical terms. The female desire to have control over a man’s chivalric (sword) and

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644 When paired with an adjective, the meaning of “craft” in Middle English changes from a general sense of an art or occupational trade to a more specific, nuanced skill set. The phrases “devels crafte” and “fendes crafte” were used to mean witchcraft and sorcery, and the compound leechcraft, although referring to the medical practice, also held connotations of magical practice. *Middle English Dictionary*, “craft,” and “leche-craft.” Similarly, Lancelot’s use of the phrase “subtyle crauftys” is characterizing Hallewes the Sorceress’s magic, and the adverbial use of “subtle” echoes other descriptions of magic such as Queen Isolde’s love potion brewing and Merlin’s magic.
courtly (the kiss) identities is easily decoded.”645 Although power dynamics are certainly
coded into the two requests Hallewes makes of Lancelot, unsurprisingly considering the
close connection of power and love relationships, Hallewes only makes these requests
because she knows she cannot gain Lancelot through normal courting methods because of his
overwhelming love and devotion for Guinevere. In her explanation of her plan and her
motivations, she states that Lancelot cannot love any woman but Queen Guinevere “and
sythyn I myght nat rejoyse the nother to have thy body on lyve, I had kepte no more joy in
this worlde but to have thy body dede.”646 Her account of her love and its resulting actions
appeals to a cause and effect relationship (“sythyn”) between Lancelot’s inability to love any
woman (including her) and her need to kill him to keep him; indicating that were it not for
his romantic unavailability, she would have taken a different approach to fulfill her love for
him.

Hallewes is also mentioned by Corinne Saunders as she discusses how “the body,
subject to sinister and menacing power, becomes the site of conflict between unruly,
predatory sexual desires and the impulse to virtue and chastity.”647 She applies this
framework for understanding the role of the body to Morgan and the other queens’
kidnapping of Lancelot (discussed in chapter three) and to Hallewes’s plan to kill and keep
Lancelot’s body for herself, asserting that “sex and death are equated in a highly threatening
way, and the woman is written as the enchantress who desires the body at all costs, even the
cost of life itself. Hellewes’s necromantic desire ultimately destroys her: she dies of

645 Wynne-Davies, Women and Arthurian Literature, 60.
646 Malory, Le Morte Darthur, 216.
unrequited love for Lancelot.” Although Saunders’s point is well taken about the destruction Hallewes’s desires wreak upon her, I would argue that her true desire is for Lancelot’s love, but knowing she can never obtain it, she is settling for possessing his body. Scholars tend to attribute Hallewes’s necrophilic plans to sexual fetish, further demonizing her character for this violation of societal norms, but these plans are the result of lacking a more traditional alternative option to gain Lancelot’s affections. Hallewes’s use of the term “rejoyse” to encapsulate that which she cannot do carries a complex blend of meanings depicting her desires—the term can refer to possessing to ruling over something or someone (in alignment with the perspective Saunders takes) or to marrying or taking someone as a lover. Since Hallewes mentions being unable to “rejoyse the nother to have thy body on lyve” (to have either you or your body) both possible trends in the meaning of “rejoyse” seem to play a role in her despair—she knows she cannot have Lancelot as a spouse or lover, but also she cannot possess him or rule him, which is particularly apparent since he blatantly denied both of her commanded requests (for the sword and for a kiss). Saunders also makes the keen observation that Lancelot’s body “is also preserved through his chaste virtue,” since time and again Lancelot’s commitment in his love for Guinevere saves him and/or allows him to overcome obstacles (the Valley of False Lovers, breaking free from Morgan’s castle, and refusing Hallewes’s request for a kiss of death).

