The Treatment of the Tristan Legend in English Literature Up to the Twentieth Century

Myrtle M. Johnson
THE TREATMENT OF THE TRISTAN LEGEND
IN
ENGLISH LITERATURE
UP TO THE
TWENTIETH CENTURY

BY
MYRTLE MAY JOHNSON

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
Department of English
Butler University
Indianapolis
1933
Foreword

The purpose of the following study has been to consider the consecutive interpretations of the Tristan legend in English literature down to the present century. In order to appreciate their comparative fidelity to the spirit of the lost primitive poem, it was first necessary to examine the metrical romance of Thomas, "who may be said," writes William Henry Schofield, "to represent the highest achievement of any English poet in the twelfth century," along with other derivatives used in the scholarly and poetic reconstruction, made by Joseph Bédier, of that hypothetical original creation.

For the helpful courtesies of Dr. Leland R. Smith, Librarian of Butler University, in arranging loans for materials not easily accessible, I wish to express my thanks. For the deep satisfaction of the counsel and instruction of Dr. John Smith Harrison, I express sincere appreciation and gratitude.
# CONTENTS

**Part I**

*The Ur-Tristan*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Hypothetical Primitive Tristan Romance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>The Chief Derivations from the Primitive Poem of the Reconstructed Romance</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part II**

*The Tristan Legend in English Arthurian Romance*

| III     | The Books of Sir Tristram in *Le Morte Darthur*, Sir Thomas Malory | 51   |
| IV      | The Sixth Book of *The Faerie Queene*, Edmund Spenser              | 74   |
| V       | The *Last Tournament*, *Idylls of the King*, Alfred Lord Tennyson   | 88   |

**Part III**

*The Tristan Legend Interpreted as Independent of the Arthurian Cycle*

| VI      | Tristram and Iseult, Matthew Arnold                                | 103  |
| VII     | Tristram of Lyonesse, Algernon Charles Swinburne                   | 124  |
| VIII    | Conclusion                                                        | 135  |
the position of sources of all other extant versions; and a fragmentary lost English poem, so considered by G. Paris (1902). In 1905 J. Bédier demonstrated scientifically, to the satisfaction of most students, the existence of a common original of a primitive romance, since then spoken of by German scholars as the Ur-Tristan. The same conclusion has been reached by W. Golther, a German scholar, whose work was done independently and at about the same time as that of Bédier and published in 1907.

Since Chrétien de Troyes mentions a poem "del roi Marc et d'Iseult la blonde" in a list of works in his Cligés, the possibility of the identity of this, evidently episodic, poem with the primitive poem has occurred to many minds. Paris asserted that Chrétien de Troyes had never written a long poem of Tristan since no allusion to it has been found in the contemporary literature of the Middle Ages. Foerster, the eminent German authority on Chrétien, supposed that Chrétien wrote the Ur-Tristan but that an Ururtristan was the model from which Chrétien's poem gained the marked superiority which this primitive Ur-Tristan (whosoever it was) shows, even in reconstruction, over Chrétien's first works, his translations or adaptations.

from Ovid. Bruce, the American historian of the Arthurian legend, concludes that Chrétien, in all probability had planned a long poem but failed to complete it and also to put the fragment into circulation. Paris believed that all French Tristan poems derived from a lost incomplete English poem.

Schofield, in America, also agrees with the theory of Paris as to Tristan's origin. Another American authority, Gertrude Schoepperle, who attributed a higher value to the Béroul-Eilhart version than to the Prose Romance or Thomas, as preserving an earlier version of tradition, refers to the source of Béroul as the "estoire" from his allusion to it:

Si comme l'estoire dit, 3
La ou Berox le vit escrit.

However, since Eilhart, Thomas, and the Folie (Berne MS.) give evidence of a continuation which Béroul's "estoire" lacked, she preferred to refer to Eilhart's source as Eilhart's "buch," though, to be sure, she explains that Eilhart's "buch" was a French poem. Her evaluation as to Eilhart's superiority over other redactions is based upon the fact that it is the most primitive complete version extant.

Eugène Vinaver, a contemporary scholar of the Tristan legend, adopts Bédier's theory of a single primitive poem, a

drama coming with no interpolation "à ses cinq premiers reman­cieurs: le clerc anglo-normand, Thomas; le trouvère normand, Béroul; l'auteur inconnue de la Folie; l'écrivain de cour allemand, Eilhart d'Oberg; et l'auteur inconnu du roman fran­çais en prose."

More recently (1931) Roger Sherman Loomis reiterated his belief that the Breri (probably to be identified with Bled­hericus and Bleheris) mentioned by Thomas as his authority is the Welsh "fabulator" who related, in French, tales of Arthur­ian subjects in the presence of a Count of Poitiers, either the father or grandfather of Eleanor of Aquitaine, who later be­came the queen of Henry II of England and brought a new ideal­ism of love to London. The story which he told was a composite tale, the precise version of which probably did not exist in writing. Dr. Loomis sees a lack of any such close resemblance in both incident and expression of Béroul, of Thomas, and of Eilhart, which fact would indicate to him that they followed no single manuscript poem. The extant versions, according to him, give evidence of the main lines of Bleheris's story some­what modified by successive oral accounts.

4. Roger Sherman Loomis, The Romance of Tristram and Ysolt by Thomas of Britain, Translated from the Old French and Old Norse, Intro. pp.XI, XII, and XXI.
However, a definite primitive original Tristan theory is commonly accepted without any conclusive evidence as to the authorship of the poem; and reconstruction of the Ur-Tristan was done by the comparative method by both Bédier and Gölz, resulting in compositions essentially the same.

In reconstructing his Tristan, Bédier used certain renderings of the Tristan story. These are the following: the Tristan-poem of the Anglo-Norman poet, Thomas; the fragments of a French poem, by the Norman poet Béroul, combined with a poem in Middle High German by Eilhart von Oberge; the French prose Tristan; and two short French poems called alike La Folie Tristan, one by an Anglo-Norman poet, and the other by a poet of North-Eastern France. The date of the Thomas poem is placed between 1155-1170; that of Béroul and Eilhart is approximately the close of the twelfth century. The French prose Tristan is dated somewhere between 1215-1230. The two short French poems last mentioned are of the last quarter of the twelfth century and probably of the first part of the thirteenth century, respectively. The former short poem (Oxford) is dependent upon

2. The unique Béroul manuscript (MS 2171 of the Bibliothèque Nationale) accords closely with the Eilhart version. The beginning section, ll. 1-2754, has been accredited to Béroul I while lines 3028-4455, the end of the poem, of somewhat coarser texture, were regarded as the work of Béroul II. The connecting passage, ll. 2767-3031, was thought to be the work of a third poet. Bédier considers the entire fragment the product of a single person and his view is now generally accepted. J.D.Bruce op.cit., Vol.1, p.158, Note 7.
3. J.D.Bruce, op.cit., Vol.1, pp.159-161 ff.
Thomas, and the latter (Berne) related to Béroul.

Only three thousand one hundred and forty-four lines of the original Thomas poem are extant. It had first to be reconstructed from foreign languages in which poems, known to be based upon it, exist. The Scandinavian prose Tristan saga, which was made for King Haakon of Norway by "a certain Brother Robert" (in 1226); Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan (early thirteenth century), the Folio Tristan of the Oxford MS., and the Italian La Tavola Ritonda (thirteenth century) are the sources from which the lost portions of the work of Thomas were recovered.

The story of the lost French romance, the Ur-Tristan, may be briefly summarized.

Tristan was the son of Rivalen, the King of Loenois (definitely identified now as Lothian in Great Britain) and of Blanchefleur, sister of King Marc or Cornwall. The royal bride dies in childbirth in the realm of Loenois, and her child perpetuated the fact of the sad circumstances in the name Tristan (from triste, sad) which he bore. The youth is placed in the care of a knight, Gorvenal, who trained his charge well in knightly behavior until the lad was fifteen, when he went to the Cornish king's court. Here he becomes the king's favorite, performing his duties in disguise. An opportunity arises for a display of his prowess, for which King Marc grants Tristan's request to be knighted. The brother-in-law of the Irish king now comes from Ireland to exact as tribute from Marc every third
child of the age of fifteen; however, he is willing to submit to a duel with a champion, Tristan. The combat takes place on an island with only the two knights themselves present. Morholt suffered defeat and makes for Ireland, but death overtakes him. His niece, Iseult, keeps the fragment of Tristan's sword, taken from the brainpan of Morholt, which had wounded the Irish champion.

Tristan, himself, sorely wounded, has a boat made ready and drifts out to sea. For comfort in his languishing, he carries his harp. When Tristan chances upon the Irish coast, the king hears the music and has the harper brought ashore and healed by the princess who knew such skill. There he is known as "Tantris," and thus his identity is kept secret. In time he is allowed to return to Cornwall.

King Marc is again served by Tristan. The king had desired a wife, but in answer to importunate courtiers, he declares that he will marry only the golden-haired woman from whose head a swallow had chanced to bring silken strands into his hall. Tristan offers to seek that treasure for his king. Chance bore him again to the Irish court. Death is imminent at the hands of the king's officer should Tristan's identity be revealed as that of Morholt's slayer, but he feigns to be a merchant and so gains time.

A monster has terrified the realm, and the Irish king had offered the princess to the deliverer of his people. Tristan kills the dragon and cuts out its tongue for proof of his
rash offer of aught that the musician wished. Marc, though re-
luctant, keeps his word. Iseult is taken aboard the Irish
ship. Tristan returns from the forest just in time to rescue
Iseult. As she sails, grieving, Tristan comes and offers to
comfort her, which service the harper accepted. By a ruse he
finally rides off with Iseult, flinging back the taunt that the
Irish harper had won her with his harp but that he, Tristan,
has won her back with his rote.

Andret, another nephew of Marc's, connives with a dwarf to
ruin the lovers. Intrigues and deceptions follow. A stream
flows through Iseult's chamber, down which Tristan sends in-
scribed messages on chips of wood. Marc, eavesdropping over-
head in a tree, is detected by means of his shadow, and the
lovers deceive him by just the right turn in their conversation.

Tristan, after the common practice of those far-off times, shares
the sleeping room with the royal pair. The king with design,
departs from the chamber, whereupon Tristan joins the queen.
The dwarf had strewn the floor with meal, but Tristan evades
that snare by leaping over the meal-strewn floor. The leaping
opened a fresh wound, and the blood from it betrays the lovers.

Tristan escapes. Marc planned to have Iseult burned but gives
her to a band of lepers as more cruel punishment. Tristan res-
cues her, and the lovers flee to the forest where for two years
they live in privation, but complete in the enjoyment of their
love. Once while they are sleeping in their hut, Marc comes
upon them. He is convinced of their innocence as he sees Tris-
tan's sword lying between the lovers. He leaves tokens of his visit, his sword and glove. These signs only serve to send the lovers deeper into the forest.

At length the forest-life becomes unbearable. Tristan communicates with Marc, who replies that he will receive Iseult again but that Tristan shall leave Cornwall.

Tristan now goes to the court of King Arthur. Gawain aids him by planning a hunt near Marc's castles, Tintagel. Marc is obliged to receive King Arthur with his party including Tristan. Marc has two blades placed near Iseult's bed to ward off Tristan. Tristan's friends feign a fight in which all are wounded by the blades, as Tristan has been, and his conviction is impossible. Marc forces the queen to make a public declaration of innocence, the test being the ordeal of holding red-hot iron in her hand. Iseult arranged for Tristan, disguised as a beggar, to bear her over a ford. She then avows that only the king and this man have held her in their arms, and so she passes through the test unharmed.

Now Duke Hoel of Carhaix in Brittany is harassed by a rival. Tristan goes to the duke's aid. He is soon married to the duke's daughter, Iseult of the White Hands. The marriage, however, was not consummated, and Kaherdin, Iseult's brother, is advised of the fact by her. Tristan tells Kaherdin of his love for Iseult, the queen, and takes him to Cornwall with him. Here he enjoys a secret meeting with Iseult, but through the interference of the King's servants, a misunderstanding on her part
causes her to have Tristan, then disguised as a leper, beaten away. Upon his return to Brittainy his marriage is consummated. Tristan has word of the Queen's penitence for her treatment of him, and he returns again to her in secret. His identity is discovered during some sports, and again he is forced to escape. His final trip to the court of Cornwall is effected in the guise of a madman. He and Iseult meet clandestinely until his detection, when for the last time he flees to Brittany.

There Tristan is wounded in a fight in which he had succoured Kaherdin, who has had an intrigue with the wife of Bedenis. Tristan sends for Iseult of Cornwall. A messenger is to bring word of the color of the sail on the returning vessel. White was to signify Iseult's coming; black, her failure to come. His jealous wife reports that the sail is black, and when Queen Iseult arrives, she finds her lover dead. She expires upon Tristan's body. King Marc, when he finally learns of the spell of the fatal potion, has his wife and nephew buried side by side in a chapel in Cornwall. Rose-vines spring from the graves and intertwine above the resting place of the eternal lovers.

Such, then, is the gist of the story which in the hands of Marie de France and Gottfried von Strassburg is said to represent best the romantic charm of the Middle Ages.
Chapter II

The Chief Derivations from the Primitive Poem

of the Reconstructed Romance

The French or Minstrel Versions

Béroul—Eilhart

The great body of literary tradition of Tristan falls generally into two groups or divisions, distinguished chiefly by the treatment of three marked features: the association with the Arthurian legend; the character of King Mark; and the duration of the effect of the love potion. Bédier in his reconstruction of the archetypal regarded both divisions which have been variously designated as the French and English versions (G. Paris) or the Minstrel and Courtly versions (W. Golther).

The former group, much the larger, is also known as the Vulgate redaction (Eilhart—Béroul-Prose) and is considered by "all scholars," according to Ernst Brugger, as far superior.

in reliability to the Thomas version. In this group the story of Tristan is associated with the Arthurian legend and Tristan has some connection with the court of Arthur; King Mark appears as a baser, more contemptible man; and the effect of the love potion is of limited duration, varying from three to four years. Béroul, a poet of Normandy, addressed his verses to an audience of lower social order than that of Thomas; his is a jongleur's version, but it is not necessarily an earlier version than Thomas's work.

As before mentioned, Béroul-Eilhart, the most primitive complete version of Tristan extant, is the version of a noble court poet, Eilhart von Oberge, written in Middle High German and drawn from the same source, an intermediary version, a derivative of the primitive poem, as the lines of Béroul. Fragments of the latter complied with Eilhart von Oberge's version afforded Bédier a substantial source of material in his reconstruction of the primitive poem.

It is a tale of joy and sorrow that I shall tell you. Hearken it well; there is none better of worldly tales, for deeds of prowess and for love.

Apparently then the author has in mind not merely a love story but a story filled with deeds of prowess which in themselves held an interest for the eager listeners hanging upon the words of a jongleur.

1.Chapter I, p.3, of this thesis.
A lack of psychological analysis marks this redaction as told for simple minds; there is almost no interpretation for the action. Very few, even are the poet's puzzled interpolations. Two examples are: When the king is about to have the tryst of the lovers at the fountain revealed to him by the dwarf, the poet remarks that the devil must have helped the dwarf into the linden for "how else could he have climbed alone?" The redactor is at a loss to understand the precaution of Bedenis, the Breton, whose wife, Gorgeolain, had promised her love to Kaherdin, Isolt's brother. If her heart is not with him willingly, he may use all his ingenuity to keep her, and she will love another, if she chooses, in spite of him.

The tragic element introduced in the use of the love potion is indeed primitive. Here two hopeless mortals are bound to each other by supernatural power, while they must continue to live in a society in which they are violating a sacred and indissoluble tie. They became powerless to act according to their best knowledge under the potion of which the stipulations were: the lovers could not be separated for four years; they must love each other with all their power throughout their lives; if they were separated for a day during the first four years, they would fall ill; if they were separated for a week during that period, they would surely die.

Passion filled the lovers with a diabolical compulsion which, as Christians, they sensed with horror. All the while they grew indifferent to treachery to Mark, to the sin itself,
to their ruined social standing, and to danger. The author absolves Tristan of any responsibility for his most disloyal act. "That was the falsest deed that ever Tristan did for in that same place he lay with Isolt. Yet it was not treachery; for he did it against his will. It was the cursed drink that brought him to it."

Again: "It was a hard life they had there in the forest, he and the fair Isolt, but for them it was child's play, so much joy did they have from the great love they bore each other. It was only Gorvenel (Tristan's serving man) that suffered. The wonder is that he did not die."

King Mark is quite of the same mind, when, after the death of the victims, he learns of the spell which held them fast. "This situation has a tragic quality deeper than that of a war with society, more poignant than that of transgression of moral law. It is a man's love for woman at war with man's loyalty to man." This relationship between the two men is in no other twelfth century version more evident or more pitiful.

Of course the influences of Christian standards of sex morals condemned the relationship between the lovers. If apprehended in unlawful love, the woman, according to old French literature, was burned at the stake, although she had recourse to a champion for her cause, or trial by ordeal. Adultery,

2. Ibid., p.456.
3. Ibid., p.33.
we are told, was a common theme. Here then, social ruin was eminent, and avenging punishment threatened.

After the King came upon the exiled lovers, in the forest, asleep with the sword between them, according to Béroul, they were seized with fear and fled deeper into the forest. In Thomas the early, courtly version, they merely rejoiced at their escape from being detected in sin.

Eventually the spell is spent, in the Béroul and Hil­hart versions (three and four years, respectively), and the lovers, Isolt, in the leafy hut, and Tristram in the forest, are definitely aware, when the time is up, of a sudden revulsion. Here all is in accord with the orthodoxy of the Christian belief of the times: the lovers feel relief from this thing laid upon them by God; they are remorseful for the past sin; they regret the injury to Mark; and they aspire to a better life. They seek out the hermit churchman, Ogrin, and enlist his aid in communication with the king. Mark receives his queen, but he banishes Tristram. All of which, as Miss Schoep­perle points out, indicates the current accepted belief in the supernatural power of potion and the sacredness of the marriage bond. In her study of the potion none more oral nor more primitive is found than this version.

The return from the forest marks the turning point. Here

invention on the part of the redactors becomes freer. The courtly lovers of Thomas return at the command of Mark, who is convinced of their innocent relations since he found them blameless before his own eyes. There is of course evident inconsistency in the work of the second part of the Béroul version in permitting the penitent victims to continue in guilty love. The unconsummated marriage of the courtly redactions is the result of a different type of love entirely. The Eilhart redactor prepared for the inconsistency by the qualification of the effect of the potion as diminishing, a conclusion natural enough since the lover's meetings were less frequent. Moreover, Eilhart, need not omit the consummation of the marriage with the second Isol; for his audience does not abide by the rules of courtly love. In the second part we have Tristan willing to do anything in Isolt's name, for here is the courtly lover inspired to do high enterprise worthy of the beauty of his fair lady.

