

THE STRUCTURE OF MALORY'S TALE OF GARETH

by

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B. A., University of Alabama, 1974

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A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1976

Approved by:



Major Professor

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The discovery of the Winchester Manuscript in 1934 is the most important event in Malory scholarship and criticism. Until then, the Caxton text had been the basis of all the published texts of Malory's work. Between the discovery of the Winchester Manuscript and the publication of Eugène Vinaver's 1947 edition of this manuscript, there was a suspension of Malory criticism and scholarship. Since Vinaver's 1947 edition appeared with his eight-book theory, which is based upon the divisions found in the Winchester Manuscript, there has been a remarkable increase in criticism on Malory, much of which argues the pros and cons of Vinaver's theory. Vinaver believes that Malory wrote eight separate tales and that Caxton was responsible for making these eight tales into one book and giving it a title, Le Morte Darthur. Many critics have opposed the eight-book theory and continued to hold the one-book theory. In order to support their theory, these critics have endeavored to establish that there is a unity in Malory's work. These critics have offered in the process of their study close readings of the text and have helped us eventually to recognize the artistry of Malory.¹

Following this trend of recent criticism, I intend to show Malory's artistry in the Tale of Gareth through a close examination of the relationship between its structure and theme. Examination of the structure of the tale reveals its central theme--that is, the development of a hero into a true knight-lover. Malory does not present his central theme explicitly; he does so implicitly by the skillful use of structural irony. Criticism of Gareth published early in this century mainly engaged in source study because of its assumption that Malory simply translated and reduced his sources.² This assumption, which regards Malory as a mere translator or scribe, would deny the validity of my approach, which emphasizes Malory's artistic intention in the composition of the tale. However, the increasing recognition of Malory's artistry in recent criticism supports my approach. For example, in his study of the Tale of Sir Lancelot, Albert Hartung points out several changes and rearrangements which Malory makes in the sources and concludes that Malory does so to create a new Lancelot, a character different from the ones in Malory's sources. Hartung states that "the care and subtlety he exhibits bring us to a new realization of how little his best effects are the result of accident, and how much he is in control of his material."³

A brief discussion of the Noble Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius also helps justify the type of approach I will take in this essay. Critics generally agree, without

much dispute, that the source for this tale is the English Alliterative Morte Arthur. As Vorontzoff points out, Malory follows his source more faithfully in this tale than in any other of his tales.⁴ In the Winchester Manuscript we can see that Malory transcribes the source almost word for word, often using the alliterative form in his prose. In spite of this heavy reliance on his source, Malory still rearranges the structure of the poem. As Vinaver mentions, the tragic dénouement is removed from the poem. Malory's tale ends with Arthur's triumphant return from Rome to England after being crowned as an emperor.⁵ Not only does he rearrange the structure, Malory also makes some changes in characterization. As Mary Dichmann has noted, Malory makes the most conspicuous change in the character of Lancelot. While Lancelot is a minor character in the Alliterative Morte Arthur, he becomes, in Malory's tale, a distinguished warrior who plays an important role.⁶ The point I want to make here is that Malory is not a slavish translator of his sources. Even when he follows a source faithfully as in the Noble Tale of King Arthur and Emperor Lucius, he still makes important changes according to his intention.

Therefore, it may be worthwhile to approach the Tale of Gareth as an expression of Malory's own artistic intention. Even if he had an immediate source for the tale in front of him, as some critics firmly believe, we can safely assume that he could reconstruct the source to suit his purpose.

This is the approach Wilfred Guerin takes in an essay in Malory's Originality, a book whose purpose is to discern the unity among the eight tales. In the "Introduction," R. M. Lumiansky, the editor of the book, states that "a primary purpose in each of the chapters which follow is to show the function of the given 'Tale' as a part of Le Morte Darthur as a whole."⁷ Given this definite purpose, Guerin necessarily emphasizes the elements which suggest some connection between this tale and the others. Guerin places Gareth at the height of the prosperity of Arthur's kingdom in the story of its rise and decline. He emphasizes that Gareth is portrayed as a model knight of Arthur's court. The exuberant tone of the tale also supports his idea that we are to see the prosperity of Arthur's kingdom in Gareth. Guerin also points out that a virtuous love-relationship between Gareth and Lyonesse is presented in this tale to provide a contrast to the adultery of Lancelot and Guinevere. His emphasis is, however, on the establishment of Gareth and Lancelot as mutual friends. This relationship plays an important role in the decline of Arthur's court as we see in a later tale.⁸

Charles Moorman interprets Gareth in almost the same way as Guerin does. He emphasizes that the purpose of Gareth is to comment unfavorably on courtly love. To Malory, Moorman believes, courtly love cannot be a virtuous love; so he condemns it "by emphasizing its tragic consequences." In contrast to Lancelot, Gareth is a perfect, virtuous lover.⁹

Some critics often find fault with this opinion. For example, Robert W. Ackerman says that since Gareth and Lyonesse are willing to consummate their love before their marriage, it is hard to see them as virtuous lovers.¹⁰ In the essays written by Guerin and Moorman, the discussions of Gareth proper are limited by their manifest intention to view the tale as a part of "the whole book." They do not analyze the tale comprehensively to my satisfaction. Instead, they tend to emphasize the elements which will support their one-book theory. I believe that it is necessary to examine more closely the tale itself before we accept or repudiate their opinions.