The need for Lancelot, a brave and accomplished knight, to call upon Jesus for protection against the sorcery of Hallewes indicates both that it is genuinely dangerous and that it is something that is morally condemned, perhaps even evil, since God can be invoked

649 Middle English Dictionary, “rejoisen v.”
against it. Like Morgan le Fay’s attempt to win Lancelot’s love by applying her magical
talents to the challenge, Hallewes fails, is presented as the antagonist, and is deemed immoral
in her use of magic. Unlike Morgan, however, little if any narratorial sympathy can be found
for Hallewes; this may be partly a result of the shorter, more concise account of her feelings
and actions, but it is also because of the horrific nature of how she intends to wield her magic
against Lancelot. Felicity Riddy argues that Malory’s presentation and adaptation of
Lancelot’s character into a knight who loves the queen but “repudiates all sexual activity”
(with the queen or others) is for the purpose of “allowing him access to the tale only through
the accusations of the four queens and the damsel, and through the grotesquer [sic] fantasies
of the sorceress Hallowes…to associate sexuality with enchantment and thus to render it
aberrant and threatening.”651 Although her argument is actually focused on Malory’s use of
Lancelot in his narrative, she raises an interesting point about the connection of sexuality and
enchantment. While the two are often connected in Malory, not all of those connections
uphold the idea of enchantment as “aberrant and threatening.” Some instances, like the
earlier discussed employment of love facilitating magic by Nyneve, and even the somewhat
sympathetic narratorial tone toward Morgan’s hopeless love for Lancelot (and for any other
man she has had as a lover), suggest that although the impulse may be to position
enchantment as frightening and dangerous, the text often considers it with more critical
awareness as well, rendering judgement upon the magic’s morality based on the motivations
of the magical practitioner.

Guinevere the Good?

Interestingly, although it is his love for Guinevere and his unwavering loyalty to her that time and again saves him from his many female suitors’ magical designs, even that love is not above scrutiny for possible interference of love magic. One of the many damsels whom Lancelot assists in *Le Morte Darthur* praises his worth as “the curteyst knyght thou art, and mekyste unto all ladyes and jantylwomen that now lyvyth” finding only one thing about him lacking, “ye that ar a knyght wyvles, that ye woll nat love som mayden other jantylwoman.” Lancelot’s dual status as “wyvles” and unavailable to love any woman presents a unique situation—a wifeless knight ought to be available to maidens as a potential spouse, yet Lancelot, although providing great service to all ladies who request it, refuses to engage with any of them romantically. This allegedly causes great distress among the women in the land. The damsel, repeating what appears to be popular speculation, attributes Lancelot’s situation to the possible use of love magic by Guinevere: “But hit is noysed that ye love Quene Gwenyvere, and that she hath ordeyned by enchauntemente that ye shall never love none other but hir, nother none other damesell ne lady shall rejoyce you.” The damsel’s allegation of love magic is one of love facilitating magic rather than love inducing magic, for she lays out two distinct points that are “noysed” or rumored: 1. That Lancelot loves the queen and 2. That the queen has used enchantment to secure Lancelot’s loyalty in love to her and prevent any other woman from being able to “rejoyce” him. The use of enchantment that is popularly believed to be employed by the queen is not responsible for Lancelot’s love for her but does control the loyalty of his love.

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Once again, the term “rejoyce” appears, leaving a haze of uncertainty around the exact stipulations of Queen Guinevere’s alleged enchantment: does it restrict him just from marrying another woman or from taking a lover? Here, the meaning is more clearly romantically/sexually focused since many women have held power over him and been able to demand he fulfill various obligations to them, but to what extent the enchantment supposedly constrains him is unclear. Donald L. Hoffman suggests that there may be some weight to this damsel’s charge of magic use by Guinevere, citing first the damsel’s proclamation and then suggesting that an earlier authorial comment about Lancelot—“at no time was he overcom but yf hit were by treson other inchauntment”—supports an authorial incrimination of Guinevere.654 This does seem suggestive of a weakness against enchantment, but the context from which this authorial description of Lancelot is taken indicates that this method of overcoming Lancelot is referencing martial skill. The fuller quotation, “in all turnementes, justys, and dedys of armys, both for lyff and deth, he passed all other knyghtes, and at no tyme was he overcom but yf hit were by treson other inchauntment,” clarifies that Lancelot is invincible except against treason or magic in martial pursuits.655 The text is specifically talking about his performances in tournaments, jousts, and deeds of arms and makes no mention of his romantic endeavors.