The Tristan of Béroul is a primitive man. His education at the hands of Gorvenal consisted of wrestling, throwing the lance, casting the stone, riding, and wielding the sword. In short, he was trained in honesty, and courtesy, and all the virtues and exercises of the perfect knight. He, unlike the later French Tristram, is resourceful in the forest life. In Cornwall he whistles up birds, and in Brittany he deftly shoots twigs one into the other for the entertainment of the maids in Gargeolain's company. Here is Tristan, the famed hunter, and
the first fisher with the hook.

Isolt has a strong loyalty to clan. There is something almost classic that reminds one of Ximene in Corneille's *Le Cid* in the tragic situation of loving an enemy of a parent. She swore vengeance for the Morboli, her mother's brother, slain by Tristram. She is loathe to love her foe and finds it a hard fate to love a man who had demurred when she was offered him in marriage. She is crafty in deceiving Mark and lacking in the refined nature of latter Isolts, in her laughter at Tristan's distress when in the guise of an unfortunate man he is beaten off from her royal presence. She grows finer in this reduction, as the years pass over her. There is much of tragic severity in her act and deed as last she is seen:

Isolt of Ireland heard the tolling of the bells as she stepped upon the shore, and she knew that Tristan was dead. She did not turn pale or red; she did not weep, but her heart was sore. Silently she went to the bier. His wife stood behind it weeping and lamenting. "Lady," said Queen Isolt to her, "you must take a place yonder and let me draw nearer. I mourn him with more cause than you. I loved him more." She uncovered the bier and silently she made a little place beside him. There she lay down and then died.1

As to Isolt of Brittany, she was primitive. She bore Tristram no resentment for not making her his wife, but she could not forego jealousy at the Queen's coming. She lied about the color of the sail but did not know that this would

break Tristan's heart. Her remorse was great; "Ah! how she screamed then!" the simple redactor says. This version pictures Mark definitely as tender toward Tristan, and the two men held one another in a relation of confidence and affection. It is the betrayal of this strong love of the King for Tristan that sounds the deepest tragic note. When Mark really knew of his wrong, he became implacable. He could not have his honor suffer: he orders the queen burned at the stake and Tristan to be broken on the wheel for their sin. Then as a more horrible punishment, Mark gives Isolt to a band of lepers, from whom Tristan ultimately rescues her. He even orders the death of Tristan's little dog, Husdent.

In point of time this version has an earlier setting than that of Thomas's story. After the return from their sojourn in the forest, Isolt is received by Mark, but Tristan, leaving his little dog with the queen, goes into exile. He is welcomed and honored at King Arthur's court, particularly by Sir Gawain. Much to King Arthur's displeasure (for he knew of the disfavor in which Mark held Tristan) Gawain arranged a hunting party, which requires King Mark's entertainment. The gallant Gawain denied himself Queen Isolt's kiss of greeting for Tristan's sake as, of course, King Mark could not brook that sight. At nightfall Mark had blades arranged so that Tristan could not approach the queen's bed. Tristan became wounded, but the quick wit of Kay saved him direct accusation as all of the knights suffered themselves to be cut by the blades and fall
into a disorderly brawl. So Mark was shamed to see all his guests go limping. Of course these incidents associated with Arthurian romance were current in medieval fiction and were inserted into the legend for the purpose of associating Tristan with a well-known cycle after the usual manner of a strong story attracting lesser contemporary legend. Another point of connection is that in which Isolt swears an ambiguous oath to prove her chastity in the presence of King Arthur. This was not an uncommon ruse at that time. So in general this tale has a more primitive milieu than that of Thomas who, we shall see, relegates Arthur to legendary times.

Characteristics of Eilhart's treatment and style are as interesting as the elements themselves which he uses, in establishing its place among early extant redactions. The independent popular stories are combined with only slight modification. Modern taste of the audience was not entirely ignored by the redactor; for example, he introduces the character Camille in the queen's train in order to add the story of a magic pillow by means of which a maid right safeguard her chastity.

Repetitions are easier to handle than editing, so the tale lengthens with two variants of apprehending Tristan in the queen's bed, of the lovers' meeting in the Blanche Lande,

and of a rudderless boat on the voyage to Ireland.

Some simple explanation is attempted by the writer when he shows how characters acquire information necessary to incite them to action. Two devices may be illustrated. Kaherdin overhears Isolt, as they ride over a muddy road, talking to herself of the splashing water which is bolder than ever her lord had been. Tristan's enigmatical smile prompts Isolt to question and to the ultimate discovery of his identity with that of her uncle's conqueror.

At times the redactor is quite simple in his utter irresponsibility as to the knowledge or conduct which is attributed to his characters. There are evident gaps: it is not given how Tristan was wounded so as to stain the clothing on the queen's couch; why Tristan placed his sword between him and Isolt; how Isolt learned of the significance of the sails; or how King Mark learned of the fatal power of the potion.

In such instances the other important early redactor, Thomas, rationalized the matter to the undoubtedly certain satisfaction of the learned court of Henry II.

The Prose Tristan

The Prose Tristan, which is now conceded to have derived from the primitive poem (Loseth regarded the work as based upon a lost poem by Chrétien de Troyes) afforded considerable bulk to the study of the reconstruction by Bédier. The prose Tristan has for its model the prose Lancelot, the reverse relation of the Chrétien's Lancelot-Guinevere romance which was an adaptation of the Tristan-Iseult legend. It was probably the most popular medieval romance, if the large number of extant versions are indication, as there are extant twenty-four versions in the Bibliothèque Nationale and six in the British Museum. The original version is not extant. The manuscripts fall into two classes: those of an earlier, simpler, and better version; attributed to a "missire" Luce of Gaut near Salisbury and those more numerous and of a greater complexity known as the "common version" or "cyclic version," attributed to "missire" Hélie de Boron of Northern France. However, these names of authors are now conceded to be fictitious and nothing certain of the authorship is known. The approximate date, however, is considered to be placed with reasonable safety between 1226-1235. The first dated manuscript belonging to the second version bears the date 1278, but the earlier version

must have been in existence prior to 1240 at which time the romance Palamedes, dependent upon the Tristan romance is known to have been in existence.

The noteworthy addition of the prose author is Tristan's actual membership in the Order of the Round Table. When he retains the musical skill and the shrewdness in carrying on the intrigue with Iseult without detection, characteristics of the old Celtic tale, Tristan becomes virtually another Lancelot, going from tournament to tournament, exhibiting an exemplary chivalric nature. He fences and plays at chess as a true thirteenth century knight. As a lover he is not the faithful Tristan of the primitive poem for he has an affair with Segurade's wife. Iseult also has other lovers, Palamedes and Kaherdin, but Tristan remains the favored one. Tristan despite his most obvious disqualification for the undertaking of the Grail quest, joins the other knights, thus quite completing the Arthurization of the story.

The most prominent element of the tradition, the lawless and irresistible passion, in the lost primitive metrical romance is completely dissipated in the mass of inventions. In

The scenes in Cornwall up to the connection with the Lancelot story some of the old individual episodes are retained but their significance is no longer prominent. The variations from the tradition are marked in the matter of the death and birth of Tristan. Since the King has been so demeaned as a tyrant and traitor, there is little of the tragic conflict of the primitive story left, and Tristan is almost pardonable for the sin of adultery in view of so much baser man as Marc, who, in a fit of jealousy, murders his nephew with the thrust of a poisoned spear.

All of the prose manuscripts agree in this account of Tristan's death which, of course, is not traditional. ES 103 alone had the death in Brittany in the presence of Iseult of the White Hands.

The association of Merlin with the birth of Tristan is another liberty which the prose author took. Merlin, as a forester, appears to the Queen of Leonois, as she is searching for her husband, and prophesies that she will see her lord no more. King Meliadus has been captivated by a fairy mistress and is released only after his sorrowing queen has given birth to their child whom she named "Tristan" because of the sad circumstances. It is Merlin who eventually saves the infant from a plot of his father's jealous kinsmen, and finally releases

the King.

Other changes are brought about in order of events and new connections for old "motifs." The romantic element gives way before a tendency to rationalize. New episodes are added, as well as new characters being invented. In order to tie up the Tristan story to the cycle, Perceval is given a brother Lamorat and Tristan is given a rival in the creation of Palamedes who perhaps originated in the character of the lying seneschal in the primitive poem. Palamedes excites sympathy by his generous and courteous bearing toward Tristan even when the former meets with naught but failure in his love suit.

Tristan's ancestry makes up more originality. His is of the line of King David and Joseph of Arimathea and his grandmother, Chelinde, is connected with four distant sources, (Athis and Prophilies) mediaeval romance, classic tragedy (Oedipus), fairy-tales, and oriental "conte."

The aim of the prose romance writer is evident: to heighten the value of his work by connection with the Arthurian cycle, particularly with the Lancelot-Guinevere story. That point is made at the time of Iseult's desperate letter to Guinevere upon Tristan's marriage to the Breton Iseult. This violation of courtly love upon Tristan's part called down the denunciation of Lancelot. As the story progresses, however, the two knights become warm friends because of their mutual

admiration of each other's valor. It is thus that Lancelot comes to grant the lovers asylum at Joyous Gard. Tristan is brought into relation with Perceval, his deliverer, and with Galahad, later, in the quest.

In spite of the rather formless construction of this romantic biography, this prose tale, both contemporary and modern judges regard as foremost in its field, though as compared with its main source, the primitive poem, it is in nowise so fine.

1. Because of numerous renderings and compound elements of the Tristan legend, problems of sources continue to challenge scholars to offer their solutions. How the tradition grew from the tale of prowess of a Pictish hero from Scotch Lothian, passing southward into Wales, thence into Cornwall where it took on definitely the nature of a love-saga, and the hero became that of "the crowning love-story of the Middle Ages," (J.D. Bruce op. cit., Vol I, p.171-199) then, crossing the Channel into Brittany and France, where it assumed the final shape in which it awaited the imprint of the mind of the original author of the Ur-Tristan--makes a romance in itself; but the matter of investigation of Celtic names, incidents from Northern and Germanic sources, borrowings from classical traditions, and survivals of Aryan folk-lore--does not properly have a place in this study.
The English or Courtly Versions

Thomas of Britain

In the second group of the Tristan tradition, the story is quite independent of the Arthurian cycle; King Mark is honorable and upright; and the potion exerts an influence enduring until death. Thomas of Britain, with his translators, is the single representative of the courtly group of Tristan literature. There is evidence, both internal and circumstantial, of the relation that the Anglo-Norman Thomas bore to the contemporary rulers, Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine.

Since Thomas's period is about 1185, and he makes the device upon his hero's shield - a golden lion on a red field, an almost definite recognition of the royal house of England, it would appear that the poet must have been in England writing to please his king and queen.

I cite one example:

London is a right rich city, a better is not in Christendom, nor a worthier nor a better esteemed nor a better garnished or rich folk. Much they love largess and honor, and lead their life in great pleasance. It is the health of England and beyond it needeth no man to seek. At the wall's foot floweth the Thames, and there cometh the merchandise of all lands where Christian merchants go. There eke be men of mickle wisdom. Thither came Lord Kaherdin.1

Now to look at the story as Thomas of Britain told it with beauty of thought and style. Among the later twentieth

1. R.S. Loomis, op.cit., p.274.
century opinions of the matter is the one that accredits to Thomas direct derivation from the archetype (which may have been considerably earlier than the latter half of the twelfth century). But to take the Anglo-Norman's own word for sources, we know that already behind his age lay an intricate development of the story of which many contemporaries made variations. He says:

they speak diversely. From many men have I heard the tale, and well I know what each telleth and eke what they have set in scripture, but so far as I have heard, they tell it not after Breri, which knew the gests and the tales of all the kings and all the earls that have been in Britain.

At this point he shows the absurdity of some one instance of paraphrasing an affair of Tristram, the Dwarf, and after defending the logic of his version, concludes with: "Certes, they have erred from the tale and departed from the truth, and if they will not yield this, I will not strive with them: let them hold unto theirs and I unto mine: reason will try all things."

Reason, that is the key note of his work; Thomas, as one of the transitional writers in the age which made over epic matter into romance, showed the marked characteristic of developing psychological ideas. He had a theme to set forth. He was himself a member of the clergy, but he was writing for

2. R. S. Loomis, op. cit., p. 262.
3. Ibid., p. 263.
the court in which there was learning. "Lords," he addresses his readers. Not only was he addressing the most highly refined social element, but he was choosing for his theme love, love according to the ideals of the twelfth century philosophy, and this he did to its great glorification. To him the fatal cup was "a symbol of the divine right of passion." "Le poète anglo-normand l'a vidée et nous sentons encore trembler," \[1\] dans ses vers l'ivresse que son coeur y a puissée." \[2\] Again and again he strikes the note of passion genuinely, though quaintly the churchman admits, "Here I know not what to say, which of them had greater anguish, nor may I tell the reason, for I have not proved these matters. I will set forth my tale: let lovers give judgment who hath better destiny in love, or who had thereof the greater woe." There follows an analysis of the strange love of the four victims of the "breuvage d'amour." Never does Thomas belittle the power of the love nor the pair of unhallowed lovers. In the end he re-dedicates his tale to all manner of lovers for an "ensample" that they might find pleasure, something to remember, and "great solace, malgre change, malgre wrong, malgre pain, malgre tears, malgre all wiles of love."

From France, Eleanor had brought the teachings of courtly love. Her own daughter, Marie de Champagne, was the cham-

3. Ibid., p.290.
tion of the rules of this cult which was practiced in her court at Troyes. The conception of "amour courtois" had its starting point in the self-advancements of troubadours who by their compositions sought preferment from the women in the castles of great barons. Far below these ladies in rank, the troubadours out of the very unreality of their themes of love created an idealization of the noble ladies. From the attitude of "inward contemplation, it was a natural step into the attitude of spiritual mysticism." This spiritualization resulted in a relationship, which, granted though it must be, was artificial and perverted at times, was regarded the most "lasting and binding over all other earthly ties. Hardships must be endured, sacrifices made, nor absence nor age nor religious difference could absolve. Love was eternal."

At best it was a refining and an ennobling force. The only condition blameworthy in the relationship seemed to be discovery, when one of the lovers had violated a prior claim of the marriage vow; the ideals of courtly love, the most worthy and those which outlasted the institution even to our present day were those of spontaneity and reverence for women.

Rivalon and Blanchefleur, Tristram's parents, knew such love. That "gentle damozel" felt that Rivalon was full of sorceries because at first sight of him she was "rent of divers torments." These lovers were faultless by the code. "So did

l. E.S.Loomis, op. cit., Intr., p.x.
this twain all their will, and for none had suspicion at their
meetings, they held their fellowship without slander or blame."

With Tristram and Queen Ysolt the decorum was long ob-
served. "So they heeded their love that never was it by ei-
ther of them shamed, secretly or openly." Throughout the
years it redound to their glory that "Tristram loved Ysolt with-
out ceasing and she him again as faithfully." She went un-
scathed because she could deceive when she said that no man,
save the king and the hapless pilgrim (Tristan in disguise)
who had fallen by the stream, had ever held her in his arms.

As throughout this group of the tradition, the potion is
of lasting duration; however, it cannot be given prominence
since the lovers must love of their own volition and eternally
in accord with the principle of the cult. The page served
Tristram and Ysolt from the goblet. "And thereof cometh unto
them both dolorous life and torment and long travail with de-
sire of the body and jeopardy of love." The spell was irre-
mediable. Neither life nor death held fear for them after that.
Only to be together was the one purpose.

But even Thomas had difficulty with fitting the soul of
the story which makes it forever that of Tristan and Isolt,
not of Cliges and Fenice, nor of Lancelot and Guinevere,

1. R.S. Loomis, op. cit., p. 9
2. Ibid., p. 140.
3. Ibid., p. 146
4. Ibid., p. 133.
5. In Cliges, an anti-Tristan story, written by Chrétien de
Troyes, in three of the five references to the famous lovers
he speaks to their detriment. Fenice, unlike Isolt, gives
her heart and her body together to her lover, deceiving her
wedded lord by means of a potion which her servant brewed for
the husband. Arthurian Romances by Chrétien de Troyes. Trans-
lated by W. Weakly Comfort, "Cliges", pp. 91, 127, 132, 159, 160,
(New York, 1928)
quite consistent with the principles of courtly love as introduced into the Arthurian cycle by Chrétien de Troyes under the patronage of Marie de Champagne. Neither Tristram nor Ysolt remained faithful to the ideal, for each violated the principle of fidelity to the object of that secret and illicit love. Their love was superimposed, for when they might have loved either openly or secretly, in Ireland, neither had the desire, not until the potion held them forever bound with its baleful power.

However, Thomas appropriated much that he could, ignoring the unpropitious matter such as the supernatural element of the potion. First, at the turning point of the story, the return from the forest, appears a different pair of lovers from those in Beroul whose version shows penitent sinners seeking grace to abandon their life in exile. In Thomas, Mark bids them return, for true lovers would not voluntarily have forsaken their life together.

Secondly, on the night of Tristram's marriage with the second Ysolt, he sees his ring from the queen, and he suffers such agony at the thought of disloyalty to her that he cannot accept Ysolt as his wife. Even Kaherdin, the brother, regards as more binding the claims of Ysolt, the queen, than those of his sister, the Breton gentlewoman, when he learns of Tristram's first great love for that glorious and worshipful lady the more worthy of the two to inspire a knight. A third instance of the observance of the code is shown when Tristram,
fleeing the enemy is summoned to return to Isolt at great peril, since the behest comes "in her name." As a true courtly lover, Tristram worships Ysolt and at great danger in encountering a giant and at great cost of labor to himself, many smiths, wrights, and woodcarvers, builds a wonderfully beautiful shrine to her even though he had despaired of so much as even her thought of him in his banishment. To these features are added the further circumstances of courtly love in the long self-analyses by the lovers, the presence of ever-dreaded spies, and the ingenious attempt of the lovers to evade detection.

As a youth, when he arrived at the Cornish court, Tristram was "beloved, mirthful, debonair, and meek." He had been made to "learn book-knowledge, and he was passing witty, and he perfected himself by his study in the VII chief arts, and he was cunning in all manner of tongues. Then he learned the VII kinds of music so that there was none had more renown nor more skill. And of meekness and mercy and gentle tasks, in wisdom and counsel and prowess he was found peerless: of his conditions and his fame was none his pareil, so waxed he even stronger." 1 In venerie he was a marvel.

Tristan was not only learned but intelligent in the use of his knowledge. Before the nobles, who were beside themselves with grief to lose their sons as truage to King Gorman of

1. R.S. Loomis, op. cit., p. 19.
Ireland, Tristram was "wise, brave, and outspoken." King Mark of England, his uncle, and the nobility hailed the young knight as their defender and all rejoiced that he was to inherit the kingdom. Toward the great Irish champion, Morhaut, he was logical in saying that no truage was due nor would be paid. Later in Ireland where he had been healed by the Queen, it was only by reasoning with the raging Princess Ysolt that he compelled her to spare his life, for Thomas is more than redactor; he shows a dramatic sense in character treatment in the interplay upon one another.