Larry Benson presents a different approach. Like the others, he believes in the one-book theory. He feels that "we need not hesitate to agree with the majority of critics and assume that Malory did organize his tales into a single work." The important point which makes him differ from the others is that Benson allows more independence to each tale. While he finds that the book as a whole is organized to create some sort of unity, he also believes that each tale also has its own autonomy. In this regard, Benson criticizes Lumiansky's objection to "the desire of Brewer and Wilson 'to have things both ways--to maintain that Malory's work is both one book and eight books'." Benson also complains that the critics are customarily concerned with unity of action when they argue "both for and against the integrity

of the book," although "it is clear that whatever Malory aimed for it was not that sort of unity." He points out that Vinaver and the critics who are against Vinaver's eight-book theory are, in this respect, not so much different from each other as they seem to be. Benson states that "Malory is working in a more elastic form than neo-classical ideas of unity of action will allow." Therefore, he suggests the necessity for finding other criteria to analyze the sort of unity we find in Malory's work. Benson's solution is to view Malory's work in the light of the Middle English romance tradition. He assumes that romance depends on "a unity of theme" rather than "unity of action, with a cause and effect relationship of the parts." Benson explains the difference between these two unities as follows: in a work which has unity of action, the sequence of actions is central and it produces the theme of the work; "in Malory's romances, the theme dominates the sequence of action and provides the narrative with its order and 'proportionateness'." Benson proposes to analyze one tale in order to illustrate this type of unity because he feels that each individual tale is also organized in order to achieve such unity.¹¹

Before we accept Benson's proposition, we must consider the validity of his assumption that the Middle English romance is always organized by a theme. Although there is little scholarship on this matter, there is one article which corroborates Benson's assertion. The article is written by Mary

Hynes-Berry. She studies two Middle English metrical romances, King Horn and Sir Orfeo. These two romances show many similarities, but they also show contrasting modes of cohesion. While she finds organic unity in Sir Orfeo, she discerns a thematic organization in King Horn. She states that "the logic of progression in King Horn . . . depends on chronology and thematic progression as Horn develops from boyhood to maturity and control." She continues to say that "while there is no overwhelming causal flow from episode to episode, we recognize the coherence of the work because of the skillful use of theme and variation in the construction of the plot." Her conclusion is that there is a "spectrum of cohesive modes found within the group of narrative usually classified as Middle English romances."¹² Her conclusion, therefore, qualifies Benson's offhand assertion. At the same time, however, her study supports his assertion by demonstrating that thematic organization is one of several methods used by Middle English romance writers.

Now, we should return to Benson's essay itself since we find that it is possible to argue that Middle English romance writers may have organized their works by a theme. As I have stated before, Benson proposes to analyze a tale to illustrate a unity of theme. The tale he chooses is the Tale of Gareth, with which we are mainly concerned. He chooses this tale because he believes that Malory composed it; therefore, it presents Malory's view of narrative form

better than any of the other tales.

Benson analyzes the structure of Gareth according to the common theme of the Fair Unknown romances. A Fair Unknown romance is the story of a young man whose identity is unknown to others or, often, even to himself. Benson argues that the theme of the education and vindication of a hero is essential to the Fair Unknown romances. The hero of such a romance has to prove himself as worthy of his name before he reveals it to others or learns it himself. To complete the theme of identity, Benson says, the hero has to prove himself worthy of knighthood, a lady, and membership in his own family. Benson believes Gareth is constructed according to this scheme. At first, Gareth proves himself "to Lancelot, to the general world of knighthood represented by Persaunte and Lyonet." Shortly thereafter, he proves himself to his lady, Lyonesse, in the tournament. In this tournament he also proves himself to "the special world of knighthood represented by Arthur and his court." At the end, he proves himself to Gawain, his older brother. Thus, Benson explains that each episode of the tale is introduced to complete the theme. According to this scheme, Benson can neatly explain the puzzling last section of the story, in which, after the tournament held by Arthur and Lyonesse, Gareth enters upon a series of seemingly unnecessary adventures. Benson believes that this section is necessary to bring Gareth and Gawain together in order for Gareth to prove

his worthiness to a member of his family--in this case, to Gawain.¹³

Benson's argument is convincing to a certain extent; however, his point that Gareth has to prove himself to his relatives is unconvincing. I wonder why Gareth has to do so after beating Gawain in the tournament. I also wonder whether the tournament is necessary for Gareth to be accepted by Arthur's court. I do not believe so. Gareth has sent enough evidence to prove himself to them. These weaknesses in Benson's argument lead us to reconsider his assumption that the process of gradual revelation of a hero's identity is a controlling force in the narrative development of the Fair Unknown romances. In order to test the validity of his assumption, we must review some of the Fair Unknown romances briefly.

There are many medieval romances which can be classified as Fair Unknown romances. The most commonly known romances which belong to this type are the Middle English Lybeaus Desconus, the old French Guinglain or Le Bel Inconnu, the Italian Carduino, and the Middle High German Wigalois. Because of the language barrier, I have read only Lybeaus Desconus and, for the other tales, I have consulted a book-length study of these four Fair Unknown romances by William Schofield and the introduction by M. Mills to the Early English Text Society edition of Lybeaus Desconus.¹⁴ A brief summary of Lybeaus may provide a starting point for a comparison among these romances and Gareth:

After a brief narration of the hero's background, the story starts with the coming of the hero to Arthur's court. The first thing he does is to ask the King to knight him and to give him the first adventure that comes to his court, whatever it may be. The messenger lady, Elene, who has been sent by the lady of Sinadoun, comes to the court and asks for help. According to the promise, Lybeaus receives this adventure. Elene is contemptuous, seeing Lybeaus is still a child. On the way to Sinadoun, he encounters many adventures. This series of adventures makes up the main part of the story. Lybeaus first encounters a knight. Seeing Lybeaus' prowess, Elene stops her scorning. After defeating this knight, he has to fight with three nephews of the knight. All of them are sent to Arthur's court after they are defeated. He saves a maid from two giants. He wins a white gerfalcon and sends it to Arthur. He fights with many assailants for a dog he finds in a wood. After this episode, he falls in love with La Dame d'Amour, whom he has saved from a giant, and is detained for twelve months at her castle. Reproached by Elene, however, he leaves the castle and continues his way to Sinadoun and rescues successfully the lady who has been transformed into a dragon. Lybeaus wins the lady's love, takes her back to Arthur's court,

and marries her.