655 Malory, Le Morte Dathur, 190. The potential weakness Lancelot may have against enchantments during his martial activities is also countered by the magical ring Guinevere had given to him (which Morgan ends up stealing) because its power allows him to identify when an enchantment is being deployed (see discussion of the Valley of False Lovers in chapter three). In Chrétien’s Lancelot, le Chevalier de la Charrette, Lancelot has a ring that similarly allows him to dissolve any enchantment if he looks at it.
The accuracy of the accusation against Guinevere is further undercut through the damsel’s own terminology which acknowledges that the allegation is rumor rather than fact. The damsel says “hit is noysed,” indicating that although the theory of Guinevere enchanting Lancelot is popular, it is a rumor and not a confirmed fact. In their conversation, the damsel takes particular care to signal through her language what is factual, her personal opinion, and rumor. In describing Lancelot, she makes concrete, assertive statements about his worth (which seem universally accepted by characters within the text), but when she moves to note his weakness of remaining unwed, she qualifies the statement by saying “methynkes ye lak” indicating that her statements about Lancelot’s unmarried and unavailable status are her personal opinion. In line with her care over indicating sources, the charges of enchantment are what “is noysed.” The verb, coming from the infinitive form “noisen” can mean “believed” or “rumored, reported” but has no roots in guaranteed truth. Lancelot is keenly aware of this and responds that he cannot control the wagging tongues of people—“I may nat warne peple to speke of me what hit pleasyth hem”—before giving a lengthy explanation for his unmarried state and unwillingness to take a lover. These accusations against Queen Guinevere, although mere rumor, are significant and dangerous. Zita Eva Rohr writes on the

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use of rumors to discredit queens and other politically powerful women during the Hundred Year’s War, and she mentions that some of these rumors included accusations of sorcery, such as in the case of Valentina Visconti.\(^{658}\) Although writing historically, not about literary narratives, Rohr also explains “rumor is key to understanding the political sympathies of a population.”\(^{659}\) This can be applied to rumors of Guinevere’s magical practices in order to analyze the how the author is imagining the popular opinion toward Guinevere and Lancelot at this point in the text. Malory, who lived through the Hundred Years’ War and then was caught up in the War of Roses, would be well-aware of the political impact of rumors.

Theresa Earenfight’s work on medieval queenship expands on the impact of rumors, particularly in connection to a queen’s infidelity.\(^{660}\) Earenfight offers an etymological overview of terms used for rumor, including the Latin \textit{fama}, which she explains not only meant rumored or reported but also held the more negative connotation of defaming.\(^{661}\) She identifies “accusing a queen of adultery” as “a distressingly common storyline in medieval literature,” and emphasizes the dangerous political ramifications of such rumors. Earenfight articulates the way these rumors would undercut a king’s authority and asserts “infidelity was regarded as a form of treason against the king that could have fatal consequences.”\(^{662}\) This is illustrated in \textit{Le Morte Darthur} when Guinevere faces an impending death sentence after her affair with Lancelot is revealed.\(^{663}\)


\(^{659}\) Rohr, \textit{Queenship, Gender, and Reputation}, 52.


\(^{661}\) Earenfight, \textit{Queenship in Medieval Europe}, 22.

\(^{662}\) Earenfight, \textit{Queenship in Medieval Europe}, 23.

Lancelot’s own interpretation of the damsel’s statement as simply a repetition of the local gossip, furthers the implausibility of these charges. Unlike the many other women who do perform magic in the text (among them Nyneve, other Ladies of the Lake, Morgan, Dame Brusen, and Hallewes the Sorceress), Guinevere practices no magic that the reader ever sees, only this circulated rumor of it. However, Hoffman, who holds that Guinevere has (at least a modicum of) magical power, asserts that she, and not the other Arthurian sorceresses, is the true threat:

While the wicked and lecherous sorceress, Morgan and her partners in slime, the Queen of North Galys, the Queen of Estlonde, the Queen of the Out Isles, and the necrophilic Hallowes, are obvious practitioners of enchantment and sorcery, and may well be spooky ladies, they are not in the end dangerous. Guenevere, on the other hand, may seem to be more a victim than a practitioner of sorcery subjected as she is to the unholy spells of her archenemy Morgan and the holy spells involving her archrival, Elaine, the mother of Galahad, but it is she who accomplishes Morgan’s apparent agenda; it is she who seduces and destroys Lancelot and brings an end to Arthur’s kingdom.

