

# How to behave around damsels

The behavior of knights and damsels in the brother sequence of the *Lanceloet*



Image first page:

Wight, C. "Detail of a miniature of jealousy catching lovers in bed together." British Library. The British Library, August 25, 2005. Egerton 881 f. 141v, <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=10247>.

Emy Knikman, 6967914

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## Introduction

After a bloody fight, one knight manages to kill the other. The defeated knight had a lady with him. Would the victor be justified or even allowed to court the lady? In another scenario, an honorable knight and noble lady have fallen in love with one another, or have a sexual attraction toward each other. There is only one problem, the lady is dating another man. Under what circumstances is an affair acceptable? If it is a secret not known to anyone? Or as long as her husband does not find out? What if her husband is lacking in prowess or respectability, or if he is very cruel? In yet another story, the adventurous knight is forced to make a choice. He can either save a damsel in distress, or a fellow knight, his brother-in-arms. Which of the two should he save? Moral questions such as these never have no easy answer and they can lead to much discussion amongst people. These questions in particular are connected to interpersonal relations and norms, and the context of both the scenario and the audience will often inform the answer to the question.

While these questions might seem a bit outdated to us, the themes they address are not: loyalty, love, adultery, family and friendship. Popular soap-series such as the *Bold and the Beautiful* (which is reaching its 35<sup>th</sup> season, being renewed through 2022)<sup>1</sup> and the longest running reality series yet, *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* (and its many spin-offs) address similar themes.<sup>2</sup>



Picture 1 A dilemma that has divided fans for years: will Liam end up with Hope or Steffy?

Bold & the Beautiful

In the tales of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table, these themes and questions are explored. These stories, in prose novels, and romances, enjoyed tremendous popularity in the Middle Ages, evident by the large number of remaining manuscripts and their translation into many different languages.<sup>3</sup> There are clear parallels between the popularity of soap-series today and these stories. You could say that the stories of King Arthur and his knights were the soap series of the Middle Ages.

Especially the three prose novels of the French *Vulgate cycle* where very popular: *the Lancelot en Prose*, *Queste del Saint Graal* and the *La Mort le Roi Artu*. These novels were translated into a number of different vernaculars, among which Middle Dutch. The most extensive Middle Dutch translation still existing today is the *Lancelot Compilation*. Like the French *Vulgate*, this compilation is divided into three parts: *Lanceloet*, *Queeste vanden Grale* and *Arthurs Doet*. This thesis concerns itself with a passage from the *Lanceloet* that I have coined the brother sequence. I will analyze this passage by way of close reading.

In this passage, the brothers of Walewein (Mordred, Agravein, Gurrees and Gariet) are on a quest to find Lancelot. In following adventures, they find no trace of Lancelot, nor any

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<sup>1</sup> Sod (website). Maloney (website).

<sup>2</sup> Guglielmi (website).

<sup>3</sup> Lacy & Wilhelm.



information about him, but they do encounter many challenges to themselves and their position and conduct as a (good) worldly knight. Their consistent personality traits seem to be the most decisive factor when faced with these challenges, and they tend to solve them in a manner typical to them. Most of their challenges are presented to them by damsels, or at least involve them. There is thus a lot of material to research in terms of interaction between damsels and knights. The material is even more interesting because there are clues that the knights, especially Mordred, Agravain and Gurrees, make mistakes and encounter dilemmas in these adventures. This would have probably prompted the listener to reflect on these dilemmas.

Taking this specific part of the *Lancelot* as my basis (lines 5077-10740, hereafter: the brother sequence), I will analyze norms for knights within their assumed medieval context of reader and listener. I assume a context of aurality (the text is read aloud from the manuscript to a listening audience), in which these scenes would have led to debates among listeners. The sequence seems to be predominantly concerned with worldly knights and their behavior toward damsels, or, formulated differently: of behavior of a certain type of men toward a certain type of women and vice versa. I will focus on these norms in this thesis, integrating a gender approach that finds its foundation in the works of Judith Butler. My research question is:

*What (system of) norms for the behavior of knights toward damsels and vice versa can be distilled from the brother sequence within the context of the Lancelot Compilation?*

Although I will take the brother sequence as my starting point, I will analyze this within the context of the *Lancelot Compilation* and refer to similar and relevant passages in other sections of that cycle. When it comes to damsels in the brother sequence there are two main themes that are explored in the narrative. The first is the romantic, mainly sexual, relation toward damsels and the second is the duty a knight has toward damsels. I have thus grouped the elements within the text into two categories, and these will be the norm(group)s that I will focus on. They are also the focus of my sub-questions.