With this brief outline of Lybeaus in mind, we should proceed to compare it with the other romances. I do not intend to make a comparison of any small details since I am concerned only with their structures. In the first half of the French Le Bel Inconnu, we find a series of adventures a hero encounters similar to that of Lybeaus. The difference occurs after the hero has accomplished his mission. Instead of marrying the transformed queen, the hero goes back to Pucele (la Dame d'Amour in Lybeaus). Later, Arthur has to proclaim a tournament to lure the hero back to his proper bride. These episodes after the rescue of the transformed lady make up the second half of the romance.

The Wigalois has a longer introductory portion than Lybeaus (Inconnu does not have any), and in it Gawain's marriage and his desertion of his lady are related. Later, Gawain's son, Wigalois, sets out in search of his father and comes to Arthur's court. After being trained by Gawain, who does not know the identity of Wigalois, Wigalois embarks on a series of adventures in order to rescue a lady from an enchanter. This part of the tale is similar to Lybeaus. Unlike Lybeaus but similar to Inconnu, Wigalois does not end in the marriage of the hero and the rescued lady. After their marriage and the revelation of his identity to Gawain, he starts another series of adventures. The story ends happily with the hero's successful accomplishment of the adventures.

The structure of Carduino is similar to that of Lybeaus, but it offers fewer incidents. The hero meets only three adventures before he rescues a transformed lady: "a brief stay with an enchantress, a combat with an aggressive knight, and another with two giants."¹⁵ In this romance, Gawain is not the hero's father but one of the knights who are responsible for the death of his father. The romance ends with Gawain's request for forgiveness and with the hero's generous pardon.

After reviewing these romances briefly, we reach a conclusion that Benson's assumption is not valid. There is no gradual revelation of the hero's identity. Of course, all of the heroes in these romances earn their names by successfully accomplishing their adventures. We do not see, however, the heroes fight with their relatives in order to be accepted by their families. In Lybeaus we do not even know whether the hero has ever learned his real name, Gyngalyn. Although we know it and the name of his father, Gawain, from the introductory opening, we only hear the characters mention a few times that Lybeaus must be kin to Gawain because of his outstanding prowess. In Carduino, there is no relative for the hero to fight with in order to prove himself. These heroes, unlike Gareth, are not required to prove themselves any further after they have saved the transformed lady. All of them, except the hero of Inconnu, marry the ladies soon after the completion of their adventures. In the case of Inconnu, the

hero prefers another lady and evades marrying the rescued lady. Because of these findings, we cannot agree with Benson's assumption that a Fair Unknown story is usually constructed according to a gradual revelation and vindication of a hero's identity.

In the preceding discussion, while we find that Benson's assumption does not work, we also notice that there are some common elements in the Fair Unknown romances. One of them is a series of adventures which a hero has to undergo. In Lybeaus Desconus and Carduino, this series of adventures makes up almost the whole of each romance. In Le Bel Inconnu, the account of the series of adventures makes up half of the story. It also occupies a large part of the narrative in Wigalois. Keeping this fact in mind, we should examine the outline of Gareth:

After a short account of how a handsome unknown youth appears in Arthur's court and how Kay mocks him and uses him as a kitchen knave for twelve months, the story relates an appearance of a maiden in Arthur's court. She asks for a knight to free her lady from the Red Knight of the Red Lands. The youth takes up this adventure. Kay follows him to mock him but is beaten down. Lancelot also follows him as he has been asked to do by the youth at the court. Seeing Kay's fall, Lancelot offers a joust to the youth. After they battle to a draw, the youth reveals to

Lancelot that he is Gareth. After being knighted by Lancelot, Gareth follows the maiden. The maiden constantly scorns him by calling him a kitchen knave. In spite of her scorn, Gareth follows her and encounters six adventures before he fights with the Red Knight of the Red Lands. Gareth accomplishes all of these adventures successfully.

After he has defeated the Red Knight of the Red Lands, Gareth is sent away by the lady Lyonesse, whom he has rescued. Gareth wanders in madness a while, but soon he is accepted by his lady. They twice attempt to consummate their love but are prevented by a strange knight who wounds Gareth. Meanwhile, Gareth's mother comes to Arthur's court and reveals his identity. In order to find Gareth, Arthur sends for Lyonesse. According to Gareth's direction, Lyonesse advises Arthur to proclaim a tournament, with her hand as the prize. She also suggests that it will lure Gareth back to the court. Gareth, in disguise, wins the tournament. When his identity is revealed, he rides away and enters upon another series of adventures. Then, by chance he encounters Gawain. They fight until Lyonet comes to reveal their identities. The story ends with a wedding feast for Gareth and Lyonesse.

In Gareth we also find that the series of adventures which the hero undergoes to rescue a lady occupies a large portion of the tale. It makes up almost half of the story. Among the four Fair Unknown romances, Gareth has a structure most similar to that of Le Bel Inconnu. Both of the romances seem to be divided into two equal parts. Their first parts are very similar to the whole of Lybeaus Desconus. In his study of the Fair Unknown romances, Schofield tells us that the author of Le Bel Inconnu adds the second half of the romance to his source because he is more interested in the love affair between the hero and the enchantress.¹⁶ This interpretation of Bel Inconnu enables us to understand the second part of Gareth as Malory's intentional addition.