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episode and the legal proceedings involved. See also Megan Leitch, *Romancing Treason: The Literature of the War of the Roses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015) for more on how the cultural and historical context of the War of the Roses affected Malory’s shaping of the narrative and characters in *Le Morte Darthur*. Riddy, “Contextualizing *Le Morte Darthur*, 65-66, highlights Malory’s source narrative choices as a method for placing blame for the civil war of the Arthurian kingdom onto Guinevere and her adultery, thus distinguishing the Roman War from the Civil War. Malory positions Arthur as responsible as well and allows Lancelot and Guinevere to originally survive the mayhem of Camelot’s destruction. Riddy explains that this upholds the tradition that “empire is exclusively masculine, while the divisions of civil war issue from the intervention of the feminine into the world of homosocial ambition” (65). The parallels between Guinevere and Margaret of Anjou as women who are held responsible for the initiation of a civil war in their kingdoms is clear, as is the deployment of rumors about them in attempts to politically discredit them. See Patricia-Ann Lee, “Reflections of Power: Margaret of Anjou and the Dark Side of Queenship,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (1986): 183-217, for discussion of the rumors about Margaret that circulated. See also Stephen Thomas Knight, *Arthurian Literature and Society* (London: Macmillan, 1983), for more on potential parallels in Malory to historical figures, including Margaret of Anjou.

Hoffman attributes this “trace of magical power” remaining in Malory’s Guinevere character to an older version of Guinevere as the Giant’s Daughter in the Welsh tradition. “Guenevere the Enchantress,” 31.

Hoffman, “Guenevere the Enchantress,” 32.
Although it is ultimately Guinevere who holds the most power over Lancelot, Hoffman unfairly places the destruction of Arthur’s kingdom onto her, ignoring both Lancelot’s equal role to play and the larger forces in the narrative that contribute to the deterioration of Camelot. Without a solid case that Guinevere is magically inducing Lancelot’s love for her, the blame for the affair and any consequences cannot be laid at Guinevere’s feet. Even Hoffman’s own characterization of Guinevere’s actions toward Lancelot claim “seduction” rather than magic, and seduction does not inhibit free will, leaving Lancelot equally responsible for their affair. While Guinevere is far from a beacon of virtue and is fickle in her treatment of Lancelot, her love for him is ever-present, and although she certainly benefits from their relationship more than Lancelot (in the events of the narrative, not in her enduring reputation), her love is reciprocated freely and does not hold the same selfishness or superficiality that is sometimes apparent in the love the narrative’s sorceresses feel for Lancelot. Although the threats these sorceresses present to Lancelot do not ultimately succeed, that does not make them any less dangerous; Lancelot himself recognizes the danger Hallewes the Sorceress poses and both calls on God and hurriedly departs from her. Morgan, although less of a direct threat to Lancelot since her love bars her from any desire to harm him, is constantly working to not only gain his love but to disrupt his love with Guinevere.

666 In natural cases of love, such as Lancelot and Guinevere, no magical or supernatural induction of love takes place. Although love may still render ill effects for the lovers (lovesickness), it does not compel them to feel any given way. Guinevere’s emotional range toward Lancelot varies widely, and she even rejects him (although does not actually stop loving him) several times. In many other medieval romances, love is sparked, not through magic, but through the will of the God of Love or Love personified. In these instances, we tend to see the same language of struggle that appears in instances of magically induced love (like the love potion of Tristan and Isolde). Lovesickness is the general result of the target’s victimization by Love, and the lover often loses free will, being forced into loving the person intended by Love.
and while Guinevere is Morgan’s intended target, Lancelot could certainly become collateral damage if the affair was revealed. It is his love for Guinevere that guides Lancelot’s virtue and thus saves him repeatedly from the dangerous situations he finds himself in with the sorceresses.