Enemies, a man of such prowess was certain to have among jealous persons. Kingdoms he might have claimed for his service, but greed or ambition he had none. He delivered his father's realm over to Roald, his faithful seneschal; he put in jeopardy his very life when he went for the Irish princess, proving to the plotting nobles of King Mark's court that he cared nothing for personal gain; he claimed nothing for slaying a giant in Spain; he delivered the Duke of Wales from the harrowing giant Urgan and asked only Petie-Cru, a faerye dog from Avalon as a gift to solace Queen Ysolt.

In victory he could be boastful. "Swollen with pride" he was according to the giant Mollagog, whose adjacent lands Tristram had wrested from him because of its fine trees and cave where he chose to build a shrine. The Irish harper, who had won Ysolt from Mark, by his boon, Tristram outwitted and taunted.
Upon his last return from England, Tristram had scarcely set foot on the soil of Brittany when a "tall and right stout" knight called "Tristram, the Dwarf," sought his aid to recover his (the dwarf's) wife from the giant Estult. As "the greatest lover of all that ever lived" Tristram's aid was sought. It was in this last quest, a quest for love's sake that Tristram received his fatal wound. Love had shaped his character and entire life. As Iseult ascends the street filled with sounds of lamentation, an ancient man tells her, "Tristram, the noble and proud, is dead. He was a solace unto all the realm. He gave largess to the poor and great aid to the wretched."

Thomas, clerk though he was, knows much about the psychology of women; at least he speaks as one with authority and gives life to the two Iseults and Bringvain. The Irish princess Iseult is a lively young woman who has her will more often than not. She desired to learn to harp and to write letters and verses from Trantris, the sick man who came in the rudderless boat. For that desire, the Queen healed him. Rather than marry the seneschal, she would kill herself with a knife, for she hated him "like a fiend from hell." How she was willing to leave Ireland to go with Tristram, the slayer of her uncle, can only be explained by the perfect knighthood of Tristram, for she was accustomed to having her will. She falls far short of courtly grace in requiring the life of Bringvain for fear that the woman would betray the deception practiced upon Mark on the
wedding night. As a queen, soon she made herself beloved by all. To Mark she was unfaithful from the beginning. She lied openly and privately fulfilled her desire. To Tristram she was faithful in life and in death. Only once did she wilfully cause him suffering, for apparent violation of the claim of their love; but when she learned of her mistake, she wore the haircloth corselet in atonement.

Jealousy was definitely a marked characteristic in the other Ysolt, Ysolt as Blanches Mains.

The wrath of women is much to dread: (says Thomas) much ought each man to take heed thereto, for whereas she has loved most, there soonest will she take vengeance. As readily their love cometh, so readily cometh their hate, and longer dureth their ranor whence it cometh than doth their love. They can well love within measure, but their hatred they attempt nothing when they be in wrath.

She had felony in her heart and dealt cruelly with Tristram deceiving him with outward tenderness and lying to him at the last.

Bringvain is perhaps the cleverest of the women, for her musus never failed. But for Tristram's hapless squire's mistake in tendering the potion, she was blameless throughout her service. She advised Ysolt how to deceive the King so that Tristram might stay at the court. She outwitted Meriadoc when he wished to involve Tristram in a plot of disloyalty to the Queen's name. Bringvain ultimately saw Gwiodoc, for his perfidy, slain by Kaherdin. For all her loyalty, it was Bringvain's

I. R. S. Loomis, op. cit., p. 273.
own resourcefulness and not the queen's grace, that saved her
head. Sure of herself after having once escaped death, the
serving woman, defied Ysolt calling her "light heart," "lech-
erous," "forsworn," "a faith-breaker," and a "liar." She de-
ivered a little homily which was, doubtless, Thomas's ideas
upon the power of habit, using as the text "what thing a colt
learneth in breaking will he, nill he, long it endureth." 
So she berated her royal mistress, who implored and wept for
mercy.

Mark is regarded by Thomas as still youthful and not un-
sightly. He is, however, not well-defined by Thomas. The King
apparently observed the code of etiquette of his day, for what
his eyes had beheld and his ears had heard of disparagement to
the lovers, he could set aside if the thing were technically
made right by ordeal. Patient, credulous, and forgiving, he
appears more often, than grim and severe. Brinvain marvelled
that he had not Ysolt's nose carved off her face for her infi-
delity, but, alas, "He loved her out of measure so that none
other of God's creatures pleased him as much as Ysolt." This
King Mark is not recorded as giving his wife over to lepers.
In Tristram he saw a dependable defender of his realm, yes,
even of his queen when Tristram reclaimed her from the Irish
harper to whom Mark's word of honor had reluctantly delivered
her. This gentle king is true to the type of the Thomas branch

1. R.S.Loomis, op.cit., p.248.
2. Ibid., p.168.
of the tradition.

Thomas removed the Arthurian connection entirely. Tristram is primarily "Tristram L'Amerous" not a "war-leader" (as was his very far away original, who also had his uncle's queen for his beloved) not even an aspirant to the Round Table. Arthur's name had become a matter of legend by the time of which Thomas wrote. In a stony vault in Brittany once occupied by an African giant, whom Arthur slew, Tristram constructs the marvelous shrine for the worship of Queen Ysolt. That is the one sparse reference to Arthur's name and time.

Thomas rides the story of the swallow episode when Tristram is sent on a whimsical errand to find a golden-haired maiden whose strand of hair had been carried to King Mark in the beak of a swallow. Instead, Thomas sends his hero forth because of six well-defined reasons, set out by the king's advisory barons, as to why Tristram should go fetch the bride. As a critic might wonder: Why does Thomas permit Tristram to leap over the garden wall and leave Ysolt to face Mark's barons alone, and why does a gentle queen demand the head of her gentlewoman, Enryvain? To be sure there remain other traces of the Celtic origin (such as Mark's sword between the lovers) which elements not easily understood or reconcilable, have lost their significance and in their isolation stand out like monadnocks, curious remnants upon the plain of another age. Ysolt, hears little of Tristram's heroic exploits of giant slaying and wanderings in foreign lands; Cariadoc, her would-be lover.
and others saw to that; and, incidentally, Thomas found little interest therein.

But on the whole, Thomas tells a well-integrated tale showing literary craftsmanship in selection, omission, and emphasis to render his theme of courtly love as best he might in accord with his country and his century. Thomas was a lover of life with its action; he was a student of the classics, for he knew of Dido who "bent herself when her lover departed;" he was an artist with an eye for fine arts of cities, and he was a poet who felt the natural charm of the orchard under moonlight and the forest grotto with its sweet fountain and who understood the nature of the heart of man when it is most loving.

Although Bédier did not make use of a certain extant lay of Marie de France, it merits attention as belonging to the group of courtly tradition because of its theme and because of similar circumstance in which perhaps she and Thomas came by the story of Tristan. Very guardedly a twentieth century translator of Marie's states the possibility that the "Lays" of Marie were written at the Court of Henry II.

Denis Pyramus, writing in the thirteenth century mentions in a poem Dame Marie, the popularity of whose lays won for her much praise among the nobles. Of course her stories are not original; she explains: "I considered within myself what fair

story in Latin or Romance I could turn into the common tongue. Then I called to mind those Lays I had so often heard. Many a one, on many a day, the minstrel had chanted to my ear." So of these she made songs as she lay sleepless in her bed and brought them together in honor of her "most noble and courteous King," Henry II (whose illegitimate sister she is said to have been).

Among these lays is one of Tristan and Ysonde, a pretty idyll of courtly love, called The Lay of the Honeysuckle with its theme "of a love which passed all other love, of love from whence came wondrous sorrow, and whereof they died together in the selfsame day." Tristan no longer able to endure the pain of separation in banishment, returned to Cornwall to look upon Ysonde. Pentecost was at hand when King Mark would hold high court at Tintagel. Tristan, who had been in hiding among the peasantry, placed a hazel wand, with a writing and his name carved upon it, upon the forest path, for the eyes of the queen to see. His greeting to her signified that as the honeysuckle and hazel-tree were "so sweetly laced" and "taken in one close embrace" that parting would mean death to both, so was the case with them, Tristan and Ysonde. The queen, passing that way, saw the wand and read it aright. Her cavalcade was halted for a rest. She took her faithful maid, Bringwaine, aside, and to-

2. Ibid., p. 102.
gather they sought out Tristan in the wood where the lovers once more had great joy for the hour. As always, in sadness they must part; he to return to Wales, his realm, and the Queen, to the Court. In memory of the happening, Tristan, so clever at harping "wrought a new lay."

"Goatleaf, men call this song in English. Chevrefeuille it is named in French;" 1 so Dame Marie tells her readers.

Gottfried von Strassburg

Gottfried von Strassburg, the famous mediaeval German poet, composed a translation of Thomas's poem before 1210 and to him "belongs the honor of having most adequately told the world's 2 greatest love tale." While Thomas was a true poet of superior genius and literary skill, the German poet has been deemed greater than he and a master of both the material, which he understood with sympathy, and the language, with its imagery and subtle meaning.

Like the Thomas version, Gottfried's is marked by the three broad characteristics of that group of the tradition. The poem is entirely independent of the Arthurian cycle; King Mark is an honorable, upright man deceived through his very virtues of love and confidence; and the effect of the love po-

tion endures even to death.

Arthur's name is mentioned twice in similar references: in which the poet describes the sojourn in the forest and points out the superiority of that life for the lovers over the joy at even Arthur's court.

Their love was their high feast, which brought them a thousand times daily the joy of Arthur's Round Table and the fellowship of his knights. What might they ask better? The man was with the woman and the woman with the man, they had the fellowship they most desired, and were where they fain would be.

King Mark is a valiant monarch whose court had attracted Rivalon, Tristram's father because of its courtesy. The king loved Tristram dearly and wanted him always at his side, from the very first sight of the boy. Mark was unwilling to believe ill of either isuelt or Tristan.

Gottfried is inclined to lay blame upon Mark and scarcely upon Isuelt for the dishonor of scandal and shame, for Mark chose to be blind to her love for Tristan and continued to love her. When the passion of jealousy completely blinded him, he sent the lovers hand in hand from his fellowship to love as they pleased. His tender love forbade him to punish them, according to custom. Willingly he receives them back again. One continuator, Heinrich von Freiburg, even has the king who had grieved both for his honor and his wife, quite consistently say upon their death, when he knew from Tristan's man Kurwe-

nal of the potion, that had he (the king) known before, he would have given Iseult to Tristan.

The potion received delicate interpretation at the hands of Gottfried. Its power appears to be stronger than the bonds of courtly love, for it is supernatural in its inception. "It was not wine... but bitter pain and enduring sorrow of heart, of which the twain at last lay dead." Brangoene said, "The devil hath made sport of us!" The original tellers of this tale regarded Tristran and Iseult as irresponsible victims of Fate. Gottfried was aware of that, but arrayed the thing in courtly dress for his age and race, politely civilized and dominated by mysticism and women-worship. He did not utterly destroy the tragic element of conflict. Honor drew Tristan back from Iseult when love stirred his heart at the sight of her. At work, the element appears like courtly love in all the usages ascribed by the code in Thomas and above all in the mystical symbolism of the love grotto glistening with crystal and marble, richly begemmed and dedicated to the goddess of love.

Now Gottfried recognized the crux of the story. He sensed the fatal element in the primitive tale; he adapted the potion element to the taste of his century and station; but he was too modern to accept personally the whole story. He makes sarcastic remarks upon how God could be duped by the ordeal of the

red-hot iron. He makes it clear that God permitted the wrong to triumph. Moreover, he admonished virtuous women to fight against their love and desire and preserve honor. Women are children of Mother Eve who herself lost Paradise because of her perverse nature. His handling is skilfull, for it is so rationalized as not to cheat nor offend. He assures all:

"But the many fables men tell of him I cast to the winds; 'tis toil and labor enow to record the truth." After the manner of his source, Thomas of Britain, Gottfried von Strassburg purports to tell the story according to Breri; while Gottfried himself, was to inspire the minds of Arnold, Swinburne, and Wagner, six centuries beyond.

Character portrayal is prominent in this work. The most refined and charming gentle-born hero in the whole tradition, except for one other who seems his very literary descendant—that youthful promise of a like nature in Spenser's Tristan, is this Tristan of Gottfried's. Fortune appeared to smile upon his every act so that the courtiers said he had the power of sorcery to turn even evil into good ending. He had a loyal love of family asking God's blessing upon the towers of Tintagel and all the folk within when he first beheld his mother's home. It was God and not he alone who went forth to combat.

4. Roger Sherman Loomis, op.cit., Intro. p.XXV.
Tender he was toward Iseult the maiden, so sorrowful to leave her kin and go to Mark. Gallant in speech, he named the royal ladies "the fairest lights in the world, Iseult, the sun; the queen, the fair dawn; and Brangoene, the stately moon." In the beginning he was Mark's all-sufficing friend. To the courtiers he was generous, facing danger alone. As he restored Iseult when the Irish harper had made off with her, they, finer lovers, did not tarry in the forest. But righteously indignant he could be. "Out to hell with thee!" he hurled at the lying dwarf, Melot, who pretended a message from Iseult. It is the intellectual Tristan with love of music, wisdom from books, flashing wit, and generous motives that charms a modern reader as no bragging, warring Pictish hero could. Royal bearing, rich dress, and comely features Gottfried gave both the lovers. Far from types, they stamp themselves in memory, he the fearless prince, tossing back his flowing brown curls, above the head of the lovely spirited princess, the gleam of whose gold circlet is lost in her shining locks. Throughout there is that wealth of picturesque detail of dress, structure, and landscape that marks the poem with a rich color like cathedral windows of that age. In these two foreign redactions of the legend can be recognized the rich heritage of the twelfth century coming primarily from France.

Sir Tristrem

In the North of England about 1300 (what has been termed a parallel of the Gottfried translation) a dialect version of jingly rhyme, retold again the legend as a minstrel, proud of his work, might sing it. It is quite ballad-like in its frank, free narration, going directly forward with lack of emotionalism and no philosophy whatever. Since the transitions are so sudden and obscurity results, there is indication that the audience was familiar with the story and listened to an old tale. The author of this Sir Tristrem is regarded as one among the chief Middle English poets though his identity is unknown. Three stanzas allude to one "Thomas" as the authority for the story. The opening stanza also refers to Erceldoune as the place in which the narrator had had an interview with "Thomas." This name is associated with Thomas Rhymer who was regarded as both poet and prophet of the day. The popular mind held a belief that the Rhymer had spent a period of time in fair land. The name "Thomas" also called up an association with Thomas of Britain, the Anglo Norman, poet of the previous century. The available evidence as to authorship of Sir Tristrem has not removed the question beyond controversy.

The knights wear "birnies," pay their gambling debts with "shillings," and are woeful at the thought of losing their

"bairns" because of the giants. So the author's country is localized for us by the language of the north of England and the south of Scotland toward the close of the thirteenth century. Tristram's father is from "Ermonie." Mark is king of England.

The minstrel says:

The tale to all men dear
Let each man praise at end
Of a prince proud in play
Whose fame had waxen wide.

Here is Sir Tristrem..."who always was lord of courteous" and Ysonde with "snow-white and blood-red cheeks." The chief characters are merely labelled as stock types of a fair queen and courteous knight. There is no development of character. Sir Tristrem with all his early moral instruction and religious prayer before battle and knowledge of old and new laws, is a clever trickster, dealing cards to his advantage when playing with Norse merchants and duping Mark ruthlessly. As "the proud prince in play" he is a German or Celtic hero. Ysonde, but for the poetically fair face, is not convincing. She is a plotter, and is passionate in her attitude toward Brengwain, the serving maid. Brengwain is really resourceful in saving her own head from the murderers, hired by her mistress, and loyal and true to Ysonde. Mark is a most credulous person more fearful of his

2. Ibid., p. 156, 1. 1271.
manly dignity than passionate in his love for his queen. More
than willing to appreciate and not vindictive, he allows Sir
Tristrem and Ysonde to spend their banishment together.

The general plan follows Thomas, but the manuscript leaves
off with Tristrem, married to Ysonde of the White Hands, but
planning to build a bower for Ysonde, the Queen, and Brengwain,
in Brittany. Centuries later Sir Walter Scott edited this ver­

sion.

Into the fabric of this romance are woven such features as
six giants overcome during Sir Tristrem's career; a horse
which bore home the lifeless body of Tristrem's father, Roland,
who had killed three hundred men in a raid; a dragon whose
fire burnt metal and stone; Hodain, Tristrem's dog, which was
also bound in love by leaping of the love potion; Petitcrewe,
the red, green, and blue dog, which Tristrem sent from Wales to
his "sweet queen," Ysonde.

Of course, the love element is romantic. Blanchefleur,
mother of Tristrem, was overwhelmed with a "sudden love," like
magic, for Roland, which brought her to shame. The potion,
which Brengwain unwittingly offered to the weary oarsmen and
Ysonde after the storm at sea, wrought its havoc.

Each heart there found its twain until their dying day.
Thereof were they full fain,
Together must abide
 In joy, and eke in pain.

1. The Chief Middle English Poets Selected Poems Newly Ren­
dered and Edited with Notes and Bibliography and References
1876-1680.
The bonds could not be broken by man, nor could any clerk explain this true love's secret. However, the joy they hoped for was but a dream which went astray, for doubts arose between the lovers. None of the ecstasy, none of the tragedy is awakened by this abrupt account of the awful fate of Sir Tristrem and the fair Ysonde.

**The Norse Saga**

The Norse Saga of Tristram and Isond is a word-for-word translation of Thomas's poem. In 1226 it was faithfully rendered by Brother Robert for King Haakon of Norway, who was interested in Anglo-Norman culture. Naturally, it shows the three distinguishing features of the Thomas branch of the Tristan tradition.

**La Folie Tristan**

The two La Folie Tristan's are short French poems one of which, the Oxford version, is the work of an Anglo-Norman poet of the last quarter of the twelfth century and the other (the Berne version) is the creation of a poet of North-Eastern France and is considered of the early part of the thirteenth century. The Oxford manuscript is considered based upon Thomas while the Berne manuscript suggests close relation to Béroul. It was, of course, the former which was required in J. Bédier's reconstruction of Thomas of Britain's poem.
The accounts are similar and record an episode of Tristan's return to King Mark's court in the disguise of a mad fool. In this feigned madness he gains an audience before the royal pair before whom he relates the real events in his life beginning with the love potion. He is not recognized. Mark departs to ride at falconry and the Queen retires. Brangwain, who is sent to fetch the fool, recognizes Tristan by his hands and feet, and she begs forgiveness which Tristan grants freely. Isolde is not convinced of his identity until she sees the joy of Tristan's little brachet, Huadain, which had been in her keeping since the return from the forest.