William Ryding's discussion of bipartite form in Structure in Medieval Narrative corroborates Schofield's interpretation. By this term--bipartite form--Ryding means a narrative form which can be divided into two almost equal parts. We have already seen that the form of Bel Inconnu and Gareth fits this description. In his discussion of bipartite form, which, he finds, is very popular in medieval narrative, Ryding makes the point that a skillful writer uses this form with some artistic concern. In his analysis of Chr tien's Erec and Yvain, he illustrates his point. Ryding indicates that the first portion of these romances can be treated as self-contained stories. In Erec, Chr tien tells us about the adventures Erec encounters and his achievement of his beau-

tiful wife, Enide. The first part ends with their return to Arthur's court. At this moment, Chrétien tells us that the first part is over. Instead of stopping here, Chrétien adds more episodes. Ryding's short summary of the second part is as follows:

Erec and Enide marry. The celebration culminates in a tournament at Tenebroc from which Erec emerges as grand champion. Then, suddenly, he becomes so engrossed in his bride that he loses interest in arms and chivalry. . . . His loss of reputation now provokes into existence the extended series of graduated and symmetrically arranged adventures.

The story ends with Erec's recovery of his honor and love. The pattern Ryding finds in Erec is this: the rise of the hero in the first part, the sudden fall caused by his uxorious life, which makes him forget the life of knighthood, and in the second part the process of rehabilitation through a series of adventures which he encounters during his self-imposed exile from Arthur's court. Ryding believes that Chrétien adds the second part to achieve a didactic purpose--that is, in this case, "to illustrate how the ideal of mesure applies in the adjustment of marriage and chivalry." Ryding also finds a similar pattern in Yvain, although the cause of the hero's fall in this story has the exact opposite nature of Erec's. Yvain also wins a beautiful wife after his adventure. Unlike Erec, however, Yvain is involved in chivalric life instead of being uxorious

and forgets to return to his wife on the appointed day. He is shamed by a messenger from his wife at the court and later undergoes, like Erec, a series of rehabilitating adventures. In both of these stories, Ryding believes that Chrétien adds the last parts to achieve some didactic meanings.¹⁷

Per Nykrog makes a similar point in his article, which aims at demonstrating a high level of consciousness of form and technique in two romanciers of the Middle Ages--Gautier d'Arras and Chrétien de Troyes. In his discussion of Gautier, Nykrog analyzes the Ille et Galeron and its source, the lai Eliduc by Marie de France. He finds that Gautier uses the bipartite form in constructing Ille, and demonstrates that Gautier intentionally changes the structure of the source to express the meaning of his story.¹⁸ From the above discussion it is clear that Schofield, Ryding, and Nykrog find that the bipartite forms of the works are the result of the authors' conscious efforts to achieve certain effects.

The findings of these critics certainly encourage us to analyze the structure of Gareth more seriously. As we have noted before, Gareth can be divided into two parts:

1. from the beginning of the tale to the end of the battle with the Red Knight of the Red Lands,
2. from Lyonesse's refusal to take Gareth into her castle to the end of the tale.

In the first part we witness the rise of the hero, as in the other bipartite tales. This part has a structure similar to

that of Lybeaus Desconus. Although the episodes of this part are not connected by a cause-and-effect relationship, they are tied together by the constant presence of the hero and the messenger maiden. Besides this, these episodes are neatly arranged so that they show a gradual development. Because of these elements, we feel a certain order in this part. On the other hand, the second part seems formless. It seems that the events of this section occur haphazardly. I have taken this peculiarity of the form into consideration as the basis for the study of the tale's meaning. My conclusion is that the first part demonstrates Gareth's perfect mastery in his knighthood and that the second part shows, in contrast to the earlier part, both Gareth's shortcomings in his love and his development into a true knight-lover. The order we find in the first part can be interpreted as a reflection of Gareth's full control over the events of this part. However, in the second part, everything is out of his hands. Nothing happens in the way he expects. The world of the second part is different from that of the first. It is a world of love. Although it seems that Gareth is at perfect ease while he is in the world of chivalry, once love is involved, everything is out of order for him. This implicitly suggests his lack of understanding in love. In the remainder of this essay, I intend to examine each part more closely in order to verify my point.

The first part of Gareth can be divided into three sections:

an introductory section about Gareth's appearance and his life in Arthur's court for twelve months; a series of preliminary adventures with Kay and Lancelot; and seven fights which he undergoes. In the introductory section Gareth appears with two men who support him from both sides. Gareth asks for and is granted three "boons" from Arthur. Proper to his seeming condition of weakness from hunger, he asks Arthur for food for twelve months; for the time being he reserves the other two gifts for a year later. He is put under the charge of Kay, who makes him a kitchen knave and gives him the nickname "Beaumains." Although Lancelot and Gawain offer some easy ways to avoid Kay's abuse, Gareth does not accept their offer and prefers to endure Kay's mocking. Moreover, he does not seem to mind it very much. Malory tells us:

So thus he was putt into the kychyn and lay nyghtly as the kychen boyes dede. And so he endured all that twelve-monthe and never dyspleased man nother chylde, but allwayes he was meke and mylde.

(295.36-296.2)

Here, we see him in full control of himself. After twelve months, a maiden comes to Arthur's court and asks for a knight to free her lady from the Red Knight of the Red Lands. Arthur refuses because she does not reveal who her lady is and where she lives. Then, Gareth steps forward and asks for the two boons he reserved from the year before. For the first

he asks to be assigned to this adventure, and his request is granted; for the second he asks that Lancelot follow him so that Lancelot can knight him when Gareth requires. This request is also granted. In this way Gareth achieves the right to take up the adventure the maiden has brought. It seems almost as if Gareth reserved the two boons because he knew what would come. The important point is not whether he knew it or not, but that we are given the impression that Gareth is in control of everything.

Before he starts the main section of the adventures, he jousts with Kay, who has pursued him to mock him, and defeats Kay easily. Thus, he pays back all the abuse Kay has dealt him. Later, according to Gareth's request, Lancelot follows him. They battle to a draw. Gareth displays his great prowess in this battle with the best knight in the world. Lancelot is the one who offers to quit the battle:

For sir Launcelot had so much ado with hym that he
dred hymself to be shamed, and seyde,

'Beawmaynes, feyght nat so sore! Your quarell
and myne is nat grete but we may sone leve of.'