**Conclusion**

Magic that facilitates love is deemed and represented as moral or immoral depending on the character’s motivations for the magic. Because these enchantments are usually meant to restrain a knight’s abilities and/or physical movements, in order to retain his presence with the intention of furthering one’s love with him, the magic is often completed out of selfish desires and is represented negatively in the text. However, medieval romances show a more positive, or at least sympathetic, representation of performed love facilitating magic when it is done selflessly, such as Morgan’s desire to help other women keep their knights within the Valley of False Lovers or Nyneve’s enchantments to save Pelleas from his lovesickness. This system of moral evaluation is applied to love disrupting magic as well. Because these two functions assist or interfere with love, but do not generate it, they do not violate free will and thus, the judgement of their moral value must be made with attention to the individual circumstances that generate the magic (i.e., the motivations of the magical practitioner). In contrast, love inducing magic, which by its nature violates free will by forcing its victim to love someone, is represented as immoral unless mitigating circumstances (God’s approval) excuse and justify it.

It is often purported that there is a fine line between love and hatred, and this holds true for many of the Arthurian characters who wield love magic. Although I have
distinguished love disrupting and love facilitating magic as two separate functions of love magic, this division is not intended to function as an impermeable boundary between the two. The intents to disrupt and to facilitate love often overlap, such as in Morgan’s attempt to secure Lancelot’s love which turns into an opportunistic way of eventually disrupting his love with Guinevere. Nyneve’s love disrupting magic also performs a love facilitating function as well. The linked nature of the two functions of love magic contributes to the application of the same set of moral evaluation criteria for both functions.

It can be tempting to categorize characters as bad or good, antagonist or protagonist, villain or hero, but medieval authors resist writing these types of characters, instead crafting a complexity in each character that reminds the audience that even the most horrifying, such as Hallewes the Sorceress, is still subject to the same human desires and flaws as the heroes like Lancelot, and that even the heroes, like the Lady of the Lake, can sometimes act in villainous ways. It is not just the characters of medieval literature that benefit from complexity though; the representations of magic also range from heinous to salvific. Love magic can be deployed maliciously against a rival, selfishly for personal gain, or benevolently for the betterment of others.
Conclusion
This project has endeavored to determine how medieval authors perceived the moral acceptability of love magic, as evidenced by their representations of it in medieval romances. Love magic is far reaching in romance and can emerge in many forms, for many purposes. I have categorized love magic into three functions—to induce love, to disrupt love, and to facilitate love—in order to differentiate between the purposes for love magic and to offer a way of conducting a more nuanced examination of the authorial treatment of love magic. I have situated love magic in romances into its theological and historical contexts, forging connections between the magic presented in these narratives to historical magical practices and cultural responses to magic. For each of the three functions, I have examined and articulated the moral evaluation framework utilized. I demonstrate that love inducing magic is represented as implicitly immoral because of its theologically problematic violation of free will, but that it can be marked in the narrative as morally acceptable through explicitly indicated divine approval of the relationship and/or its resulting progeny (such as in the cases of Lancelot, Bohort, and Igraine). Because love disrupting and love facilitating magic do not violate free will, the morality of these functions is evaluated on a more circumstantial basis. The judgement of these functions of love magic as moral or immoral (portrayed as such within the narratives) is dependent upon the reason that motivates their use; the motivations of the magical practitioner as selfish (immoral) or selfless (moral) are superimposed onto the narratorial representation of the magic’s morality.