La Tavola Ritonda o L'Istorie de Tristan

The prose Tristan is considered the chief substance of the (prose) La Tavola Ritonda o L'Istorie de Tristan which probably is a very late thirteenth century product needed to reconstruct the poem of Thomas.
The great popularity which the story of Tristan and Iseult won during the Middle Ages perhaps surpassed that of any branch of the matièr du Breton. The numerous literary references prove that there was both deep interest in and understanding of the story. Perhaps the most ancient allusions are those found among the Provengal troubadours who, like the French writers, were concerned with the degree of attachment of the lovers whose names are placed beside those of the great lovers of all times, and not with the circumstances of the story. Reference to the "pilâtre d'amour" is the most fréquent. Spanish, Italian, and German literature bear evidence of the influence of the story. The popularity of the Tristan romances also can be seen reflected in the use made of them in the decorative

arts in the principal countries of Europe.

In the fourteenth century three English poets, Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate gave recognition to the traditional lovers. Lydgate placed Isolt in his *Temple of Glass*; Chaucer in his prologue to *The Legend of Good Women* uses her as a foil to the beauty of the fair woman who is the immediate subject of his dream; and Gower in his *Confessio Amantis* exhorts against "love drunkeness" by citing the example of Tristram who was love drunk with Bela Ysolde.

Tristram had become also a figure of popular ballad. He is one of four knights to make good his "brag" at the court of Cornwall where Arthur had gone to see a Round Table said by Guenever to be superior to his own. The king succeeds in killing his rival; and Tristram, in rending Cornwall's horn "up to the midst" by means of a powder furnished him by a friend of the Cornish ruler's. This ballad in eight parts, bearing a close relation to the eleventh century *chanson de geste*, is preserved in a badly mutilated manuscript.

1. J.D.Bruce, op.cit., Vol.I, p.164, note 13. Twenty-six plates of the tiles from Chertsey Abbey, which are said to be "both the earliest (circa 1270) and the finest specimens of decorative illustrations drawn from the Tristan romances" are used in the *Romance of Tristram and Ysolt* by Thomas of Britain Translated From the Old French and Old Norse by Roger Sherman Loomis, (New York, 1931).
However, it was not until about two centuries after the appearance of the earliest dated prose manuscript (1278) that the tradition of Tristan was to have a place in an important English literary production. In his Le Morte Darthur (1469) a prose romance of King Arthur, Sir Thomas Malory compiled the romances of many individual heroes in order to portray a great spectacle of chivalry. He has, after a fashion, synthesized a civilization. This was quite the thing that William Caxton desired to print. In his preface he states that he had been besought by "divers gentlemen" to print the history of King Arthur (of whose existence Caxton gives substantial proof) since he was not only among the nine worthies but also "a man born within this realm, and king and emperor of the same." The lack of literary records of this Christian king in England, where he had won surprisingly little renown as compared with that accorded him on the continent as attested to by many noble books in French, was now to be supplied by the timely appearance of a copy which Sir Thomas Malory had taken out of French and reduced into English. It answered Caxton's want to indoctrinate the principles of chivalry and so lead his generation by presenting the noble acts of King Arthur of Britain and his knights, whose deeds were to be held in memory and to be emulated for their virtue. At the same time Caxton stated that

the volume would afford pleasant pastime, but for the truth of its entire context, he could not assume the responsibility. Writer and printer were of one accord to hold in memory the glories of a departed system of civilization and point this way to a life of "good and honest acts."

To understand Malory's purpose with intelligent appreciation demands an analysis of the construction of his massive work. The central story of the fortunes of Arthur has running through it the idea of fatality which threatens the king from the first and reaches its realization in his destruction brought about through two factors. For the sin of incest, of which the hero was unconsciously guilty, he must suffer defeat. The guilty love between his queen and his greatest knight Lancelot, corrupts the court and brings dissension among the knights who support either the king or Sir Lancelot. Mordred, the offspring of Arthur and his sister, becomes the fatal instrument, seizing the opportunity to lead an organized rebellion against Arthur and holding his queen, and so bringing about the downfall of the king.

A great mass of subordinate romances surrounds this politi-

1. Books VIII, IX, and X are attributed to the French prose Romance of Tristan assigned to the fictitious Luce de Gast. Chapters 21-28 of Book X derived from the French Prophecies of Merlin. Books XI and XII are mainly drawn from Lancelot, but sources of the last three chapters of Book XII are difficult to identify, according to the Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. XII, p.865.

cal center of King Arthur at his court, each of which is used as an episode either to further the plot, as the Grail quest romance, which serves as a rebuke to the worldly character of Arthur's plan, and the Lancelot-Guinevere story, which serves as a check to the king's power in disrupting the order itself by division; or to widen the scope of the great spectacle with episodes at court, which picture the social aspect of chivalry; and those of the various kinds of individual adventures leading out from the court; such as, quests granted as boons, or mere adventure for its very love, expulsions for evil deeds, or as the outgrowth of a court celebration.

However, one rival romance is so nearly parallel as to resist being brought into close connection with the central theme and so remains an intrusion because of the similar nature of the relations of its main characters. In the romance of Sir Tristram and La Beale Isoud there is the court of King Mark of Cornwall. Mark's queen is the object of the love of the king's own nephew. The driving force of this secondary romance is beyond the sphere of Arthur's influence, and the story thus remains an almost unrelated element except for the knighting at Arthur's court of Sir Tristram which mechanically ties it to the main body. It is not strange that Malory missed the significance of the old Celtic story coming to him as it did in a source so far removed from even the primitive poem. No amount of mechanical interlacing of the numerous adventures of Tristram with those of Arthur's knights could bring the story
into real relation. 

Another analysis of Malory's design sets forth his purpose to present the controlling interests of the Middle Ages, love, war, and religion, in their ideal symmetry and their actual conflict ending in the ultimate destruction of the ideals of the protagonist, Sir Launcelot. This Malory did through his use of the story of the rise and fall of chivalry. Each of the three knighthly loyalties has its exponent, who, almost wholly ignoring the claims of the other two loyalties, exalts one loyalty to its excess and his own failure. In this analysis Tristram becomes the chief exponent of loyalty to his lady; Galahad, of loyalty to God; Gawain, of loyalty to the king; while Launcelot as the perfect knight in the conflict of these loyalties loses his ideals. With knighthly "mesure" Launcelot need not have failed.

No one can say that these elements are not to be found in the great "fatras" of Malory's source. After an ice age what of geological interest cannot be found in a terminal moraine? So with this synthesis of chivalric tradition. It is harder, perhaps, to discover the creator's arrangement than to recognize the elements. Malory, if Eugène Vinaver's painstaking study of sources has established a fact, took over a great "bloc" of story. Just why he quarried where and as he did may not easily be determined with certitude.

This more recent (than Vida D. Scudder's) statement of Malory's intention shows a moral aim with King Arthur as a moral symbol as well as a great national figure, in a drama of fatality in which his overthrow was precipitated by the desire to place human greatness above divine greatness; thus Malory showed forth moral worth of chivalry. Tristan is an interpolation in the book which falls into two parts; the drama of the Round Table and the drama of Tristan in which latter part the chivalric elements are developed, even to the point of original additions to the code, and the adverse elements are suppressed. Although the Tristan story, in E. Vinaver's opinion, does not give a very complete idea of its creator, Vinaver is drawn to that story rather than the Arthuriaede proper, in Malory's redaction. For Vinaver voices what may be a growing tendency of opinions among scholars "dans toute la poésie médiévale, le drame de Tristan et Iseut est, sous toutes ses formes et dans toutes ses variantes, le plus vrai, le plus vivant et le plus irrésistible."

To appreciate the art of Malory one cannot ignore the matter of sources; for, while he was a faithful translator, he was more than a mere redactor of what has been demonstrated to be the sources of his Tristan story and probably the text of his "Frenshe Book." Eugene Vinaver tried to find a single version which contains the entire Malory version.

What compromises that account in Malory includes: Book VIII, entirely devoted to Tristram; Book IX, including the story of La Cote Male Taile; Book X, being its climax in which Tristram is made a member of Arthur's great order; and including the story of Alisander le Orphelin; and the last four chapters of Book XII, leaving off with the lovers at Joyous Gard. Vinaver missed his aim, but he did find that three French manuscripts MS. 103 (end of 15th century); MS. 334; and MS. 99 (dated 1463) used in the Bibliothèque Nationale, used in that order, do give the very construction of Malory's work. The English work contains three elements which can be reconstructed into a single "bloc" by faithful reproduction of these three manuscripts. Vinaver hypothesizes a single version which exists now only in its vestiges and which was the common source for the English writer and these manuscripts. The original was Malory's "Frenshe Booke:" unless he knew three distinct texts (not these identical ones, as 103 is dated too late for Malory's use) and copied them, carefully concealing his "soldering." Because of the remarkable agreement of Le Morte Darthur and these manuscripts, the first hypothesis seems the more acceptable to E. Vinaver. Although Sir Thomas had all of this prearranged material at hand, the fact would not be to the disparagement of his great achievement, for even if he did copy the material blindly, he breath-

1. Eugene Vinaver, op.cit., p.86.
ed into it a unifying spirit both in purpose and atmosphere and did much more besides for the romance in prose.

It was from a version of the Prose Romance, itself derived from some intermediary source, and not from the primitive poem, which Malory derived. The primitive poem had the same serenity of the great epics and it progressed from step to step in an inevitable, clear order. The action of the love philtre was the significant central theme. The prose romance had degenerated by the time of Malory. In the period of transition from the epic to romance Chrétien de Troyes had had both the "matière" and the "sens" from Marie de France, he tells us in his introduction to the romance of Lancelot. These elements had been one and the same thing in Tristan and the Chanson de Roland, the two great creations of the twelfth century, but the adventure element had grown to such disproportionate mass that the idea was completely overshadowed. Tristan, no longer an isolated figure, had become one of a company of knights. After the point of his marriage and the return to Cornwall many interpolations had been added. The central theme had lost its significance for the belief in "sortilège" (magic) was no longer held. The prose author has Tristan, for pure love of adventure, undertake to supplant Sir Palamedes, not that love of Iseut inspired him. That love for Iseut became a banale affair, one of several, with nothing to distinguish it. The sublimity and simplicity gave way to the gratification of the new taste of the age, tangible adventures to replace the magic.
Out of the mass of narratives Malory was able to create an artistic whole, for a psychological tendency in his work draws the matter together. First he reduced the matter of his source one-sixth in condensing it. The characters he reduces by omitting unnamed "chevaliers" and "demoiselles." Names of persons already introduced, replace nameless characters in the parts they play, and he promptly identifies disguised persons. He reduces two situations at a single scene to one; he simplifies the number of meetings, departures, and separations between court intervals. He combines two discourses at the same event. Appreciation of this craft can be seen only by comparison with the mass which he welded together.

In the second place Malory emphasized throughout the sentiment, the "sens." Chrétien de Troyes had already combined the elements of the philosophy of courtly love and the accounts of Breton legends. He created the Arthurian romance upon this basic fusion. Malory did not hesitate to stress the one element. Vinaver points out two symbolic expressions in the Arthurian tales: Gawain, the knight of chivalric glory and of love of adventure, and Launcelot, the perfect knight and lover. Between adventure and sentiment Malory chose sentiment and made Launcelot his hero. When Launcelot is not the hero of the story as in the book of Tristram, then it is Tristram whom he makes the equal of Launcelot.

Malory's position in relation to the literary tradition of Tristan is one of inestimable worth. "Il a surtout été un inter-
mediare entre deux civilisations; il a su se les assimiler toutes les deux, sans porter atteinte à aucune d'elles...

lui seul s'est inspiré de la noble tâche de faire revivre dans la langue anglaise le plus belle légende du moyen âge français."

It was an auspicious concurrence of events for the entire Arthurian tradition that the early formation of English prose should fall in a period when a revival of interest in the French stories of romance which had flowered in the twelfth century was in progress. To be sure the tradition had gained currency in the French tongue and under the shaping of the French genius, but there could not have been so complete a dissemination of the entire body in the French tongue only. The story of Sir Launcelot would have been read in any language by scholars; but Sir Tristram is of the more universal appeal and rightly should have been made accessible to men of every estate back on that island from which it had sprung centuries before. If the versions of the French group had not associated the Tristan story with the Arthurian, the rarest of all the legends retold by the Bretons might have perished. It is scarcely to be thought that the Welsh triad forms of Tristan would have ever spread broadly. Malory retrieved for England much that was native to her blood and shaped a national epic with the king of romance as hero. So concisely and so intelligently did Malory achieve his task, that his work is the last of the redactions of the

tradition which has served as the fountainhead for many writers; as for the Tristan story proper, Spenser, Arnold, Swinburne, and Tennyson—all derive from that living source of the ancient love story.

The theme of love, the distinguishing feature, treated as that one of the three controlling forms of the Middle Ages makes of Books VIII-X of Le Morte Darthur the "Pageant of Romantic Love." It is the growing cult of woman-worship which is expounded as the factor in the chivalric ideal of life. Here Tristram and his lady are at the center: winsome, insistent, wholly demoralized subjects of the Lord of Terrible Aspect who excuses them from any other allegiance. They are viewed with no expressed disapproval; they see no touch of compunction. Other lovers gather around them, lovers in every attitude illustrating from various angles that "Sac Science" which the Middle Ages had codified and exalted. It is in Tristram the eternal lover that our interest centers no matter how many deeds of knightly valor he does.

Tristram the hunter and harper is still a primitive person for all of his knightly accoutrements. In a jealous rage he becomes "wood" and in this sad plight lives for months with herdsmen. He is coarse and violent sousing Dagonet in a well and going naked through the forest when lured by music. He strikes off the head of Sir Brennar's lady whose lord held to a vile custom of his castle. Then again overcome with shame at being naked in the chapel, Malory has him leap onto the

crags below. He is strangely inconsistent. On the other hand, he is Launcelot's peer for courtesy, the epitome of true knighthood.

La Beale Isoud lacks reality. She was in Gottfried, for example, a true Irish princess, clever with ruses, warm-hearted, and brave. In Malory she laughs lightly and loves somewhat after the same fashion. Isoud is not without a certain impulsive courage. Rumour falsely reported Tristram dead. Mark comes upon her in her garden about to take her own life by falling upon a sword. Before he confines her in a tower, she entreats him for mercy, saying,..."he was my first love and he shall be my last." While both Tristram and Isoud grow more polished and refined as Malory lengthens the account, neither character is at its finest point in the tradition, for that was in the first poem; but, even so, in Cornwall they are superior in that company.

The setting in Cornwall is "a region of wild living" and "evil customs." Here courtly love has a refining influence changing appetite into sentiment. In Arthur's court the sentiment should have grown into purity but the outcome of the courtly love theme would have been recognized at once there as the destructive force to the Order. Frequently under a greenwood tree we come upon one of these solitary lovers groaning, after the true courtly manner, for the love of a haughty

2. Vida D.Scudder, op.cit., p.197.
lady: Epinegris, Lamorak, Alisander, La Cote Mal Taile, Falomides, even Meliagraunce. The unseen Launcelot is their ideal love. Distinctive among the lovers is Lamorak whose elderly "amour" with Arthur's sister, Queen Margawse, is not without a comic touch. Alisander le Orphelin and Alice La Beale Pilgrim are the principals in a love idyll in itself. Sir Dinadan is no lover at all, but a foil; not even for Isoud, fairest of women, would he do service. Love was the condition of valor, and Epinegris, the lover, proved it to be when his enemy got a fall. Tristram with pleasure remarked that in the match it was the lover that was "well-sped." In some of the later fourteenth and fifteenth century romances Dinadan developed a criticism against all chivalric ideals of love, of war, and religion, and asked but one blessing, to be delivered from all ladies and maidens. In Le Morte Darthur his criticism is reduced to a single comment: "and then Sir Tristram told La Beale Isoud how Sir Dinadan held against all lovers...." Falomides is the best example of a courtly lover as he spends his days in the hopeless service of his lady, La Beale Isoud. Emotions tear his heart between adoration for his lady and love for his rival, Sir Tristram. Repeatedly he praises her and attributes all his "worship" to his love for her.

While courtly love is the type that dominates the book of

successive sex relations and the attitude toward women are to be seen. In the early epochs woman was merely property; a relic of that remains in the account of Segwaride's wife.

Tristram had no right to ride to her rescue while her lord and husband was also present at court. Then there is the "play of sense" above the idea of woman as mere loot. The highest relation is upheld in the ennobling ideal of courtly love.

The crux of the matter of the Tristram romance is always the interpretation of the action of the potion, within the central theme of love which distinguishes the versions. The "sorcellerie," magic, of the primitive poem in which the cup was a material symbol of blind and irresistible passion was transformed into mere worldly intrigue in the prose romance.

In Le Morte Darthur the relation is human affection, to be sure glorified, as best Malory could do it, to accord with the external aspects of courtly love. When Tristram disguised as Tramtrist dwelt in the Irish court to be healed by Isoud's surgery, he "cast great love" to her, and "she began to have a great fantasy unto him," then grew to love him "passing well." La Beale Isoud armed him handsomely to joust in a tournament for her sake after which she made him "good cheer."

When he returned to Cornwall, his lady lamented dolefully and said that for seven years she would not be married without Tristram's consent and approval of the lord. He in turn,

swore to be her good knight always, and they gave each a ring to the other. Upon his return to Ireland as the champion who had fought for Isoud's sake and had defended her father, King Anghish, when appealed to Arthur's court for murder, Malory tells, "But the joy that La Beale Isoud made of Sir Tristram there might no tongue tell, for of all men earthly she loved him most." After Tristram's return from Brittany, Malory records: "and to tell the joys that were betwixt La Beale Isoud and Sir Tristram, there is no tongue can tell it, nor heart think it, nor pen write it." As a boon Tristram might have had the princess in marriage, but he asked for her to be King Mark's bride as his uncle had bade him do. It was only quite incidentally that Tristram and Isoud drink from the flasket of gold. "But by that their drink was in their bodies, they loved each other so well that never their love departed for weal neither for woe, and thus it happed the love first betwixt Sir Tristram and La Beale Isoud, the which love never departed the days of their life." Here, to begin with, is spontaneous human affection making the potion almost superfluous, and a guise of courtly love, but utter lack of passion, or true acceptance of a fate sealed by a supernatural spell. The potion is dismissed with its first mention. In short Malory had a tale outgrown for his handling.

2. Ibid., Book IX, Chap. XVI, p. 323
3. Ibid., Book VIII, Chap. XXIV, p. 273
"Il n'a pas été donné aux éternals amants de Cornouaille de survivre à l'époque puissante qui les avait créés. Le charme fut rompu; leur ombres disparurent et ils passèrent dans l'Inconnu."