'Truly that is trouth,' seyde Beawmaynes, 'but
hit doth me good to fele your myght. And yet, my
lorde, I shewed nat the utteraunce.'

(299.3-10)

Again, we find him in control of the event. Besides, it seems almost as if Gareth planned this meeting because he is the

one who asked Lancelot to follow him. Probably because he knew he would have to reveal his identity before he could be knighted and because he wished to conceal his identity longer, he chose to be knighted out of the court instead of receiving the knighthood before he started his adventure. Lancelot's speech may support this point. When Gareth asks Lancelot to give him the Order of Knighthood, Lancelot replies:

'Sir, than muste ye tell me your name of ryght, and of what kyn ye be borne.'

(299.21-22)

(Later in the tale, he also says that if he had not known the true name of Beaumains, he would not have given him the high Order of Knighthood [326.28-29].) Gareth tells his name to Lancelot and asks him not to reveal it to anyone.

After this encounter with Lancelot, the story takes a form which is very common in the Fair Unknown romances--that is, a narration of a series of adventures that a hero undergoes and a final meeting with a rescued lady. This point has already been mentioned in my discussion of the Fair Unknown romances in general. This section of Gareth is given a progressive form by making the opponent in each episode stronger than the one in the preceding episode. First of all, Gareth meets six thieves and kills them all quickly--in the space of one paragraph (300.32-301.4). Then, he fights with two knights instead of the thieves, but he also manages to kill them quickly and easily (301.36-302.10). After this episode,

Gareth enters upon a series of fights with the brothers of one family: first, the Knight of the Black Lands; second, the Green Knight; third, the Red Knight; the last, sir Persaunte of Inde. If we examine the descriptions of these fights carefully, we notice that the time Gareth fights becomes longer in each successive episode, and the difficulty he has in defeating an opponent increases (304.13-21, 305.28-306.9, 309.21-36, 313.30-314.11). This type of arrangement of episodes is not unusual. We find a similar arrangement in Lybeaus Desconus.

The difference between these two stories is in their treatment of the motif of the contemptuous maiden. Compared to Lybeaus Desconus, this motif is developed extensively in Gareth. Anyone who reads the Tale of Gareth agrees that this is one of the most delightful aspects of the story. Malory spends more time narrating the conversation between Gareth and the maiden than he does describing the battles Gareth undergoes. While the maiden in Lybeaus soon stops rebuking the hero after seeing Lybeaus' victory over one knight and enjoys traveling with him after that point, the maiden in Gareth continues to mock Gareth even after he defeats many knights. Moreover, she sometimes encourages Gareth's opponents to defeat him. Observing these differences, I believe that Malory is more interested in Gareth's courteous but clever dealing with the maiden and in the gradual changes in her attitude toward Gareth than in Gareth's chivalric activity.

If he were interested in presenting the gradual revelation of Gareth's prowess, he would not have put Gareth's battle with Lancelot at the very beginning of the adventure. It has diminished the effect of suspense, because Lancelot is known as the best knight in the world. As we have observed, Malory has shown Gareth as a master of all the situations until he follows the maiden. I find that Malory also uses the motif of the contemptuous maiden to demonstrate Gareth's control. Taking a leave of Lancelot, Gareth follows the maiden, who has left Arthur's court in anger because Arthur has given her a kitchen knave instead of a knight. When he overtakes her, the first word he receives is this:

'What doste thou here? Thou stynkyst all of the
kychyn, thy clothis bene bawdy of the grece and talow.'

(300.7-8)

She constantly gives Gareth this sort of scorning; however, Gareth simply says that he will follow her and accomplish his mission. It seems that this nonchalant attitude of Gareth irritates her more. Even after seeing Gareth's victory over six thieves and two knights, she says Gareth has done so "unhappily" (303.21). For a long time, Gareth does nothing about her mocking except occasionally asking her to stop it; he seems almost submissive. However, the tables are turned in the episode of the Green Knight. When Gareth defeats the Green Knight, the knight asks for mercy and yields to him. Gareth will not allow his request unless "this damesell that

cam with me pray me to save thy lyff" (306.13-14). The damsel answers:

'Fye uppon the, false kychyn payge! I woll never pray the to save his lyff, for I woll nat be so muche in thy daunger.'

(306.16-17)

Hearing this, Gareth seems to prepare to kill the Green Knight. The knight prays for mercy again and promises to serve Gareth with thirty knights. Nothing, however, will avail him except a word from the maiden. She finally tells Gareth not to kill him:

'Lat be,' seyde the dameselle, 'thou bawdy kychyn knave! Sle hym nat, for and thou do thou shalt repente hit.'

(306.32-33)

Gareth responds to her by saying:

'Damesell,' seyde Bewmaynes, 'your charge is to me a plesure, and at youre commaundement his lyff shall be saved, and ellis nat.' Than he said, 'Sir knyght with the grene armys, I releyse the quyte at this damesels requeste, for I woll nat make hir wroth, for I woll fulfyllle all that she chargyth me.'

(306.34-307.3)

Thus, Gareth emphasizes that he is doing her service. Now, we see him in full control again. Even after this incident, however, the maiden does not stop her rebuking. She still

calls him a kitchen knave. But we find some change in her attitude. When Gareth uses the same stratagem in his victory over the Red Knight, the damsel does not make so much fuss as before. She simply says:

'Let be, thou Bewmaynes, and sle hym nat, for he
is a noble knyght, and nat so hardy uppon thyne
hede but that thou save hym.'