Although the distinction between these three functions is important to understanding how the morality of each was perceived and represented, it also poses the challenge of categorizing these functions distinctly when they often overlap or connect to each other in significant and important ways. For example, the “magical love triangle” presented by the
“Pelleas and Ettarde” episode in *Le Morte Darthur* depicts the practice of all three functions of love magic. I chose to parse them out into different, thematic chapters, but if we were to look at only one of the functions in this episode without considering the context of the other two, we would lose a grasp on the complexity of the love magic. The love inducing magic offers a logistical solution to the pragmatic problem of one-sided love between Pelleas and Ettarde. However, when placed in relations to the love disrupting magic Nyneve wields to free Pelleas from his affections toward Ettarde, a richer reading of the love inducing magic appears. The connectedness between the functions reveals how the two functions of love magic work in coordination to enact divine justice, with Nyneve as its agent.

This study offers a new strata framework for discussing love magic, as well as a consideration of the human motivations that drive it and the human responses that result from it. Scholarship on the mechanics of magic, gleaned from surviving recipes and instructional guides, is prominent in magic studies, but this study refocuses on the human element involved in the medieval practice of love magic. I also contribute analysis of several narrative episodes and characters that are understudied within literary scholarship, including Hallewes the Sorceress and Nyneve’s role in the “Pelleas and Ettarde” episode. I counter the impulse of scholars to separate magic-practicing characters into a false good/bad dichotomy by demonstrating the complexity of these characters and their engagements with love magic. Morgan le Fay is the particularly prominent example of this, as scholars often reduce representations in later medieval literature to that of a villain or “counter-hero,” to use Maureen Fries’s term. I have worked in this project to uncover and to display the complexity of Morgan’s character, which blends vengeful intentions with sympathetic motivations and villainous behaviors with concerned care for others. I have tried to look not only at the broad
strokes of characters and narratives engagement with love magic, but also at the brush-marks which more accurately define them and craft a more nuanced and accurate depiction.

Because the body of romance in insular and continental Europe is largely Arthurian, so too is the material scrutinized in this project. We have looked at two texts from the early thirteenth century—Gottfried von Strassburg’s German Tristan and Isolt and the French Vulgate Cycle—and at the fifteenth-century condensed Arthurian work of Sir Thomas Malory, Le Morte Darthur. These texts are major Arthurian works, but each comes from a different geographical tradition, which is particularly significant when comparing the Vulgate and Le Morte versions of the same episode. Each author draws on a larger body of sources for their material, but each also adapts, shapes, and editorializes the narratives to fit their purpose. Literature is a reflection of the culture in which it is created, revealing to modern scholars the concerns and interests of the text’s own time. But literature did not and does not exist within a vacuum—it has the power to influence culture as much as culture has the power to influence literature.

The Past and the Present

It is because of this reciprocal influence between literature and culture that careful study of medieval love magic is so important. Not only does this project work to reveal medieval author’s understandings of and attitudes toward love magic, but in doing so, it also speaks to modern cultural concerns over many of the same basic premises—free will,

667 Malory draws heavily on the Vulgate Cycle, although he also has a number of other sources and generously adapts the material at times. See P. J. C. Field, Malory: Texts and Sources (Cambridge and Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 1998), for more on Malory’s sources and adaptations.
consent, gender, and morality. Love magic remains a subject of interest for contemporary society, frequently appearing in popular culture, including songs, novels, and movies. This fascination is because literary depictions of love magic provide a removed and emotionally safe way for society to grapple with complex and difficult issues such as consent and action accountability. Medieval authors were engaging with these same concepts through their implementation of love magic in romances. They were manipulating scenarios and exploring how various circumstances effect the morality of the magic. Regardless of whether love magic is condemned or excused in texts, medieval authors also recognize and signal that its trauma still affected its victims. Lancelot’s violent responses, Bohort’s feelings of shame, and Igraine’s fear of discovery all offer insight into the emotional impact that love magic, particularly love inducing magic, has on its victims, even when it is morally acceptable because of its divine purpose.