There is nothing of the tragic conflict of the archetype left. Tristan had to choose between loyalty to his uncle and king and the love for Isolt; yet he was powerless to choose because of the cursed cup. In the prose romance and Malory, there remains no tragic conflict. Tristram is loyal to the queen, his lady, and no one can blame him, for he is "the ideal of prowess and loyalty." He is enemy to the king, but no opprobrium attaches to that fact, for Mark was regarded as "enemy to all good knights" since for "jealousness of his queen he hath chased him (Tristram) out of his country." King Mark is so debased as a coward, a traitor, a liar, and a murderer. He is made ridiculous, falling from his horse like a bag of meal and "chased" through the wood by Dagonet. Since La Beale Isoud is regarded as a worshipful lady, their relationship is regarded as a pity, so unevenly matched were they.

The culmination of interest in Malory's version is with the knighting of Sir Tristram. He is a Cornish knight but a rare one and most loved of all by Lancelot so that for his many noble deeds his greatest ambition is realized in the re-

ward of membership in the Order of the Round Table. The ceremony was celebrated with "noble and great feast." King Arthur asks a boon, that Sir Tristram remain at his court. Sir Tristram, honored for knightly prowess and great craft in hunting, is given Sir Marhaus's former seat. The eagerness of the King, the loud acclaim of the queen, ladies, and damosels, the high praise is almost fantastic in its travagance to the reader of the primitive poem, who knew that older Tristram, as the eternal lover, who went hand in hand with Isolt out from the Cornish King's court into banishment for love's sake. At that point in the primitive poem the interest reaches its height.

In death, Tristram in the primitive poem breathes his last with Isolt's name on his lips. In a late thirteenth-century prose version he bids farewell reluctantly to chivalry and whispers "my sword." In Malory he is slain treacherously by Mark while he (Tristram) is harping before La Beale Isoud. It is mentioned as a parenthetical remark in another account long after the main story of Tristram is closed.

That Malory had never known the significance of death which alone could bring release to the suffering lovers, was due to his knowledge of the prose romance alone, or else he would never have added, "whereof was great pity."

Malory did not wholly understand and could not personally

have supported the relationship between Tristram and Isolt; however, he attempted to justify their relations with the chivalric ideal. Even Sir Perceval justifies Tristram to King Mark, saying that Tristram might love the queen sinless for she was one of the fairest ladies in the world. Surely great beauty in the lady inspired worthy deeds to match it. Tristram excused himself for the wedding of Isoud la Blanche Mains in writing to Launcelot, "as he was a true knight he had never ado fleshly with Isoud la Blanche Mains." Guenever excuses the case with the generalization that ladies often compel men to marry them by sorcery, and comfort's Tristram's first love with the assurance that he will love her more than before. Queen Isoud accepts the situation and writes for Tristram to return and bring Isoud la Blanche Mains with him to her (the queen's) court. Tristram is loyal in arms fighting always courteously so that he won laudatory expression from even Arthur's court where honor was more than that of Cornwall. Toward his first love he behaved in strict chivalric manner, refusing, in a tourney, to depart from his shield, the gift of La Beale Isoud. In combat, the thought of her presence caused him to rally and give twenty strokes to each of his adversary's. La Beale Isoud proves her love to Tristram by compelling him to go from her to attend the court at Pentecost for the sake of his worship as a knight; a decorous Isoud is that. It is his

"clean knighthood" that gives him strength against odds.

Malory added to the chivalric code of arms a new tenet amounting to "speak no evil of the absent." As Tristram departed for Cornwall, he bade the Irish knights tell him outright any shame against him and that he would give his body to make it good.

With all his insistence, by epithet, if not by recorded deed, Malory stressed Tristram's accord with courtly love. Malory's own conception of love remained as far removed from that of his own century as that of fifteenth century conception was unlike the ideal of the punctilious Provençal love of the twelfth century. In his essay on "how true love is likened to summer" he commends virtuous love, that of wisdom and stability, in which the worshipful individual loved one better than all others. Pensively the agâng knight, Sir Thomas, reveals the image of the "old love" so faithful and free from lust that was known in King Arthur's reign; Guenever he names as a true love. Tristram's parents appear to be lovers after Malory's own heart; of them Malory says "she (Elizabeth) was a full meek lady, and well she loved her lord, and he (Meliadus) her again, so there was great joy betwixt them." But what he labored to set up as the ideal was a ritualistic thing, which with all its form lacked the vital strength of

the passion which ruled those primitive lovers as bounden slaves.

Sir Kehydius of Brittany died of his love for Queen Isoud, and Sir Palomides spent all his knightly days to honor her with none soever guerdon. For love of Tristram the daughter of the King of France died, and Sir Segwaride’s wife showed him favours and Tristram loved her "a passing fair lady, and that espied Sir Tristram well." Now King Mark loved her too and this jealousy was the origin of his hatred for his nephew. La Beale Isoud was not the cause. What to do with such contradiction might have troubled Malory in giving a positive interpretation to the facts; he ignores them and insists upon the courtly elements by eulogizing the lovers in the words of everyone.

Some aspects of Malory’s art, which make for the excellence of the drama as a whole, claim attention. One-third of the work is the Tristram story which still is not given in its entirety. The lovers in themselves were not the thing of chief interest to Malory, but he seems to be trying to bring the adventures in the outlying Cornish realm into some juxtaposition with the more orderly spectacle of the realm of Arthur. The long account of tournaments, quest, imprisonments, and sojourns in the forest moves in such leisurely fashion as to produce a timeless quality as if the flux of life might move on for ages.

High romance is here, because of the very mystery of the land of Logris. It is no geographical kingdom over which an historical king rules. Sir Thomas Malory, a victim of civil strife, for escape from his melancholy, probably sought a refuge in this fairy realm. Though the natural magic of the early Celtic tale is lacking, there is a suggestion of the forest setting away from the court where Tristan and Isolt must abide as long as he is Tristan and she, Isolt; one line can set his proper stage--"and so they rode all in green full fresh-ly bysene unto the forest." Here are adventures extravagant beyond the acceptance of rational thought. The lovers in their utter disregard for law other than their self-imposed code are most romantic in their lack of responsibility and their almost unchallenged freedom.

The great principle of causality which can be heard as an ominous rumbling beneath this action in the main story of the Le Morte Darthur is not heard in the Tristram story. Since the lovers' acts are completely justified by all, including King Arthur, himself, no avenging fate pursues them. Temporary separation is the cause of their sorrow, never a consciousness of sin. There is no epic greatness in a certain effect unfolding inevitably from a cause. Their death is a matter for human pity from Malory, not a stroke from a wronged God, as, within the very same volume, in the destruction of Arthur,

nor yet a blessed release from pain as in the primitive poem.
Chapter IV
The Sixth Book, *The Faerie Queene*—Edmund Spenser

Not until another century had elapsed was the story 1 to be revived in a great English literary work. The usual thing in the chronological descent of a matured tradition took place; that is, a portion of it was removed and viewed under a high power lens. It is but the youthful hero whom Edmund Spenser selected for his purpose. It is not strange that "the poet's poet" should seize upon Tristram from the most poetical of the romances connected with Arthur. 2

By the author's epithet, if not always by Tristram's own deed, Malory had made of Tristram a knight, peerless for courtesy, save for Lancelot who loved Tristram most of all. Malory had, doubtless unwittingly, restored Tristram by eulogy (not always convincing to the reader) to his original preeminent role, as in the primitive poem, of a youth of capti-
vating charm for friend and stranger alike who won love upon sight from persons of every estate.

Tristram, moreover, was a gentleman of culture, as Malory points out; that, any one of discrimination could see. The youth had spent seven years in France, probably much of the time at the court (for, later, Malory tells that the French princess died of unrequited love for Tristram). He knew "language, nurture, deeds of arms," harping, hawking, and hunting. The book of venerie bore his name. No other knight of the Round Table is associated with such general culture as Tristram.

There was, too, a marked humanitarian quality in the chivalric spirit of the young boy which made him forego hate where, according to right as his father held it, hate was due. "For God's love" he asked as a boon, the life of his stepmother who had plotted his death.

Here Spenser had ready-made a youth with the qualities which "men of worship" should honor "to the day of doom." What was the scheme in which Tristram was to be used?

Spenser sets out to teach his philosophy of the spiritual life by the use of the tradition of chivalry in his masterpiece, The Faerie Queene. He universalized the elements of the chival-

1. Sir Thomas Malory, op.cit., Vol.I, p.241. Spenser does not use the same ancestry for Tristram as Malory does; however, Spenser's Tristram derives from that of the former writer.
rific ideal to illustrate the operation of the spiritual forces within man's soul. The individual man looks to the divine world for the beauty of truth and achieves holiness; he looks within in happiness at temperance, temperance that virtue which enables him to achieve, by his reason, self-mastery over angry passions and bodily appetites. In a sense the struggling soul of man may be likened to a battle ground on which the chivalric conventions fit. Allegory is used to interpret the inward experience in terms of the outward ideal life of chivalry. Spenser used only the elements and not the whole body of the Arthurian legend, to which he freely adds characters of his own creation with both allegorical and historical significance.

It may be seen how the poet has blended the idea of Christian discipline and Platonic idealism in The Faerie Queene. As the Platonic philosophy was understood in his century, it taught the reality of a heavenly beauty known in and by the soul, as contrasted with an earthly beauty known only to the sense. Only in so far as the soul is filled with moral ideas can true beauty be discovered in it or by it. The presence of beauty inspires the religious feeling of worship. So in the love-inspiring beauty of woman, he saw both the reflection of and index of divine good. "A gentleman or noble person,"

fashioned in virtuous and gentle discipline, was the ideal of character which the poet endeavoured to show forth. Arthur, the King, was for Spenser the equivalent of the Christian conception of Divine Grace (to aid the knights, constituting the virtues of the Soul upon its quest) and he is also the ideal Christian gentleman. The essential traits of such a being are the love of glory, a life of service, and a life of discipline.

What in the nature of Spenser made him choose this body of tradition for his philosophy? His was a chivalric nature. He came of a "house of ancient fame." He had for companion and ideal, Sir Philip Sidney of whom it is said, "No Englishman has ever impressed his own or later times as a more perfect type of gentleman." In the pattern of Sidney, Spenser had before him "one who was 'president' (precedent) of both noblesse and chivalry." Schofield describes his character as "grounded on the very noble, but very difficult, ideal of Christian chivalry, which demanded that a man should try to make himself beloved." Schofield concludes that "the finest note of chivalry that Spenser presents" is the criterion which Sidney held: "True worth esteeming fame more than riches, and noble actions for above nobility itself."

In Spenser's century scholars were interested in principles

2. Ibid., p. 175.
of chivalry more than with laws of chivalry. Spenser had the ideals of Oxford and Cambridge, not so unlike those of today. In the select group of young men there is recognition of the fact that they have a responsibility because of their "virtuous and gentle discipline." This discipline implied an understanding of motive. Reason was to rule passion. They set standards and directed affairs after a kind of intellectual "noblesse oblige." Their conduct meant a combination of gentleman and scholar who spoke with well-tempered and speech and who rebuked unseemly manners. The chivalric code as set forth in the Book of the Order of Chivalry (a compendium of rules issued in translation a year before Le Morte Darthur appeared) made a man to love wisdom; the growing idea was changing knighthood to mean "the order of the learned" in Spenser's day. "There is a noticeable change in this new age away from that of humble impersonality to that of supreme individualism." The principle profession of a courtly gentleman was chivalry. This courtier of the Elizabethan age deliberately set out to teach how to achieve worldly fame, and incidently he was increasing his own. He realized that it was politic to be good.

Virtue gives herself light through darkness for to wade

Strive your excellent self to excel

were injunctions which taught development of self, brought

about through self-analysis. The whole burden of blame for a
Spenserian gentleman would be, "That is unworthy of you."

A source of this mental stress upon chivalric ideals came
from Castiglione's Book of the Courtier, first printed in 1528
and translated into English in 1561. Dr. Johnson regarded it
as "the best book that was ever written upon good breeding."
It was written for the court of Urbino, and in like manner
The Faerie Queene was written for the court of London, by Spen-
sor who knew well the work of the Italian. Both authors were
of the opinion that the courtier should practice chivalry.

Sir Calidore, or Courtesy, in Book Six of The Faerie Queene
is a very pleasing character and perhaps the best illustration
of Spenser's view of what a gentleman ought to show. In the
court of Faery

was none more courteous Knight
Than Calidore, beloved over all.

His "mylde manners" were natural. To this was added "comely
guize," "gracious speech," great approval "in batteilous affray."

Moreover,
He loathed leasing and base flattery,
And loved simple truth and steadfast honesty.

There was power in this courtesy both over friend and foe,
as illustrated in the opening adventure of his very first quest.

every deed and word, that he did say,
Was like enchantment, that through both the eares,
And both the eyes did steale the hart away.1

The opening incident illustrates courtesy operating upon others. Briana might wed Crudor upon condition that she give him a mantle lined with locks of ladies and beards of knights who chanced to approach her castle. Sir Calidore overcame both her seneschal, Malefort, and Crudor and compelled him henceforth to aid errant knights and ladies and to wed Briana unconditionally. So wondrously changed was Briana under the influence of courtesy that she gave her castle to Sir Calidore and bound herself to him forever, his virtue having discovered virtue in her.

Sir Calidore, assigned to the virtue of courtesy, has a certain duty to perform. In The Faerie Queene six moral virtues of the twenty-four contemplated in the poet's plan are actually treated. Originally each virtue was to have experienced a series of disciplinary adventures, but Calidore is perfect in courtesy from the outset, for, as a matter of fact, Spenser had completed his pattern in the first two books since Holiness and Temperance had been achieved. Calidore's adventures as illustrated by the first are merely outward and not spiritual experiences.

The tradition is further used to express Spenser's love of beauty, the most instinctive quality in the poet's nature. The first book expresses the love of spiritual beauty. The following books illustrate the chivalric ideal of love. Beauty is the moving power. There is an episode in which the sight of the beauty, pure beauty of form of Pastorella, a shepherdess,
holds the young Calidore. He woos and wins Pastorella and saves her from brigands; then he rides upon his quest for the Blatant Beast, symbolizing slander, which he does overpower.

Within the larger outlines of the exploits of Sir Calidore comes the Tristram episode within the adventure with Briana of that cruel custom of the castle. Sir Calidore spied a tall young man on foot, fighting a mounted knight, whom finally he killed, to Calidore's great amazement. Calidore, who had noted him steadfastly, recognized in Tristram "a goodly youth of amiable grace" although only a slender seventeen-year-old "slip," and concluded that he was of the nobility.

Here one of Spenser's beautifully colored portraits presents the "gentle swayne" wearing an hood with aglets spread, woodman's jacket of Lincoln green belayed with silver lace, costly Cordovan leather buckskins, pincht upon gold, and hunter's horn at side, and carrying a dart in one hand and a bore speare in the other.

Tristram had broken the law of arms; however, loathe as he had been to do it, he would have repeated the act. The knight had been the aggressor. Calidore asked for the account. Tristram represented himself as an unripe youth ranging the forest for game when he came upon the knight prodding with a spear his lady, who walked beside his horse. Indignant at

this proceeding, Tristram blamed the knight, who then threatened to chastise him as a child might be. Tristram's taunt incited the knight to strike him a painful blow with his spear. Tristram then cast his dart, fatally wounding the knight. Upon this recital, Calidore had only admiration for the youth's "tempered" speech, but more for his act, and upon the testimony of the lady, acquitted Tristram since he had spoken in defense of the lady and merely fought for his own defense.

For knights and all men this by nature have Toward all womenkind them kindly to behave. Calidore's words show a much more universal practice of chivalry than that of Malory's which was restricted to the nobility, and exemplifies in part Spenser's humanitarian ideal.

Then, upon request, the lady recounted how her lord had killed an unarmed knight, whom they had come upon, making love. Since the hapless lady had hidden herself and thus thwarted her pursuer, he had misused his own lady all the more. Calidore held that Tristram's assailant has been justly compensated for cowardly and tyrannical behavior.

Again the knight Calidore turned to Tristram to learn his genealogy since he was so impressed by the action, appearance, and "pregnant wit" of the "gentle boy" with "face so lovely, sterne and coy." The knight declared he had never seen one in whom did "greater hope appeare." Here is set forth Spenser's

ser's conception of good as identified with beauty, a relationship apparent only to one in whom there is good. Sir Calidore recognized virtue in Tristram because of his outward beauty. This virtue was at work because of the occasion and not for outward show, since Tristram walked all alone in the forest and knew of no witnesses.

Here is a parentage reversed from the usual account. Tristram is a Briton born of King Peligras, of Cornewale, and Emiline. Upon the King's death, his brother had taken the throne and Tristram was sent, at the age of ten, for safety into the land of faerie. Now, eagerly but modestly he implored Calidore to make him a squire, for it was then past the time when he should have been taught the use of arms and he, though unworthy in his own modest sight, desired to bear these newly-won arms in battle and learn their right use.

Sir Calidore was pleased and really wished that he had more noble hire than chivalrie (though none there was) for Tristram's reward; but he dubbed the youth his squire with the oath, swearing faith to his knights; truth to all ladies; devotion to duty even in the face of peril or fearful consequences. Tristram prayed to accompany his knight upon his quest, but that pleasure Sir Calidore was obliged to refuse as he had been commanded by his "Soveraine" to ride alone. They took courteous leave of each other, and Tristram did his knight's command to safeguard the lady whose knight he had slain. First the squire feasted his eyes upon the godly arms
which he had won:

gilden armes, with azure band
Quartered athwart, and bearing in his targe 1
A Ladie on rough waves row'd in a sommer barge.

Then he raised the lady upon the steed of her own late knight
and marched forth with her as she directed him.

What did Calidore, the courteous, see in Tristram to call
forth his admiration and trust? First, Tristram was learned
in good manners and venerie. He has displayed nobility which
matched his noble bearing that marked him in spite of his
rustic life. Spenser thought "wild woods should far expel all
civil usage and gentility and gentle sprite deform with rude
rusticity." To him the court and royal citadel were the
"great schoolmistress of all courtesy." The "tempered speech,"
the "pregnant wit," and "the worthy worth" are accretions to
Tristram which Spenser invents for the admiration of the gentle
Calidore.

For Spenser, himself, the very name "Tristram" was a word
with which to conjure up a whole pageant of forest life and at
the same time accord with the particular quality of courtesy
of which Sir Calidore was the embodiment. Malory had given
the world a Tristram equal to Lancelot in courtesy so that the
name was established to mean that. But Lancelot, even had he
excelled, could not have served Spenser so well as Tristram.

XLIV: 9-11, p.315.
"I am a Briton borne," 1 he declared to Sir Calidore and the straight-forward statement has a proud ring in it which might have been from Spenser himself, for we are told that "he was penetrated and pervaded by a proud passionate patriotism." 2 Tristram is, within limits, an "idealized Englishman" in an age when patriotism ran high. In this age, the history of which reads like a paen of glory, tremendous achievement entailed great adventure with fearful hazards. The young Tristan was but a stripling, yet he dared to violate a law of arms in a matter of expediency. This spirit is no invention on the part of the sixteenth century poet; the ancient Tristan as well as the Tristram of Malory violated three loyalties of chivalry when he saw fit or was compelled by the greatest motive in his life, --love.