(310.9-11)

Then, before Gareth's fight with sir Persaunte of Inde, the damsel finally admits her fault in rebuking him so much and asks for his forgiveness. Gareth willingly grants it and says that her rebuking inspired him so that he could win all the victories. When sir Persaunte is defeated and asks for mercy, the damsel comes out and prays for him to save his life before Gareth says anything. We have observed that Gareth gradually gains hold on the damsel and finally achieves her respect through his remarkable prowess and, moreover, his courtesy to her, which is an essential quality for a true knight. After Gareth's victory over sir Persaunte, the maiden reveals that she is called Lyonet and that the lady for whose sake Gareth has started his adventure is her sister, Lyonesse. At the same time, Gareth also reveals his identity. The last adventure Gareth encounters in the first part is, of course, the battle with the Red Knight of the Red Lands. As we expect, Gareth successfully defeats him, though with much difficulty. Hence, he has accomplished his mission.

At this point, we expect the heroine's hearty welcome and a union of the hero and the heroine, as we see in many of the romances such as Lybeaus Desconus. Apparently, Gareth expects the same. When he comes to the castle, he finds the men armed and the drawbridge pulled up.

Than he mervayled why they wolde nat suffir hym to
entir. . . .

(327.4-5)

From the high window, Lyonesse tells him that he has to prove himself further to have her love. Gareth pitifully appeals to Lyonesse:

'Alas! fayre lady,' seyde sir Bewmaynes, 'I have nat
deserved that ye sholde shew me this straungenesse.
And I hadde wente I sholde have had ryght good chere
with you, and unto my power I have deserved thanke.
And well I am sure I have bought your love with
parte of the beste bloode within my body.'

(327.12-17)

At this point, Gareth's position is changed. Until now, Gareth has exercised control over all the events he has encountered. From this point on, however, things happen and develop which are out of his hands. This sharp turn in his situation is the main reason for my dividing this tale into two parts at this point.

It seems to me that Malory uses structural irony to create an effect of surprise in our minds and, of course, in

the mind of Gareth. One way to create structural irony is to use two similar scenes or situations. An author may set up parallel situations in his work, or he may rely on the reader's understanding of a convention which provides a contrast to the situation he sets up in his work. Malory uses the latter technique. As we have noted already, the first part of Gareth is very conventional, and we can easily find situations similar to Gareth's in many romances. In these romances, we usually see that the story ends with the happy marriage of a hero and a heroine. Therefore, we expect the union of Gareth and Lyonesse here. Malory denies our expectation by making Lyonesse refuse Gareth permission to come into her castle. By doing so, Malory introduces his main theme of true love. Malory implicitly denies the idea that Gareth deserves Lyonesse's love, because he has "bought your love with parte of the beste bloode within my body" (327. 16-17). In the remainder of this paper, I will analyze how Malory exposes the falsity of this sort of love.

As we have seen, Gareth is sent away from Lyonesse's castle. This is an unexpected thing for Gareth as well as for us. After being refused by Lyonesse, Gareth wanders in madness:

And so he rode now here, now there, he wyste nat
whother, tyll hit was durke nyght. And than hit
happened hym to com to a pore mannys house, and
there he was herborowde all that nyght. But sir

Bewmaynes had no reste, but walowed and wrythed for
the love of the lady of that castell.

(327.30-34)

This rejected hero's wandering in madness is another conventional motif Malory exploits. As we see in the cases of Lancelot and Tristram, according to this convention a hero goes mad for a while when he is rejected by his lady, but after undergoing several adventures, he is usually accepted by his lady. Therefore, we expect Gareth to go through a similar process. Again, our expectation is betrayed. In spite of a protestation of his love, soon afterward Gareth falls in love with the disguised Lyonesse, whom he believes to be another person:

And sir Gareth thought many tymes: 'Jesu, wolde that
the lady of this Castell Perelus were so fayre as
she is!' And there was all maner of gamys and playes,
of daunsyng and syngynge, and evermore sir Gareth
behelde that lady. And the more he loked on her,
the more he brenned in love, that he passed hymself
farre in his reson.

(331.19-24)

Fortunately for Gareth, the lady whom he now loves is the same lady he is supposed to love. Therefore, the problem is solved without presenting any moral complication as such to Gareth. However, the problem is presented to the reader. We doubt the degree of sincerity of Gareth's love. His first

love is easily put away for the second lady, the disguised Lyonesse; his love for the second lady is easily kindled out of all reason. We cannot help noticing the frivolity and shallowness of Gareth's love. Even Gareth himself is not completely blind to his awkward situation. Therefore, when Lyonesse reveals her identity, "Than was syr Gareth more gladder than he was tofore" (332.33-34).

What we have seen in the second part of the tale so far supports my point that Gareth, in contrast to his confidence in the first part, has lost control over the situation. He has been sent away unexpectedly by his lady and falls in love with another lady, thereby finding himself in an awkward situation. Besides these events, Gareth's identity is revealed to Lyonesse and to the others in an unexpected way. Lyonesse asks her brother to steal Gareth's dwarf because Lyonet has told her that his dwarf can tell his name. Gryngamoure successfully brings back the dwarf to Lyonesse, who has been waiting for him at his castle. They learn Gareth's identity from the dwarf. In the first part, Gareth reveals his identity whenever he wants to do so. In this case, in contrast to the first part, Gareth's will does not have any part in the revelation of his identity. Again, things are out of his control.

All of the above-mentioned episodes support my point. In the episode of the mysterious knight, however, Malory's intention to establish a contrast between the first part and

the second is obviously seen in his different treatment of Gareth and Lyonet. After learning each other's identity, Gareth and Lyonesse plan an assignation:

And than they trouthe-plyghte other to love and never
to fayle whyle their lyff lastyth. And so they brente
bothe in hoote love that they were acorded to abate
their lustys secretly.

(332.35-333.1)

Lyonet immediately learns their intention, "for they were but yonge bothe and tendir of ayge and had nat used suche craufftis toforne" (333.5-6). Lyonet does not like their plan at all:

Wherefore the damesell Lyonett was a lytyll dysplesed;
and she thought hir sister dame Lyonesse was a lytyll
overhasty that she myght nat abyde hir tyme of maryage,
and for savyng of hir worshyp she thought to abate
their hoote lustis.