With the popularization of the #MeToo movement in recent years, more attention is now being given to conversations on these important themes, both current and historical. Beginning around 2018, just after the movement entered mainstream popular consciousness, many medieval scholars began working on the subject of consent, recognizing the importance of studying historical perspectives and realities related to modern issues. This

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The #MeToo movement refers to a social movement started in 2007 by feminist Tarana Burke. The movement was one of solidarity for black women and girls who were survivors of sexual assault, but the movement gained wide popularity in 2017 when several high-profile sexual assault accusations were made, and women began using the hashtag #MeToo to share their stories of sexual assault and harassment. The movement has provided women with a venue for voicing their experiences and pushing the “whisper network” into a more public venue. The #MeToo movement has not been without criticism though. It has been critiqued for its appropriation by (white) female celebrities to whom, for a time, the movement’s creation was misattributed. Others have condemned it for its power to spur consequences through public outcry rather than through channels of legal recourse.
trend in scholarly work can be seen in the uptick of public-facing scholarship such as blog posts and twitter threads on gender, consent, rape, and sexuality in the medieval period and in more traditionally academic spaces like conferences and journal publications. This study fits into this new direction of scholarship, recognizing the importance of researching these challenging but culturally relevant subjects. The historically different legal meanings of certain terms, such as “rape” or “consent” can cause confusion when a modern understanding is anachronistically applied to a historical incident. This disparity in the meaning of these terms is amplified further by the magical focus of the study. The addition of magic as the vehicle for overcoming free will complicates the identification of something as “rape” even further since no physical force was used. Historically, love magic was also employed as a smokescreen to disguise willing participation in adulterous behaviors, so even when accusations of love magic are leveled, the accuser does not necessarily believe that magic has actually been deployed against them. Because of this, I have avoided the terms “rape” and “consent” within this study to describe what is occurring in specific narrative episodes. This is not because I deny that the dynamics would fall under the modern understanding of rape,

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670 See note 48.
but rather to avoid causing confusion over the terms’ legal, historical, and contemporary meanings resulting from anachronistic labeling.

**The Future**

Within the framework of three love magic functions proposed in this study, my findings have raised the question of the significance of the magic’s form. In my analysis of the love magic functions, I have merged discussions of performed magic, such as enchantments and potions, and magical objects, like the drinking horn or the magical ring used on Bohort. This made sense both for the thematic structure of this project and because the form love magic takes does not inherently contribute to its moral status; however, some interesting patterns about the forms of love magic emerged in the course of this project that I plan to explore in more detail in future research. Particularly, I am interested in the mobility and transferability of the magic imbued in an object compared to the more geographically permanent nature of performed magic which must be anchored to a specific place or person.

Connected to this are questions about the duration of love magic, whether it is temporary, temporary but renewed continuously, or permanent. Some of the love magic in the episodes examined appears to wear off after a specified period of time, such as the potion given to Lancelot to manipulate him into sleeping with Elaine. Other examples of love magic have longer-lasting effects, although they are not fully permanent. The magical ring given to Sir Bohort demonstrates this; as long as he wore it, he was under control of the magic, but once removed, the ring lost its magical power over him. Still other love magic never expires and seems irreversible, such as the love potion in *Tristan and Isolt*, the effects of which are enduring.
Beyond these questions of form and duration of love magic, I am also interested in applying my guiding research question onto the different relationship dynamic that exists between fairy or elf lovers and humans. A future direction for this project is to examine how medieval authors’ responses to love magic change when the magic is not externally performed or possessed, but comes from the internal, inherent nature of a supernatural being. A number of Middle English romances offer these relationship dynamics, including *Sir Degare*, *Sir Orfeo*, *The Wife of Bath’s Tale*, and *The Tale of Sir Thopas*, as well as non-English texts like Marie de France’s *Lanval*. Also fruitful in connection to this development to my argument will be a discussion of Morgan le Fay, whose literary tradition has fairy roots, although she is represented as born of human parents in both the *Vulgate* and *Le Morte Darthur*.

The new questions this study raises perhaps outnumber the conclusions it offers, but I take this as a sign of a successful project because of its production of many new lines of inquiring for future exploration. This study has identified the functions of love magic, examined the methods on which moral evaluations of the magic are determined, and expanded on the ongoing lines of scholarship on magic, gender, and sexuality. Moreover, the project works to destabilize rigid, one-dimensional conceptions of complex characters, their motivations, their behaviors, and their actions, and to counter overgeneralized understandings of love magic.
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