England was to Spenser a veritable land of faerie "wrought in a golden mist of chivalry and romance, populous with knight-errants of divine purpose, and indomitable prowess." 3 Emilie, mother of Tristram, was prudent to have sent her princely son here soon to prick over the plains with his peers. Spenser, writing in Ireland, must have felt a certain Celtic response to natural forces. It was savage and wild, and his solitary residence there made his life seem like knight-errantry of old. He was led in isolation to dream dreams of book-worthies and to

2. Ibid., Vol.I, Intro. p.XV.
3. Ibid., Intro. pp.XI, XII.
view facts at home in unreal semblances. It was a stroke of economy for him to use the name of Tristram, for that called up the very haunt of the Blaunt Beast.

Take it literally—how many fabulous dragons had the readers of Tristram's story associated with that hero? In Ireland he had killed the venomous dragon which threatened the land. Many others were added to that beginning. Take it figuratively—Tristram himself was to become the prey of the Blaunt Beast, slander. However it is only with Chyld Tristram that Spenser deals. Maynard thinks that Spenser meant no farther use for Tristram in the scheme of his completed work and that his reason for Tristram's introduction was to add to the general interest with the well-known romantic hero.

All the pageantry of hunting is called forth with the mention of Tristram. The book of venerie bore his name because of his skill and the use to which he had put the craft. Hauking was another sport in which he excelled. In the Blanche Landes he had whistled up birds as if by magic and in the streams of Brocelande he had been the first to fish with a hook. The faithful dog of Tristram, that remembered him when even his lover was uncertain, is called to the reader's mind. The connotation leads into a labyrinth of forest associations, and the British gentleman does honor the hunt.

In fine, who indeed could have served so well as Tristram to be the squire of the most courteous knight, Sir Calidore,
in this quest of the Blatant Beast?

So the master painter has swept in with fresh color all the glamor of the sylvan setting of a forest in faerie. This artist who made music or colored pictures, who posed as professor of morals, has produced another pageant. The tall, comely lad weaves in and out of the gleaming light and lush shadow which Spenser could create so well in what our contemporary critic calls (with nothing but praise in mind) at its greatest worth, "one of the world's most magnificent picture-books."

Just as Spenser borrowed from all poetic sources to enchant with scenes of beauty, so all poets in Britain to follow him were to acknowledge his inspiration to them. Malory immediately was undoubtedly his source for the pageantry of Arthur's realm. But in this fragmentary use of the bit of the Tristram story, Spenser added nothing of import to the legend, at least nothing, which any one has seen fit to interpret anew. He illuminated it in enduring colors for all who would behold again the courtly grace of gallant young prince Tristram.

Chapter V

The Last Tournament, The Idylls of the King

--Alfred Tennyson

What is the purpose of society? That was the question that Tennyson wished to consider when he made use of the chivalric element in the Arthurian legend in his Idylls of the King. Each individual, to him, represented an underlying force at work in the life of mankind. Thus he makes universal application of the chivalric ideal in his account of knightly deeds.

Of the mosaic of idylls each one is a little picture with a certain independent unity. In The Last Tournament Tristram is conceived as one of these underlying forces which assail the soul and its fairest hope. King Arthur's plan to reform the world, with the support of his Queen and the cooperation of his knights was the soul's purpose, as the poet explains his conception. A successful working order has been established centering about Arthur's court, which attracted noble

youth, upheld ideals of purity and justice, and exercised a civilizing influence even beyond his realm. The evil forces attacked the social order from within and without.

The Last Tournament pictures the degeneration of the Round Table as it demonstrated the futility of the soul's aspirations in the face of the inherent nature of mankind. Tristram is a type of weakness.

Briefly the story of the idyll runs:

King Arthur let cry the tournament of the Dead Innocence, honoring a dead infant whom the Queen had cared for until its death. For prize to be awarded she returned to the King the ruby coronet which had encircled the foundling's neck. Before the day appointed, a churl, mutilated and robbed of his hundred swine by the Red Knight, chief of a rival court in the North, appeared before Arthur, with his account of cruelty. Leaving the tournament to the conduct of Sir Lancelot, Arthur, with new, young knights went to quell the renegades of the North, who had sworn counter to all of the vows of the order of the Round Table.

The morning of the tournament broke with dismal, wet wind blowing the white, silken hangings along the streetway and yellow leaves of autumn drifted about the lists. Laws were broken; curses were hurled out because of the dead infant and the King's follies. Then came Tristram, just returned after a year's absence and his marriage to Isolt of Brittany, who, partly because of little resistance from faithless, craven
opponents, won the tournament without great ado. Lancelot, questioning as to Tristram's purity, awarded the necklace. Tristram accepted it with matter of fact manner, as proof of his skill in a world for which he felt no responsibility whatever. Bluntly enough he refused to award the prize to any of the white-robed ladies, saying that his Queen of Beauty was elsewhere. In even heavier gloom than it had dawned, the weary day passed, that

one white day of Innocence...

Thou somewhat draggled at the skirt....

Disorderly revels completed the evening, which the sorrowful Queen was obliged to halt. Courtesy and glory had not graced the jousts nor the sports.

The following morning Tristram, sauntering from the hall, with the prize dangling from the crown of his harp, met Dagnot, the fool, who accused the knight of breaking his marriage vows and his allegiance to the king. To which Tristram harped a song of free and light loves. The fool knew that Tristram was a degrading influence, and he knew that the King, himself, was a fool for the presumption of omnipotence in purposing to build an order of such coarse, depraved individual men. This he told Tristram.

Tristram travelled toward Lyonesse, sleeping by the way in a bower, where he was troubled to know how to explain his

marriage to his beloved Isolt, Mark's queen. He found Isolt at the castle happy to have him there, ready to be dallied with and lied to flatteringly but not without upbraiding him for his marriage to Isolt of Brittany. She wished him to swear to a love for her when she would be past desire. Tristram would swear no more vows. He had broken his to Isolt of the White Hands and to the King, just as Mark's queen had broken hers. The oaths were but impulsive expressions, good, but beyond the hope of being kept since the King who had bound them was perhaps only an imposter with a sullied Queen, and since men's very natures were hopeless of perfection on earth. His love, bound only by love, and therefore larger and free, was the only matter of moment. In exchange for food and wine he was ready to love Isolt to the death. After that satiety they laughed and enjoyed reminiscences of their deception played upon Mark. With a lyric, Tristram confessed that her love as the light of a fiery star would always shine for him. He flung the love and peace offering about her neck. As his lips were pressed to her throat, from behind, Mark struck him dead.

Arthur meantime had vanquished the rebels of the North. The drunken Red Knight had lurched from his own saddle in a fatal fall.

So all the ways were safe from shore to shore, But in the heart Arthur pain was lord.¹

For although forces without the ideal social order may be con-

trolled, the noble purpose of the soul of man, with all its inherent natural weaknesses met with defeat.

The episode is original with Tennyson. The Red Knight is Pelleas of the old story; Dagonet is, with changed character, also from Malory. Only Tristram's death is the same. In Malory's account, Iseult cleaved his brain with a "trenchant glaive," but Iseult then died upon his body, a grace that Tennyson might have granted her, for she had been ever here Tristram's constant star.

The characters are all either ignoble or, at least are losing their grip in Tennyson's idyll; a gloomier caste can not be pictured in a darker atmosphere. He achieved his purpose effectively. Outwardly Tristram is the woodland warrior as always. He, rosier and comelier than the rest, taller than any, enters the lists

armoured all in forest green, whereon
There tripped a hundred tiny silver deer,
And wearing but a holly spray for crest, with ever-scattering berries, and on shield
A spear, a harp, a bugle...

(a new device upon his shield of Tennyson's own making to indicate Tristram's three-fold superior attainments.)

First and last he is a law breaker; chiefly to Tennyson looms the disregard for the sanctity of the vows of the order of the Round Table; then, in relation to Iseult, he is doubly an adulterer. He has foreworn oaths of the three loyalties,

1. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, op.cit., p.228, ll.170-174
to God, to the king, and to two ladies. Since Mark is such "a want of a man" there seems to be less of wrong in the relation of Tristram toward Mark, who, indeed, is in this idyll no longer Tristram's uncle as in the primitive tale. Coming late into the order, Tristram had sworn only "by the shell" to meaningless vows. Granting that the emotional fervor and blind espousal of a cause, only partly understood, had made worthier men of all the knights and exalted even their leader, Tristram knew that the realm so built could not last. Doubt as to the king's own identity, a king bound to a faithless queen, made Tristram, especially, chafe under restraint; and a recognition of his own fleshly appetite showed the utter hopelessness of purity in men. "A worldling of the world" he called himself to Isolt. Not only had his experience made him conscious of imperfection, but purity seems an object of open ridicule and a hindrance.

Particularly did Tristram resent the strait vows of love "binding to one." He held a completely romantic conception of love--

we love but while we may;
And therefore is my love so large for thee,
Seeing it is not bounded save by love.

Law, order, proportion--none of these should govern his passion for Isolt, yea, or for any new love in a free field--not

1. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, op. cit., p.242, l.691
2. ibid., p.242, l.896-8.
even that other Isolt, his bride whom he had—wedded easily, 
But left her all as easily, and returned.
However, with all of his vain boasting of freedom, his heart even in dreams was torn with aimless struggle. As he journeyed toward Isolt, the Queen, he pondered how to color best his account of his marriage. A woman weeping by the road for her departed husband, he counselled to weep no more lest her mate, returning, should find her no longer in his favor. In his own irresolute mind he sought decision, unable as he was to know whether he wanted Isolt's love or hatred. His fickleness Isolt knew. Under her "black-blue Irish eyes" again he sang of his love that should last beyond the death into the dream.
Here is no chivalric ideal of love. In Tristram's view, it was practice and skill that gave him the victory in the tournament, not the steadfast love for his lady as chivalric ideal held as the source of glory. He was not even formally courteous to the ladies at the tournament. Isolt accused him of want of courtesy from his continued harrying of beasts, for he was cruel to remind her of age when she would be past desire since he knew the thought was hateful to her yearning heart. Here is not even elemental passion, kindled by a curse of God upon ill-fated victims, as in the primitive poem. Here

is philandering lust of a clever, light-minded man who first intrigued with a knight's wife, stole away Mark's Queen for a month's dallying, then losing her, followed the call of a mere name whose owner later he thought he loved enough for marriage. Of her to the Queen he later said,

'Care not for her: patient, and prayerful, meek, Pale-blooded, she will yield herself to God.'

That would not the Irish Isolt do:

Isolt of Brittany is scarcely more than a name for Tennyson. She does not enter the action. (For that matter the whole tournament is given, only in retrospect.) In Tristram's dreams, Isolt, the queen has a hand, hot with ill-desires. She is passionate but "drained of strength" with inflicting moods of love for Tristram and hate for Mark. To her lover she is "soft, gracious, kind" and even Guenevere's superior. Jealousy gives her the cruel tongue of a common termagent when she says of her rival:

    can I wish her any huger wrong Than having known thee?....2

Again she refers to the other Isolt as Tristram's "leman," with, no doubt, a loss of her own self-respect. She draws odious comparisons with Lancelot to the disparagement of Tristram's courtesy. So broken with torturous suffering, she begs

2. Ibid., p.239, 11.591-592.
for flattering lies from Tristram's ready lips.

That warrior is not less lacking in chivalric ideals in his attitude toward other knights than he is to ladies. He and Lancelot bear each other's presence at the tournament in an almost hostile manner, except for the fact that Tristram is simply nonchalant toward the opinion of the world at large. Toward the great King he is disloyal, and toward the Cornish King he is unscrupulously faithless, vindictive, and scornful. Such was far from true in Tristram's primitive character.

Mark is a vile, beastly "want of a man" whose hate for Tristram grew from rivalry in favor from the wife of an unnamed knight. The rivalry over the Queen is but one of a series of clashes. Self-mastery he has not, nor even respect from his wife or subject, who fear his treachery, but ridicule his cat-like stealth and ungainly crane-like legs. (Deft suggestion is this touch. The reader recalls the royal eavesdropper in the pear tree.) Always cruel to Isolt, he crowns his villainy by murdering her lover as Tristram caresses her.

The absence of the magic potion element from the story utterly degrades the relation of Tristram and Isolt. Tristram questions whether or not their love is sin and if so finds it warranted by their happiness; so blase has he become. Isolt is more scrupulous in her recognition of broken vows, but, in actuality participates in the wrongdoing. Mark is ruthless from passion rather than from high principle. All of the deep tragic note of the primitive narrative is removed since the
two men have never honored nor served each other and have no dramatic conflict to face in their claims. The original character of the theme comes to destruction in Tennyson's hand.

However, it gains in human interest within the allegory as compensation for that other loss. The mystical character of Arthur and the moralizing element stimulate the mind to questions, howbeit dismally answered by the Victorian prophet. Arthur is the tragic figure who expresses Tennyson's own philosophy, "that of an age when faith is the prize of victory, and remains open to obsessing doubts."

As Lancelot had said to his sovereign, "It is well" when he heard the king's command. With entirely different content the King flings back the response as a question. He has sensed lack of reverence and loyalty in a lower manhood. He fears for his realm an end of violent confusion. Queen Guinevere, too, is beset by semiconscious misgivings, when the king rides forth, as to his very nature and destiny. What is the soul and its end? That is the meaning of the poet's metaphor. Dagonet, the fool, knows that Arthur's scheme is doomed for failure. While the King gains yet a temporary hold in the North, his heart is filled with pain. Returning in "death-dumb autumn-dripping gloom" Arthur finds his fool who knows that the King will never smile again. The Anti-Christ will triumph in the world.

A present day critic sees as an aspect of Tennyson's life

the constant fear that dominated his thinking: "he was afraid of life; he was afraid of death; predominantly and persistently he was afraid of life after death." Yet he was the civic prophet, and for a half century the acceptance of his opinions as a criterion for the majority of British people had invested him with sacerdotal power. The same critic writes, "although his 'message' now appears to have been a very inconclusive business...yet it must be remembered that upon the majority of his contemporaries it acted as a very potent sedative, and that to hundreds and thousands of perplexed and anxious minds he brought complete intellectual and moral relief." His public must have been lulled so by the rhythm and charmed by the imagery of this idyll as to miss the poet's own despair and compromise running throughout.

Why with "all roads safe from shore to shore" was Arthur (a subjective study of the poet's self) filled with pain? Safety there was for the Victorian's readers, who demanded to be told that all was for the best, but for the poet there was no more than troubled doubt.

"It seems to me," he wrote in 1867, "as if there were much less of the old reverence and chivalrous feeling in the world than there used to be--I tried in my Idylls to teach men these things and the needs of the Ideal. But I feel sometimes as if my life had been a very useless life." 3

2. Ibid., loc.cit.
3. Ibid., p.218
Then, Tennyson felt that the universal life of society had never, and, perhaps could never continue on a lofty plane. Aye, it was going down hill and maybe already past redemption, at least by the means of an English poet laureate.

The youth of 1880 had found Arthur neither blameless nor real. Tennyson on his side, found the youth at fault; not only were they wrong, but worse, they were un-English due to the influence of Baudelaire and Zola. Such was a part of the "anti-Gallican cackle" which Swinburne in the reviews of Tennyson criticized. One can understand the fairness of our contemporary French writer.

Tennyson preeminently represents Victorian literature, a privilege which today is in the eyes of many one of his shortcomings;...the vein of his genius is distinctly national, and he has voiced better than any other the instincts, feelings, and preferences which have never ceased to feed the moral personality of the English people ....He is not only British, but insular. 2

So the devastation of this "perhaps the greatest love-story in literature" was, in part, required by Victorian contemporaries.

However, Tennyson was seriously mindful of his reading public and at the same time evidently impressed by the critics. A Blackwood's reviewer had lamented the pollution of the Merlin and Vivien idyll within the same pages which portrayed the "Christian purity of Arthur." That was upon the appearance of

2. Ibid., loc.cit.
We have seen how Tennyson in a time of growing unbelief
they believed, with excruciating conviction,
the value of individual; they were obsessed
with the tremendous responsibility of their
own future; and as they watched uneasily the
monster civilization which they had fathered
getting more and more beyond their control,
they clung despairingly to the pretense that
they were a serene generation of happy and
enlightened people who knew exactly why and
whither it was all progressing so fast. And
it was on the basis of this pretense that
Tennyson, the mirror of his age, treated the
subjects of love, politics, and religion....
They (Victorians) approached these three prob-
lems obliquely and from the gentler angle of
compromise.2

Further criticism of the age is explanatory of Tenny-
son's difficult position in treating this romantic material
under the eye of Victoria, a monarch, who really questioned
the Laureate concerning the morality of some of his best-
known characters.

that the advent of Swinburne was leading the
Laureate to consider whether a little--a very
little wine might not with advantage be added to
the limpid waters of Camelot. The experiment, which
was afterwards abandoned was not very edifying....
he inserted into The Last Tournament the follow-
ing startling indelicacy:--
"He rose, he turned, then, flinging round her neck,
Claspt it, but while he bow'd himself to lay
Warm kisses in the hollow of her throat...."
Messrs. Macmillan were appalled. They asked,
they begged the Laureate to suppress these passages.
The passages were suppressed.1

We have seen how Tennyson in a time of growing unbelief

2. Ibid., p.242.
earnestly tried to function in the expected manner and show that all was for the best. He could not so easily compromise or dissemble when he dealt with love. The primitive Isolde would never have passed the test of red-hot iron in Tennyson's presence! In the first place he is said to have had an abhorrence of physical passion and contended for the advantage of spiritual as opposed to physical love. The love built to last for the duration of a life time was the sort that he upheld. He turned to the home for romance. In his hands the theme of love was treated in a way considered by his contemporaries as "eminently wholesome."

For showing this he uses the antithesis, the "broken music" of Tristram's relation with his bride. Dagonet had it:

"Good now, what music have I broken fool?"
And little Dagonet, skipping, "Arthur, the King's; For when thou playest that air with Queen Isolde,
Thou makest broken music with thy bride,
Her daintier namesake down in Brittany-
And so thou breakest Arthur's music too."

The whole element of a supernatural influence is utterly lacking from Tennyson's interpretation. The principles of courtly love with its ennobling power for great emprise and its eternal ties are misconstrued. Tristram is merely light in love. No overwhelming passion is manifest in his return to Isolde. Indeed no motive is assigned. He sings gayly that, "New loves are sweet as those that went before." The Red

Knight sent the challenging taunt to Arthur that the knights of the Round Table were liars and adulterers. Cursing as he faced Arthur, his foe of the Kingdom of the North jeered at the "sumuch-hearted King" and indicted him for driving out free manhood in his woman-worship. Now, ideally courtly love did not make for freedom; it imposed hardships and tested the endurance in a rigid bond. But the evils of a decadent order were painted in their tawdriest and most clashing ugliness so that the moral purport be made plain. All can see that the worldliness will undermine the integrity of the soul and that society cannot endure with such a membership.