(333.6-10)

To accomplish her intent, she sends a mysterious knight to their bed. At first glance, Lyonet may seem to be too morally strict since they "trouthe-plyghte other to love and never to fayle whyle their lyff lastyth" (332.35-36). However, the key for judging this situation is given earlier by Gareth himself. To entertain Gareth, sir Persaunte sends his daughter to Gareth's bed. Gareth, however, does not accept this offer, recognizing that he will dishonor sir Persaunte by dishonoring

his daughter. Here, a knight-and-paramour relationship is flatly denied by Gareth himself. Gareth might have applied this principle to his relation with Lyonesse if he were not "brenned in love" (331.23).

Another key for judging the situation is the tone of these episodes. While Lyonesse and her brother are crying and lamenting Gareth's wound, Lyonet calmly comes in and then:

[She] toke up the hede in the syght of them all, and anoynted hit with an oyntemente thereas hit was smyttyn off, and in the same wyse [s]he ded to the othir parte thereas the hede stake. And then she sette hit togydirs, and hit stake as faste as ever hit ded. And the knyght arose lyghtly up and the damesell Lyonett put hym in hir chambir.

(334.20-26)

The confusion of the others, in contrast to Lyonet's controlled manner, seems humorous. In the second attempted assignation, we see Gareth almost comically portrayed. After beheading the mysterious knight,

he hew the hede uppon an hondred pecis, and whan he had done so he toke up all tho pecis and threw them oute at a wyndow into the dychis of the castell.

(335.19-21)

We feel Gareth's real frustration and hatred; but we cannot help laughing, especially when Lyonet appears with the pieces of the head and puts them together neatly in front of Gareth

and the others, as she had done before with the head and body. Gareth rebukes her in both cases, but Lyonet calmly answers:

'My lorde sir Gareth,' seyde Lyonett, 'all that I have done I woll avowe hit, and all shall be for your worshyp and us all.'

(334.32-34)

In such a situation, our sympathy tends to go with Lyonet; as a consequence, we agree with her moral judgment. This is the exact opposite of the situation we find in the first part. Instead of Gareth's being in control, now Lyonet controls Gareth. Gareth and Lyonesse are, as Malory mentions, inexperienced lovers, and they need a guide. Lyonet plays this role for them.

After the episode of the mysterious knight, Malory simply leaves Gareth and starts narrating the happenings at Arthur's court. In this part of the narrative, Gareth's identity is revealed to the whole court. Arthur wishes to find Gareth. According to the advice given by Lancelot and sir Bawdwin, Arthur sends for Lyonesse. Gareth directs her not to tell where he is but to propose to Arthur to arrange for a tournament, with her hand as the prize. It seems that Gareth tries to put things under his control again. He plans to prove his love by winning this tournament; by toiling more to achieve Lyonesse, he wants to prove his love is true. At the same time, he can prove his prowess to Arthur's court. With the help of Lyonesse's magic ring, he enters a tournament

in disguise and wins an overwhelming victory and achieves the right to marry Lyonesse, as he probably has planned. Things are, however, still out of his control. I suspect that Gareth has a plan when to reveal his identity as he has done in the first part. However, because his dwarf keeps his ring away from him, his identity is revealed unexpectedly for him. Gareth has to ride away hastily into a forest.

After this episode, although he has publicly won the right to marry Lyonesse, Gareth enters upon another series of adventures instead of going back to her. He sends his dwarf to return Lyonesse's ring with his word that he will return soon. Then, he wanders off to have more adventures. In this scene, we see a picture of Gareth different from the one in the earlier section of the second part. It seems that he regains control over his passion. Now he can leave his lady for his business as a knight--that is, for fights and jousts with other knights. This series of adventures makes symmetry with the previous series of adventures, in which Gareth has demonstrated full control. The similarity of these two sets of adventures implies Gareth's self-control in the second series. The time spent for these adventures also suggests the enduring quality in Gareth's love, which is unlike his first love. When he thus reaches maturity in his love, Lyonet brings his adventure to an end and also brings everybody together. As the guide for his love, Lyonet again plays the important role in this section.

When Lyonesse and Gareth are brought back together in front of Arthur's court, Arthur asks specifically whether he wants to take Lyonesse as his paramour or as his wife. Of course, he chooses to marry her. Gareth has matured and now deserves the complete bliss of conjugal love. Everybody seems to be happy with his choice. Arthur says:

'What, nevewe?' seyde the kynge. 'Is the wynde in that dore? For wete you well I wolde nat for the stynte [of] my crowne to be causer to withdraw your hertys. And wete you well ye can nat love so well but I shall rather encrece hyt than discrece hit; and also ye shall have my love and my lordeshyp in the uttirmuste wyse that may lye in my power.'

(360.6-11)

His mother also agrees. The tale ends with their splendid marriage celebration.

Thus far, in the second part, we have seen the emergence of the new theme--the theme of true love--and the development of Gareth into a true lover. Using the conventional form in the first part, Malory prepares for the ironic outcome at the beginning of the second part. Through his use of structural irony, he subtly expresses the denial of the commonly accepted relationship between a knight and his lady, which may belong to the courtly love tradition. I do not think, however, that this tale is a simple celebration of conjugal love and denial of courtly love, as Moorman seems to think.

Since Malory presents Gareth as a perfect knight who has supreme prowess, humility, courtesy, and self-control in the first part, Malory's treatment of Gareth as a failure in the second part suggests the real difficulty in attaining true love.

We have found Malory using irony in a masterly manner in order to express the central theme. He also shows himself as a conscious artist in the structuring of Gareth. As we have noted repeatedly, this tale has two parts of almost equal length. On the one hand, Malory gives an orderly form to the first part in order to imply Gareth's masterly conduct; on the other, he gives no readily perceivable form to the second part until Gareth has regained some control over himself. The symmetry is formed by the two series of adventures of the first and second parts. If we remember the details well, we also notice that the story is opened at Kynke Kenadonne and ends at the same place, both on the days of the feasts. These points show that Malory is concerned with form and encourage us to attribute an artistic intention to him.