The first norm group is rules concerning sexuality, courting and consent. Both the knights Mordred and Gurrees devote quite an extensive part of their adventure to the courting and persuasion of damsels toward sexual behavior. Unable to persuade a damsel, Gurrees even forces himself on her. The damsels they encounter voice different, and often very strong opinions, about the behavior of the knights. My two sub-questions concerning this theme are:

*- What system of norms for the behavior of knights and damsels concerning sexuality, courting and consent can be distilled from the brother sequence?*

*- How can the system of norms for the behavior of knights and damsels concerning sexuality, courting and consent from the brother sequence be connected to the Lancelot Compilation?*

In Gurrees' adventure, there are also references made to duty and obligation of knights, especially the duty to save damsels. Yet, this theme is notably most prevalent in Gariet's adventure. In this adventure, Gariet is presented with a dilemma: both a fellow knight of the Round Table and a damsel are in danger. He chooses to save his fellow knight, but he is fiercely reprimanded by a damsel. And another question arises from the brother sequence: does a

damsel have a duty to repay a knight when she has been saved? My two sub-questions connected to this theme are:

- *What system of norms for the behavior concerning duty and obligation of knights toward damsels and vice versa can be distilled from the brother sequence?*
- *How can the system of norms for the behavior concerning duty and obligation of knights toward damsels and vice versa from the brother sequence be related to the Lancelot Compilation?*

### Terminology: the use of the word damsel

In the *Lanceloet*, which is written in Middle Dutch, the word '*joncfrouwe*' is used to refer to a variety of women in the text. The word has some ambiguity to it because it can either mean (1) a young woman of high birth, or (2) an unmarried woman of high birth. In Dutch, these meanings have separated themselves into two words, the first meaning now indicated by '*juffrouw*', the second by '*jonkvrouw*'.<sup>4</sup>

In the *Lanceloet*, the term '*jonkvrouw*' is used for both married and unmarried young women of noble birth. When translating the word to English, a few words spring to mind: lady, maiden and damsel. Both maiden and damsel refer to unmarried virgin women of noble birth. The word lady can refer to both married and unmarried women, but it can also be used for older women. In this text, I have chosen damsel as a translation for '*joncfrouwe*', though I am aware it is not a perfect translation. In this text, damsel can thus be used for married and unmarried ladies, who are young of age and of noble birth.

### Text, edition and translation

This thesis is concerned with the *Lancelot Compilation*, but most specifically with the novel *Lanceloet* therein. I have consulted this text in the most recent edition (to be found in my list of literature). This edition currently has four volumes in which lines 1 till 26636 are included, among which the brother sequence. I will also reference lines that are not put into this edition, either from the *Lanceloet* itself or from the *Wrake van Ragisel*. If I reference these lines, I will make use of the Jonckbloet edition. I will highlight this by adding 'ed.- Jonckbloet' to the line numbers. More information about the editions can be found in the bibliography.

The text of the *Lanceloet* has not been translated into English. To enable a good understanding of this thesis, I have provided rudimentary translations whenever I cite passage. To keep the structure of the original text of the *Lanceloet*, I have tried to keep the division between lines intact and to include the original punctuation. Only when a line, translated separately, would make no sense in English, have I translated more lines into one sentence. This perhaps makes for less pleasant reading, but I feel like it benefits the research as well as the understanding of the primary source to stay as close to the original version as possible. For the *Wrake van Ragisel*, an English translation by Johnson and Claassens was available. I have thus used this translation.

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<sup>4</sup> Historische Woordenboeken.

## Chapter one: an introduction to the material

In this chapter, I will give an extensive introduction to the material and the theoretical basis I will utilize for this thesis. The first section will place the brother sequence in the context of the *Lancelot Compilation*, both narratively and thematically. The second part will explain the gender perspective used. In the third section, I will explain the social and literary context I believe the *Lanceloet* has functioned in, one of listening, debating and laughing.

### Literary tradition and the *Lancelot Compilation*

This thesis focuses on a portion of the *Lanceloet*: lines 5077-10740, analyzed in the context of the *Lancelot Compilation*. In this section, I will summarize the literary tradition of the story of King Arthur and his knights, and place the *Lancelot Compilation* within this context. I will analyze both the narrative and thematic structure of the *Lanceloet/Lancelot en prose*, and specifically for the brother sequence in the *Lanceloet*.