With all excess of emotion, somewhat unreal, at that, carefully restrained, the romantic theme so glamorous in itself met with defeat, and the matter ends in that spirit of "langorous suavity of a conventional age."

---

1. Emile Legouis and Louis Caziaman, op. cit., p.1203.
Part III

The Tristan Legend Interpreted as Independent of the Arthurian Cycle

Chapter VI

Tristram and Isolde -- Matthew Arnold

From circumstances of the old Tristan story Matthew Arnold found an entirely new value in suggestions for his succession of reflective lyrical passages which he published in 1852 as Tristram and Isolde.

During the interim since Spenser had placed the youthful Tristan in his Faerie Queene, no original treatment of the tradition had been attempted. In the beginning of the nineteenth century both Sir Walter Scott and Robert Southey, as their correspondence shows, had considered literary work in the field of the Arthurian legend. Scott published in

1804 an edition of Sir Tristram, the Middle English version, derived from Thomas of Britain's poem, under the title of: Sir, Tristrem, A Metrical Romance of the Thirteenth Century, by Thomas of Ercildoun, called the Rhymer. Edited from the Anchinleck MS. by Walter Scott Esq., advocate: Edinburgh. 1804. New editions published separately appeared in 1808, 1811, and 1810, and it was included in his complete works in 1851. The task of copying Sir Tristram may have been performed merely at Sir Walter's request; at any rate, the first edition was both inaccurate and erroneous. In 1817 Southey edited a two volume redaction of a French text of King Arthur and his Order.

In 1833 Tennyson had set down a prose sketch of King Arthur and had continued his study with increasing interest, publishing five short separate poems drawn from the Arthurian legend before his larger work. His Morte Darthur, the first portion of the Idylls of the King, had been published just ten years before Arnold's contribution to the Tristan tradition.

1. Chapter II, p.46, of this thesis.
4. The Bryth, lyf and actes of King Arthur, of his noble knights of the round table, theyr merveylous conquestes and adventures thacuyeyng of the Sanc Greyl; and in the end le Morte Darthur with an introduction and notes by Robert Southey, 2 vol.; (London, 1817) Eugène Vinaver, op.cit., Chap.1, p.28.
Now Arnold, in the first place, severs from the body of the old romance the episodes which he makes use of and treats the matter independently with a substantial modern philosophical application, attaches an original ending and a kind of postlude to the tale.

The only association with the Arthurian cycle is made in reference to Tristram's fame in Arthur's court and his service in that king's army and a recital of a legend of Merlin's death.

While the selection appears in dramatic form in the first two of its three sections, it becomes most significant in the last section in which the thread of the narrative is full of exquisite descriptive passages broken by the personal analysis of the effect of two types of life upon the sensibilities and concluded with a romantic tale. There is only a loose connection with the first sections. Upon this fact the opinion of the contributor to the Dictionary of National Biography points out a shortcoming.

If the finest passages are thus strictly speaking, superfluous, the poems can hardly be other than disjointed and so, indeed, they are—not apparently from inability to conceive the subjects and wholes, but from inaptitude in the combination of details.

To discover what these disparate parts are we shall consider each section as a whole. In section I, "Tristram," the

setting is a stormy December night in Brittany where Tristram, in a fitful fever, awaits the coming of Iseult from Cornwall. He is identified for the reader by his harp of gold beside the bed and by his hunter’s dress spread over his feet. His hair is yet rich brown, but he appears spent. Richly attired, the flower-like Iseult, his lady, stands watching by the fire. The poet identifies her by her rare mildness, her snow-white hands, and fair fragility.

Tristram inquires about the lights which shine to the northward and the presence by the fireplace. The page replies. The poet raises the question as to the whereabouts of that other Iseult and whether the love-draught works no more. Tristram’s spirit wanders and he dreams.

He relives the hour in which he drank a pledge to that dark-haired Irish princess Iseult on that Maytime voyage when he brought her to King Mark. Again their hands

Tremble, and their cheeks by flame,
As they feel the fatal hands
Of a love they dare not name,
With a wild delicious pain, 1
Twine about their hearts again.

His spirit is again flooded with the magic of love.

The rushing winds without and the heat of his fever hurry him as if a fugitive once again from Mark’s wrath. He hears Iseult imploring him with that desperate farewell kiss to flee from their betrayers at Tyntagel.

In his disorderly flight he wanders from the wind-swept Cornish pleasance to the Breton heath where the maid Iseult tends him until he is eased from his tragic suffering. Her own heart is moved with love, and he finds a measure of respite for violent anguish in this tranquil place with his youthful bride.

From this asylum he wanders forth to fight, as Arthur's knight, the Roman chivalry. The stress of warfare cannot absorb him. He is enslaved with the secret longing. Iseult's face rises from the array of spears.

His spirit returns to Brittany to a forest shrine with a cool pool where he stoops to lave his fevered eyelids, only to see Iseult, his lover's image in the water and hear her voice. Nowhere in life he seems able to find peace. He awakens from his troubled dream to find the wintry storm over and moonlight shining into the room.

His first thought is that Iseult will not come this night and that before a second message can reach her, he will have been burnt out with fever. His second thought is of his "Princess" Iseult whom in pity he tenderly sends to rest from her faithful vigil. He bids her kiss their two children who are now peacefully sleeping in the southern part of the castle overlooking the moonlit park glades. He knows that their dreams are even fairer than the moonlight. In sharp contrast to the deep peace, the steps of Iseult are heard on the stair.

The section glows with emotional tone of love and suffer-
ing. Only pictures carry the interest; less than a dozen words from the attendant page can scarcely make of this revery of Tristram a dialogue. Here is seen how the all-absorbing passion of the fateful love for Iseult made of Tristram a restless exile and wanderer. What the fever now is that consumes him we are not told. Whether Iseult has the gift of healing of bodily wounds is not mentioned. The malady seems to be a troubled mind and burning passion. Iseult's words are not recorded or scarcely implied. She is represented as patient, innocent, but wholly and tenderly sympathetic as if by instinct rather than by direct understanding.

The second section, "Iseult of Ireland," is a dialogue of the lovers with, near the close, a soliloquy of the Huntsman who is woven on the tapestry hanging above the lovers. Tristram speaks first to Iseult, reproaching her for cruelty in coming late, tells her he is dying, and so assures her that men will not tax her honor for coming. Iseult reminds him that she is sick with grief and travel-worn and begs him to speak kindly. Tristram admits his forgetfulness, forgives her, and has nothing more than admiration for her beauty and charm. She promises to stay and watch at his side and recite tales of lovers like themselves. He wants nothing but her presence alone as in those forest days. He fears that her tone will have become courtly. She reiterates that her love is unchanging regardless of the presence of courtly love in which she has lived and knows that their lot has been equally painful, his in
exile in the forest and hers upon a throne. Their anxiety is turned to a brief space of gladness. She assures him that none will contest her right to stay since she is scarcely more than a statue and a supplicant before the Virgin, no longer a rival of his Lady. Tristram smiles and grateful tears well up in his eyes. He says that he is happy, but knows that death is at hand. He requests Isolde to remain with his good, kind princess to be near him in his grave. With time only for a farewell kiss, his life goes out. Isolde entreats him to receive her in death and so sinks lifeless at Tristram's side, still clasping his hands.

The Huntsman, on the tapestry, picturing a vernal scene, stares as if to question who the sleeping one and the lady at prayer may be and how he chanced, as if in some glamor, to sweep into this quiet chamber. The poet bids the hunter continue his pastime, fearless of his waking the sleepers. The lovers are among the eternal ones who lived a thousand years ago. Here is demonstrated the effect of over-powering love that drew Isolde to her lover at last after years of moody anxiety with her "deep-wronged husband" and continued loyalty to her lover.

Section three, "Isolde of Brittany," is the longest and most diversified section. A year has elapsed in the succession of events. The lovers are buried in Mark's chapel in Tintagel. Isolde upon this particular bright winter day, which is not unlike any other in her monotonous life, has taken her children to play in a hollow among the heather slopes. In this ancient,
glacial, cirque the children are racing and gathering bright
bits of spar startling the fell-fares and mistel-thrushes
from thick coverts. Before a sheltering screen of hollies where
the sunlight lies warm, Isult calls the children to her for an
old Breton tale of Brece-liande, the other side of Brittany.
The children are entranced by her story and follow attentively,
not looking aside as they walk home along the darkening heath.
An account of the routine of her days is given. She is joyless
and apparently dying in her youth.

Loneliness and sorrow seem to be her lot. Yet she has not
lost her capability for loving people, nature, and the tradi-
tions of her home. Her companions are her seneschal, the
women, her two fair golden-haired children and Tristram's dog.
At this point the poet introduces his philosophical analysis
of what destroys the power of feeling. He understands that
suffering alone will not close the senses to response. The
"gradual furnaces of the world" it is which crumble or harden
our spirits until they cannot respond to the stimulus that once
yielded joy. Another cause for this loss of sensibility is
neither a single dominant thought or one strong emotion of am-
bition, remorse, or love. All reality of purposefulness in
former pursuits vanishes. Without this obsession, men languish;
with it, they are consumed with its fire. Tristram and Isult
spent a painful existence and welcomed death together. Isult
of Brittany, mild and restrained, whose heart was only "touched
with love" seemed "dying in a mask of youth." Which life is
better?

Arnold laments that this "diseased unrest" or "unnatural heat" makes men rush about, fretful and irascible toward everyone. He cites examples from antiquity, Caesar who grieved to learn of one who had achieved fame when younger than he, and that ambitious Macedonian Alexander whose life was over at thirty-five years.

After this expository passage of sincere and honest searching, Arnold relates the tale which Iscult told to the children:

With Merlin afoot at her side, witching Vivian rode upon her white palfrey through a "sylvan glade" in Broce-liande one April day. When they reached the brow of a hill above a glen all freshly green and white with springtime leaf and bloom, Merlin asked to halt. Sleep fell upon the wizard as he sat beneath a hawthorne tree. His mistress then with her wimple waved nine times above him, marked off a circle of magic which imprisons Merlin until judgment day. This she did because of her weariness of his love. At the end of all, Arnold by a natural predilection appears to find life swept by passion, the perilous way.

The imagery throughout the poem is as purely classic as Grecian sculpture. Pictures, while they are not without color, sparkle and glister as if cut from clear, cold quartz or crystal, or chased upon silver or more lustrous metal. Glaucous holly leaves and splintery bits of spar and the ringing of the wood-pecker's chipping make the atmosphere crisp and clear.
There is ever that rationalization. The oak leaves are jewel-like in the moonlight because they are wet with the late rain. Merlin chose the slope's brow because the grass was "dry and mossed" there, and "you saw clear across the hollow." Isidell beckoned her children to the enclosure where the holly "screened" them. It is these descriptive passages which render the poem commendable to critics "a masterpiece of descriptive poetry."

This dramatic narrative begins where both Béroul-Eilhart and Thomas versions leave off. Isidell in the primitive poems ascends the steep street lifting her long robe before her as she goes swiftly to her lover who has even then breathed her name the last time. But Arnold has no jealous wife Isidell who hastens Tristan's death with a false message about the sail on the returning vessel. Here is a patient, understanding Isidell who watches through the long nights until she is as pale as the dying knight himself. When the Irish Isidell arrives, she finds her lover alive and has the joy of hearing him say "I am happy." The whole thing is suggestive of the calm after the tragedy in a Greek drama. There has been tragedy, and surely this is not a "happy ending;" it is merely that calm that follows great noble action.

The narrative, condensed and almost elliptical, gives the body of the story in retrospect, whence Arnold departs

upon his own invention. In the first place he simplifies the action in his finale so that only the main characters of the triangle plot are necessary. Brangain, Gouvernal, and Kaherdin are all eliminated. The chorus-like interpretation of the poet serves for such explanation as is needed beyond the economical speech of the lovers. From the wife we have no direct words and only implied action. With these characters Arnold has dealt with originality. To be sure Tristan is, always, the "peerless hunter, harper, knight," and he is essentially romantic. He is weak with fever and pain and his spirit is no longer clear. For most of his life he has been driven about by a secret in his breast,
That will never let him rest.1
The fire in his brain and the dreams mingled with his thoughts made of him "a moonstruck knight" to his companions in arms who fought the Romans. But he is not the romantic lover. His passion, for Arnold, is one of suffering, never of supreme golden joy. The courtly lover is gone entirely. Tristram has violated such rigid bonds by consummating his marriage. He is, unlike the traditional Tristan, a father of two children of whom he is thoughtful to send a good-night kiss by their mother. He is rather paternal and benevolent in his attitude to that tender-hearted uncomplaining, innocent young Isidul. His bearing with her is gentle as from the first; he calls her "My

1. Matthew Arnold, op.cit., p.146, ll.244,5.
Princess" and "Sweet." He submitted willingly to the caressing touch of her slender white hands upon his own feverish ones. He seems sincerely solicitous of her welfare and touched by the faithful care of the "poor child" as he addresses her. She is as the most impressive character, in a unique position.

With Iseult of Ireland, there is less change. She is drawn, however, with less sympathy than Tristram, for aside from her loyal response and self-sacrifice in heeding Tristram's last summons, her charm seems to be less of a spiritual one than a physical one. Tristram speaks of his undimmed eyes and her beauty, fair in the moonlight. Her speech is sarcastic and reproachful at times. Love has not meant to either Iseult or Tristram as much of joy as in the primitive versions. Their youth has simply been "constrained and sad" and the magic has seemed to work less of love and more of "teen." When most youthful, she was proud, petulant, and imperious. At Mark's court she becomes "fantastic" with her moods, pale and withered at times, then as where contemplating the flight to Tristram, a "restless ghost" flushed and quivering with abortive attempts at courtly phrases, and laughter on her lips. Others desired to be spared such a temperament. This is not the Iseult whom Cornwall so proudly welcomed as queen in earlier records. Now at life's close she has become "humbled, pale, and still." She is grief-stricken before the Virgin Mother and calls upon

2. Ibid., p.152, 1.60.
God and the angels. In the presence of death she starts and looks "wildly." Tristram says that graciousness will come from his Breton Princess toward Isolde, the Queen, for "she is kind and good," intimating that the Queen, herself, is not so charitable. The disordered tresses of her raven hair upon the bed suggested nothing of the deliberate calm spirit with which the tragic queen Isolde of the earlier versions welcomes death as a redeemer and a blessing. On the whole, she falls short of majestic proportion.

The controlled, orderly behavior of the classic disposition is imposed upon Isolde of Brittany. To be sure she has enjoyed a greater measure of Tristram's love than any other record has given her. She has been elevated to the position of a real wife and is ennobled with motherhood so that the once imperious Isolde cannot stride into her presence and claim the place at Tristram's side with better right as those old poets told it. Her jealousy and baseness as an eavesdropper are eliminated. She loved Tristram generously, suffering nothing from his shortcomings. She grieved only for his suffering not for her sorry state. Her love burned steadily, not flaming high under fear of loss of its object. It was not romantic love kindled by physical charm; it was rather the love of a Christ-like spirit seeking to do good to the man who suffered in gloom. What it lacked in passion, it exceeded in sympathy.

The poet named her "the sweetest Christian soul alive." 1
Arnold pictures Isenult, the sweet "Flower" a being as pure and mild as the Virgin Mary. To see her at her prie-dieu, with golden head bowed and white fingers upon her gold-tipped rosary beads is to stand in the presence of an enshrined image. 2
Arnold says elsewhere, "In religion there are two parts: the one of thought and speculation, and the part of worship and devotion... The best prayers originate thus of the nature of simple devotion." This seems to picture the calm prayerful life of Isenult. She seems to be a true disciple of Arnold's religion, "morality touched by emotion." In fact Arnold apparently identifies himself with the cult or fellowship of Isenult of Brittany. He refers to her as

\begin{quote}
Our Snowdrop by the Atlantic sea,
Isenult of Brittany. 4
\end{quote}

In an apostrophe to Tristram he bids the wanderer return to his halls in Brittany,

\begin{quote}
To our lonely sea complain,
To our forest tell thy pain. 5
\end{quote}

and earlier, in another apostrophe:

\begin{quote}
Hither let him wander now,
Hither to the quiet hours 6
Passed among these heaths of ours
\end{quote}

1. Matthew Arnold, op.cit., p.141, l.84.
3. Ibid., p.231.
5. Ibid., p.147, l.274-275.
6. The underlining is mine, M.J.
By the grey Atlantic Sea,
Hours, if not of ecstasy,  
From violent anguish surely free

There is a melancholy (which is in itself of romantic origin) mingled with the classic serenity and order that characterizes Iseult's quiet days. She is not without capability of emotion; "Joy has not found her yet, nor ever will." The pallor of her face disputes the sanity, the perfect health which her still mien alone would bespeak. Arnold's own temperament was such an admixture. Is not this Arnold, himself, meditating on which is the better part of being, to live an active life or to withdraw in quiet contemplation?

Not only are the characters greatly changed, but also the plot. The lovers of the primitive poets did not meet alive in Brittany. The tragic element is diminished somewhat by this version of Arnold's. Of course, Iseult's children and the life after Tristram's death has no part in the original story. This is pure invention.

What Arnold could do with the love-potion, which is the crux of the old story, is a rather perfunctory thing. He relates that the magic draught

forever rolls
Through their blood, and binds their souls.

But he continues to speak of two Iseults who "possessed" Tris-

2. Ibid., p.157, l.68.
3. Ibid., p.141, ll.65,66.
triam. And from the suffering which the drink entailed, it seems to have lost the power over the lovers to compel the enjoyment of each other's presence. It makes for restlessness, the antithesis of Arnold's "calm." The love it caused was sinful—it was true romantic horror—a nameless quality. Mark was "deep-wronged" even in Isuelt's sight. Though she hears fair speeches "honied nothings" of the courtiers at Tyntagel, she seems to have no conception of the etiquette of courtly love. Arnold makes no attempt to rationalize the power of the passion nor does he give it significance. In fact, at his death, Tristram explains the reason for grief in his own life quite independent of the potion; that grief had been with him since his mother's death in the forest. She called him Tristram because of the sad circumstances of his birth. (Here is one of the elliptical passages. Arnold writes to scholars, and they need not be told what these circumstances were.) While Tristram has sought freedom, as a true romantic soul, all of his life, he does not seem to realize that death is the true release. While he is not fearful of it and tries to soothe the startled and "wildly" looking Isuelt, who seems equally unaware of the release from the potion's curse, he speaks of

One last kiss upon the living shore.

Death for Christian souls, as these were represented to be, would have meant release, freedom, and eternal life. But Tris-

trien speaks of leaving life. Arnold's lovers do not embrace
death as eagerly as Swinburne's eternal lovers do nor as gal-
lantly and calmly as the primitive lovers do. His interpreta-
tion is, of course, finer than Malory's lack of understanding
or Tennyson's unworthy conclusion.