I believe that we have established Malory as an artist. Although I do not intend to analyze the relationship of this tale to the other tales in detail, as I have stated at the very beginning, I want to make a short comment on this matter as a conclusion. When we see the eight tales as a whole, we find Gareth before the great love stories of Tristram-

Isode and Lancelot-Guinevere. Since we now believe that Malory is capable of subtle manipulation to express his ideas, I believe this placing of Gareth before the two tragic love stories is not mere chance. Although Gareth ends happily with conjugal bliss, the tale as a whole certainly points out the difficulty which can be caused by love. Fortunately for Gareth, everything comes out fine, with the help of Lyonet. In this respect, Gareth can be called a comedy. The happy ending, however, cannot dismiss the potential difficulty we have seen in the tale. Hence, Gareth can be taken as a prelude to the other two pairs' tragic love stories rather than as a tale to be contrasted to them. Thus, Malory subtly prepares for the coming of the tragic end of the Arthurian world.

Footnotes

¹ Malory's Originality: A Critical Study of Le Morte Darthur (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1964), edited by R. M. Lumiansky, is one of the best examples of the recent trend to attribute artistry to Malory.

² For example, see Eugène Vinaver, "A Romance of Gaheret," Medium Aevum, 1 (1932), 157-67; Roger Sherman Loomis, "Malory's Beaumains," PMLA, 54 (1939), 656-68; Robert H. Wilson, "The 'Fair Unknown' in Malory," PMLA, 58 (1943), 1-21.

³ Albert E. Hartung, "Narrative Technique, Characterization, and the Sources in Malory's 'Tale of Sir Lancelot,'" Studies in Philology, 70 (1973), 252-68.

⁴ Tania Vorontzoff, "Malory's Story of Arthur's Roman Campaign," Medium Aevum, 6 (1937), 113-21.

⁵ Eugène Vinaver, "Commentary on the Tale of the Noble King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius," in The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, ed. Eugène Vinaver (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), III, 1366-71 [Hereafter page numbers in parentheses in the text refer to this edition].

⁶ Mary E. Dichmann, "'The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius': The Rise of Lancelot," in Malory's Originality, pp. 67-90.

⁷ R. M. Lumiansky, "Introduction," in Malory's Originality, p. 4.

⁸ Wilfred L. Guerin, "'The Tale of Gareth': The Chivalric

Flowering," in Malory's Originality, pp. 99-117.

⁹ Charles Moorman, The Book of King Arthur: The Unity of Malory's Morte Darthur (Lexington: Univ. of Kentucky Press, 1965), pp. 19-22.

¹⁰ Robert W. Ackerman, "'The Tale of Gareth' and the Unity of Le Morte Darthur," in Philological Essays: Studies in Old and Middle English Language and Literature in Honour of Herbert Dean Meritt (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), p. 201.

¹¹ Larry D. Benson, "Le Morte Darthur," in Critical Approaches to Six Major English Works, ed. R. M. Lumiansky and Herschel Baker (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), pp. 81-111.

¹² Mary Hynes-Berry, "Cohesion in King Horn and Sir Orfeo," Speculum, 50 (1975), 652-70.

¹³ Benson, pp. 111-131.

¹⁴ William Henry Schofield, Studies on the Libeaus Desconus, Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature, 4 (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1895); M. Mills, "Introduction," Lybeaus Desconus, E.E.T.S., O.S., No. 261 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 42-64.

¹⁵ Mills, p. 46.

¹⁶ Schofield, p. 106, and passim.

¹⁷ William W. Ryding, Structure in Medieval Narrative (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), pp. 124-33.

¹⁸ Per Nykrog, "Two Creators of Narrative Form in Twelfth Century France: Gautier d'Arras--Chrétien de Troyes," Speculum, 48 (1973), 258-76.

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THE STRUCTURE OF MALORY'S TALE OF GARETH

by

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B. A., University of Alabama, 1974

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1976

Abstract

An increasing number of critics recently have begun to attribute high artistry to Malory. In keeping with this trend, I intend to show Malory's artistry in the Tale of Gareth through a close examination of the relationship between its structure and theme.

The central theme of the story is the difficulty of attaining true love. Although Gareth demonstrates himself as a perfect knight in the world of chivalry, he shows his shortcomings and lack of understanding in the world of love. In order to present this central theme effectively, Malory employs a bipartite form and the device of structural irony. The tale is divided into two parts which represent the worlds of chivalry and of love. In the world of chivalry, Gareth shows a full control over the events. Malory organizes this part in such a way as to show a gradual development and a certain orderliness, which, in turn, reflect Gareth's perfect mastery of knighthood. The first part is also organized according to the convention of the Fair Unknown stories--that is, as a series of adventures concluding with a final union of a hero and a heroine--so that the reader expects a union of Gareth and Lyonesse at the end of the first part.

Thus, Malory prepares for an ironic turn which occurs at the center of the tale. By making Lyonesse refuse Gareth and thus denying our expectation, Malory introduces the theme

of true love. Instead of a happy union of the two lovers, we see the shallowness and frivolity of Gareth's love in the following part. In contrast to the first part, it seems that everything happens haphazardly and is beyond Gareth's control. To reflect Gareth's inadequacy in the world of love, Malory does not give any readily perceivable form to this part, but arranges it in such a way as to show that the other characters, especially Lyonet, have control over the events. Once Gareth matures in his love, Malory presents a form similar to that of the first part and implies that Gareth has regained self-control. Since Gareth is presented as a perfect knight in the first part, his shortcomings in the world of love emphasize the difficulty of attaining true love. Thus, Malory skillfully structures the tale to convey his central theme.