One would scarcely expect a classic writer to accept the
love potion for great worth. That was an objection that Arnold
had to popular present day religion, the conception of "the
birth, ministry, and death of Christ as altogether steeped in
prodigy, brimful of miracles and miracles do not happen." "
Whether or not the lovers should have resisted the power of
the potion does not matter so much in their relation to others;
that is not the question for Arnold. For him the sin was al-
lowing the passion, any passion, to burn out their lives. It
was the offense against the classic "golden mean" that injured
them. The question was a personal one rather than a social
one.

When Arnold reaches Section III and leaves the field of
romance, he is at best with his pure inventions of the life of
Iseult with her children with the background of the Breton
landscape and his sincere dissertation upon the two philoso-
phies of life. His imagery of the cirque and the terms of the
geological formation of the Breton region call up beautiful
pictures accompanied by an emotion of timelessness that stirs

the heart. The darkening castle towers in the waning light, the long, long sleep of Merlin are remindful of the fleeting quality of time.

The idea of the two types of life which Arnold sets forth simply and forcefully gathers around it this beauty of the scene and is not wholly untouched by the emotions of pathos in the feeling which the ancient castle, with the grey turrets above the lonely hall overlooking the lonely sea, and the departing days of Iseult's life call forth. The effect is still further heightened by that tale of the Breton grandames in huts along "this sea-coast wild," of Merlin and Vivian in Broceliande which is remote in time as well as "away the other side of Brittany." There is a classic harmony in the scene in accord with the theme.

Of Tristram and Iseult Arnold had this to say: "Against 'Tristram,' too many objections may fairly be urged; but the subject is a very popular one, and many people will tell you they like it best of any thing I have written." He was aware of popular taste, but did not write for it. His tone of melancholy, due, in part, to a remoteness from the stir and struggle of life about him and to his own profound nature was a factor against popularity. He recognized this: "The life of the people is such that in literature they require joy." Neither his

3. Ibid., pp.4,5.
thought, nor his style, of exotic metres, could satisfy the masses. A need he was conscious of and which he did conscious-
ly aspire to answer through his study of ancient art was beauty. The simplicity and purity of Grecian art was his model. "The need for beauty is a real and ever rapidly growing need in man."

Under the influence of balance and proportion from his Greek teachers of antiquity, there was no possibility of the expres-
sions of romantic vagaries. His work contrasted sharply with that of the Romanticists of the century. He examined his sub-
ject matter in the light of intellect and objectively, dealing with ideas rather than the everyday facts of life and calling upon the ancient worlds to furnish such imagery as he had need of.

In the order of philosophical poetry, Arnold's work is foremost, due to his expression which is so precise and rare. He gave no entirely new view of life and cast his philosophy in no new form of poetry, but his style was individual. "His position is distinctly independent not due to innate original-
ity but to the balance of combating influences." His own criticism of his work bears out this statement of the later day critics.

It might be fairly urged that I have less poetic sentiment than Tennyson and less intellectual vigor and abundance than Browning. Yet because I have more perhaps of a fusion of the two than either of them,

and have more regularly applied that fusion to the main line of modern development, I am likely enough to have my turn.1

He remains to this day the poet of the few, for his realm is that of scholarly art.

This Tristram of Arnold's can never be known to the mass of people. To be sure he chose a popular subject in "Tristram and Iseult," but his treatment of it, so full of sheer invention, 'did nothing to carry forward the old line of the tradition. Eugene Vinaver thinks that Arnold derives from Malory, and R.S.Loomis states that it is from Gottfried von Strassburg whose source was Thomas. A scholar such as Arnold, of course, was at home in Malory. The little forest shrine scene with its pool of water in which he saw Iseult's face is reminiscent of Thomas's beautiful Breton shrine. However, Iseult was all that Tristan could see anywhere as long as he was Tristram, even as Arnold's lover, so that is only suggestion, not proof.

Living in an era of transition when an old world has passed out of existence and a new one had not yet come into existence, Arnold came into a pessimism that was about to permeate the country. Temperamentally he was melancholy, but his melancholy had a sedateness about it; it was quite unlike the morbid and rebellious temperament of those earlier Romanticists, Byron,

3. Roger Sherman Loomis, op.cit., Intro. p.XXV.
and Shelley. Arnold was continually seeking for calm. His spirit was torn between a desire for quiet self-controlled meditation and imposed action. "It can scarcely be doubted that he had an innate love of perfect form, an innate sentiment against hideousness and rawness, and so he was a classicist by temperament."¹ Out of this conflict within his own nature, grew the profound mental activity which was the stimulus of his poetry. This was the unrest within Iseult of Brittany which blanched her cheeks. The religious views of the day were not quite adequate for him. The most that the poet made of metaphysics was this: "And as for our relation with God called by most people Religion, well--Religion is morality touched by emotion. This and nothing more."² A kind of moral pantheism was the philosophy of religion at which he arrived. Iseut's blameless life upon her native heath seems in accord with the view, and the poet called her "the sweetest Christian soul alive."
Late in 1871 upon the eve of the appearance of Tennyson's The Last Tournament, Swinburne published as a prelude to an unfinished poem his "overture" to Tristram of Lyonesse. His mind had long held in keeping the subject of Cornwall's queen.

Swinburne's choice of a subject for poetic treatment was governed by definite principles. He had adopted the theory of esthetics which he had derived from the French doctrine of "L'Art pour l'art." He held that it is not incumbent upon an artist to warn against evil; indeed any didactic purpose removes a subject from the realm of poetic art. Swinburne repudiated the common Victorian conception of the function of poetry, since he held that worthy literature "must be large, liberal, and sincere; and cannot be chaste if it be prudish... and if literature indeed is not to deal with the full life of man and the whole nature of things, let it be cast aside with the rods and rattles of childhood." For him the only criterion for artistic

selection was that good work could be produced from the material. Here for the first time in centuries was a poet who had both the power and the desire to tell the story of the passionate love of Tristan. He had long since thought upon the romantic Iseult, and he had by nature affinity with other literary minds that had created from the sources of romance. Swinburne, as a poet, claimed for himself as "brothers," Villon, Marlowe, Baudelaire, and among the ancients, Sappho, as his "sister." He continued in England the romantic generation of Byron, Shelley, Keats, and Landor, and was a worshipful admirer of Victor Hugo.

He drew upon a great literary heritage of romantic art and assimilated according to his tendencies, both from those sources and from his contemporaries. While a boy at Eton he had made a beginning upon the subject of Tristram and Iseult; at Oxford, under the influence of Morris, who turned his thoughts to the Middle Ages, Swinburne wrote a long fragmentary poem, Queen Yseult, and still another fragment Joyeuse Garde. In his association with Morris and other members of the Pre-Raphaelite circle, he found aims such as the idealization of sensuality quite in keeping with his own tendencies. He was himself like a companion of the dreams and myths of the past.

3. In a Pre-Raphaelite decoration of Oxford Union, Morris used the subject of these lovers.
which held his imagination. He lived in a remote world which may be symbolized by the signs of his burning zodiac of lovers in the Prelude to Tristram.

Whether or not he chose to use it, Swinburne had the gift to see the worth in others and practiced the "noble art of praising." He acknowledged his indebtedness to Arnold for "help and guidance in thought and work" relative to style. The younger poet came too late to suffer the doubt that distressed Arnold and, of course, Swinburne had no admiration for such poetry as the medium to voice that negative element, but he did pay tribute to Arnold's supreme quality which can be seen in "spontaneous temperance." We have noted it in the calm of Arnold's Tristram poem. It is his very own antithesis which Swinburne praises: "His verse bathes us with fresh radiance and light rain when weary of the violence of summer and winter in which others dazzle and detain us." Tennyson's music had fascinated the "heart-struck" boy Swinburne, and throughout the years, Swinburne, the critic, alternately praised or disapproved his elder's writing.

It was his desire, heightened by distaste for contemporary use of the Arthurian legend, to treat the great Tristan

2. Part III, Chap.VI, p.112 of this thesis.
story worthily, that caused him to return to his long neglected subject. His old loyalty to Iseult aroused him. He sought to show the inherent purity of passion and to spiritualize it in the theme of love "the body spiritual of fire and light."

In the dedicatory epistle he says:

My aim was simply to present that story, not diluted and debased as it had been in our own time, by other hands, but undefaced by improvement and undeformed by transformation as it was known to the age of Dante wherever the chronicles of romance found hearing from Ercildoune to Florence.1

There is a sincere note of a crusader in his determination as he sets out upon the labor of a decade to come.

The first London performance of Wagner's Tristan was given a month before the appearance of Swinburne's poem. He may have known Wagner's libretto. For Tennyson or Malory, he had little use, particularly in the account of the death. Sir Tristrem, the Middle English poem, edited by Scott, and the Anglo-Norman versions seem to be his immediate literary sources.

The theme of love which he has glorified in the prelude to his unique poem is stated in sheer lyrical beauty beginning in sensual rapture and transcending itself to a spiritual plane. The mystery that surrounds the lovers engages his philosophical conjecture as well as that love itself.

2. Ibid., pp.167-8.
Love that is flesh upon the spirit of man
And spirit within the flesh whence breath began.

Love for Swinburne is reality. He worked consciously to give
the best that he had to make of the poem a "magnum opus."
A decidedly modern idea is the subjective element in his ap-
proach. He states that he from out his life wills "to make
their dead life live again."

The treatment is through a succession of dramatic scenes
in descriptive settings with a continuity provided by narra-
tive passages. There are nine cantos which have been analyzed
in this way: the dawn of passion; the fulfillment of love-
longing; the yearning of Iseult for her absent lover; the
reunion; the renewed yearning of Yseult to the "choral accom-
paniment of wind and sea" (the climax); Fate, a new motif,
mingled with the theme of love; Tristram's life in the absence
of Iseult; and last, Love-in-Death. The poetic names used by
Swinburne are descriptive of the episodes, all centering about
love: "Prelude: Tristram and Iseult, The Sailing of the Swal-
low, The Queen's Pleaissance, Tristram in Brittany, The Maiden
Marriage, Iseult at Tintagel, Joyous Gard, The Wife's Vigil,
The Last Pilgrimage, and The Sailing of the Swan." The fine
insight into the passionate struggle of Iseult in the sixth
Canto reaches the highest dramatic pitch. The Celtic back-

ground with wind and sea keep the undertone of fatality while
Isuelt reaches her decision for Tristram's love above all else.

The primitive plot shrinks into insignificance in any de-
tails not subservient to love. The adventure elements are
gone. Notable omissions are: the "enances," the blood rela-
tionship of Mark and Tristram, the voyage for healing, the
swallow story, the dragon and false seneschal story, the plot
against Bringwain, and the deceptions needed by the courtly
love versions.

Variations are necessary in several connections. Isuelt,
who is love incarnate, offers Tristram the potion; Palamede
is the disguised minstrel who gains Isuelt by a ruse; three
years banishment for Tristram; Tristram is a knight of Arthur's
order from the beginning of the poem when he comes for Isuelt
as Mark's bride-to-be (though it is almost a discordant note
to think of the splendid pagan Tristram wearing the knightly
armor on that god-like body); and the Joyous Gard episode is
prolonged with considerable connection with the Arthur-Guinevere-
Lancelot theme.

The characters are developed through the dramatic series
of episodes. At times they seem purely symbolic and again in-
dividuals. Tristram is "a man born at sunrise" and above all
other knights like the sun. He is reverent, fearless, lusty,

beloved by things and people, at harmony with earth and sea. 1

"Iselit is one with Love's own lordliest name." Tristram's soul is her star. She is tender-natured, yet a princess, yes, before Mark, a goddess. A life-long idol in the heart of Swinburne, this Iselit is made ethereally beautiful, but strong, perfect in her transgression and place in the zodiac of all great lovers. Her generous nature is given:

So far was my love born beneath his love
I loved him as the sea-wind loved the sea,
To rend it and ruin it only and waste: but he
As the sea loves a sea-bird loved me, 2
To foster and uphold my tired life's wing,

Mark falls short of kingliness; only wine made his thin blood course more quickly. With Iselit his life became "a smouldering flame." 3

Iselit of the White Hands, a mere girl at the first meeting, is humble, courteous, and yearning. But her yearning turned to hate. She becomes a creature like a sorceress with "a virgin lust for vengeance." 4 Her shadow above her dying lord chills him. According to her wrath, hell required the lovers. She is almost fearful enough to be a Christabel like that conception of evil of the supreme English romanticist.

The potion is magic in Swinburne's conception. At first Iselit loved Tristram in a "holy girlish wise" in an immoral,

1. Algernon Charles Swinburne, op.cit., p.66, 1.20.
2. Ibid., p.65, 11.4-8.
4. Ibid., p.34, 1.20.
natural love. Upon the drinking of the potion, the fatal love with "power more compulsive than the sword" mastered them. In the forest bower they celebrate their "coronal" of joy. Insult knows that they have sinned. Later at Joyous Gard their heart of love rises higher than fate.

Mark, advised by the scroll on Tristram's sword hilt, of the potion, forgave the lovers after death. He buried them in tomb which later the sea swept away, releasing the lovers from every bond forever. The duration of the curse was for life time. It is not to be confounded with the passion which was eternal and in which the lovers had at once perfection of being and a completion of fate. The poet's conception of love has been pronounced as wholly physical and lacking in the spiritual exultation of that of Rossetti and Donne. He is said to have given no account of a relationship between men and women where the accord of minds was the basis.

A criticism upon the modern philosophical turn to the meditation on man, nature, life, and death, of the mediaeval knight Tristram, Swinburne met by declaring that his hero belongs to "an impossible age in an imaginary world," the poet's realm of imagination where there is timelessness. The philosophy, is, of course, the chronicler's and an eclectic system it is, if it could be systematized. The Greek legacy from

2. Ibid., p.49, l.5.
which he draws is marked by the absence of Platonic influence. His own theory seems to change as he grows older. He accepted Fate, the "equal-eyed,"

Fate, that of all things save the soul of man, is lord and God since body and soul began.

This Fate is baffling in its mystery, but the lovers accept it.

How should it (Fate) turn from its great way to give MAN that must die a clearer space to live?

There is a likeness to pantheism in the identification of fate with the universe of greater being. The lovers by escape from the day had a greater freedom. There is a spirit imminent in the elements because of this unity.

As seen in the first of the last two quotations above, Swinburne found hope in man's power. Man, himself, is above any other force. Swinburne held a belief not unlike the French positivism in which Reason was deified. In an age of achievement it was not strange that the poetic imagination saw in the apotheosis of man a religion with a creed of knowing and doing.

Through the aspect of nature Swinburne achieves a concept of the unknown infinite while through the aspect of human accomplishment he conceives of humanity. We see the poet's phil-

2. Ibid., Vol.II, p.84, 1.14.
George Edward Woodberry says that Swinburne "has enriched English literature with a music never heard before,..." and its most imaginative romantic poem." He adds: "It is unsurpassed in English in the quality of passion." Samuel C. Chew writing in 1929 states, "All competent judges agree, whatever, the qualification they feel compelled to make, that Swinburne's is incomparably the finest rendering of the legend in English literature." The last of the century in the last of its romanticists saw the Tristan legend restored to primitive purity of passion.

2. Samuel C.Chew, op.cit., pp.176,9. This author offers no opinion upon the poetic treatment of the Tristan story by Mr. Masefield or Mr. Robinson as they are "too recent to be judged unprejudicedly."
Chapter VII

Conclusion

No adequate complete story of Tristan had been told and preserved from the end of the twelfth century until the beginning of the twentieth century. The archetype (merely postulated) was lost. Its finest contemporary and early redactions were either not completed by the authors or are now preserved only in fragmentary form. It remained for the French scholar-poet Bédier in 1905 to restore the oldest love-story (of such length, of which there is any knowledge) in a narrative of full measure and in the pristine beauty of the twelfth century spirit in which it was probably first conceived by the poetic mind of an individual writer. During the intervening centuries the great story suffered in attenuated forms. One worthy treatment in the English language during the nineteenth century was successful within its limitations (set by the author) -- Tristram of Lyonesse. To Malory must be given thanks for the restoration of the story to the native land of its Celtic hero.

Spenser's Tristram as a fresh youth, is a picturesque stroke in the wilding setting ofCourtesy's adventure. Matthew Arnold through a sympathetic study of Iseult of Brittany expounds his philosophy of life. Tennyson has made the most slanderous use of the lovers in a tale of adultery which makes of the hero a destructive social force in Arthur's plan.

The legend belongs to the literature of the world. To say that it has a great imaginative theme is axiomatic. The fact that it has persisted for more than a thousand years is proof of its value in the mind of the race. The theme of love gives to Tristram and Iseult immortality, no matter how their story may be exalted or degraded. The three-fold mystery of love and fate and death compels the interest of humankind.

Swinburne recognized the truth that great themes are remote from the modern world, and he was able, in his genius, to conceive the story in the majestic simplicity of its primitive state. E. Vinaver writing in our day indicts those early prose writers for the wrong they did, growing out of their common lack of that poetic insight which was Swinburne's. "C'est un grave péché littéraire, que d'adapter ainsi une œuvre de génie aux goûts nouveaux d l'époque où l'on vit." Bédier, writing in the first decade of the twentieth century, observed the poetic

2. Eugene Vinaver, op. cit., p. 36.
principle in his achievement of a Tristan in its primitive sublimity.

An attempt to treat the story with didactic purpose, to ignore the purely romantic quality, to dismember its whole body, or to regard it flippantly, as devoid of the supernatural, is to fail in the production of a work of art.

At the close of the nineteenth century a number of possibilities for a treatment of the story remained untried and awaited a new interpreter. A purely objective treatment by a temperamentally classic mind had not appeared. The setting might be made scarcely more than an abstraction. No entirely dramatic handling had been attempted. Any adequate work must take into account the lovers without essential change, for the reality is in their relation. That is the abiding quality. The character of Mark had always been predominantly base or predominantly noble. A more human mixture of elements in him might give way for a new value to the tragedy growing out of the disloyalty to such a man.

It would be feigning a prophecy after the manner of old Geoffrey of Monmouth whose mage Merlin made bold to prophesy--in retrospect--to ignore the actuality of the Tristan tradition carried on in English literature on both sides of the Atlantic since this century began. The eternal lovers can know no

dreamless sleep as long as a man of poetic imagination lives to read and repeat their story.
Bibliography


Legouis, Emile, and Cahamian, Louis. A History of English Lit-
Schlauch, Margaret. Medieval Narrative, A Book of Translations.

Schoepperle, Gertrude. Tristan and Isolt: A Study of the Sources of the Romance. Joseph Baer and Co, Frankfurt a M.


Woodberry, George Edward. Swinburne. McClure, Phillips and

Dictionary of National Biography, Volume I and Volume XII.

Periodicals


Texte du manuscrit de la Bibliothèque Nationale fr. 103, fol. 374 sqq.