### King Arthur and his knights

The stories of King Arthur and his knights were popular all over Europe; traces of Arthur and his court are interwoven in the Latin tradition and almost all medieval vernaculars.<sup>5</sup> First inscribed in French, they were translated into various languages, Middle Dutch being one of them. The *Lancelot Compilation* was thus conceived within an intertextual context, with various texts, traditions and translations influencing one another.<sup>6</sup>

The *Lanceloet* particularly needs to be related to the French *Lancelot en prose*, which was probably written between 1215 and 1225. The character of the *Lancelot en prose* is different from many other Arthurian stories, that are romances, whereas the *Lancelot en prose* simulates a chronicle. It is, as the title suggests, written in prose instead of verse. The existing versions of the *Lancelot en prose* connect to the cyclical *Vulgate Cycle*. Like an exciting trilogy, the stories in the *Vulgate Cycle* interconnect.<sup>7</sup>

The *Lancelot en prose* is the first part of the *Vulgate Cycle*. In it, the love of Lancelot and Guenevere is explored and the knights prepare for the quest for the Grail. The second part of the cycle contains the story of this quest: *Queste del Saint Graal*. Only three knights are able to complete the quest: Galahad, Perceval and Bohort. Lancelot is disqualified because of his romantic relationship with queen Guenevere. In the final part, *La Mort le Roi Artu*, the downfall of the Arthurian Imperium is described. Lancelot's affair with Guenevere is an important catalyst for this downfall.<sup>8</sup>

The *Lancelot-Queste-Morte Artu* trilogy was translated to Middle Dutch. An important part is preserved in the *Lancelot Compilation*, which probably came into existence around 1320 in Brabant. The subject of this research is a part of the *Lanceloet*: the translation of the *Lancelot*

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<sup>5</sup> Lacy & Wilhelm (ed).

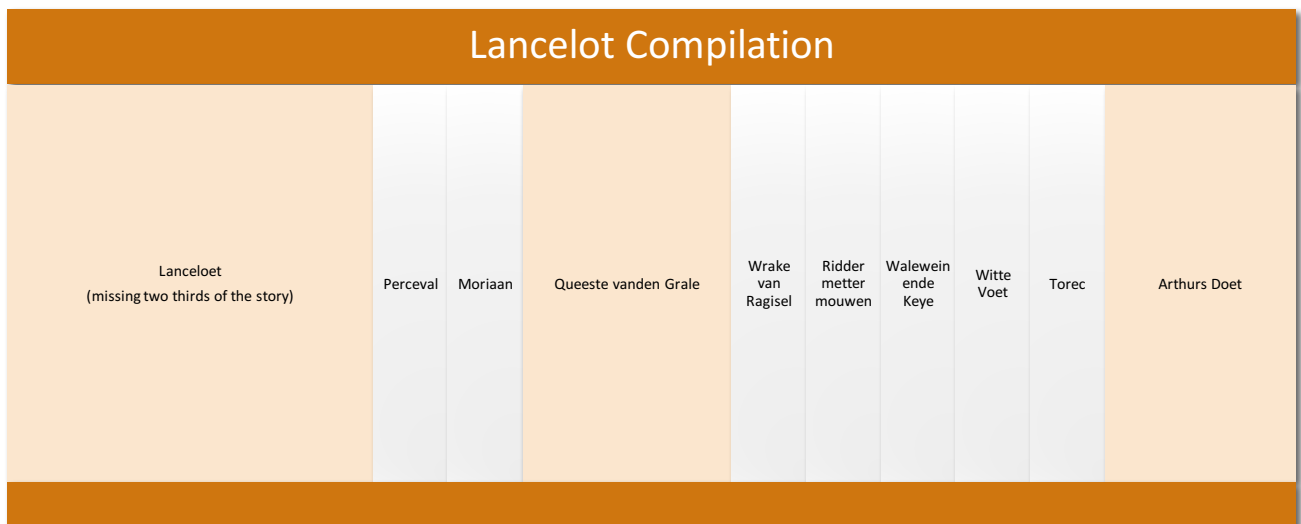
<sup>6</sup> Tether & McFadyen, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Besamusca & Gerritsen, p. 9-14.

<sup>8</sup> Besamusca & Gerritsen, p. 14.

*en prose*. Unfortunately, however, the *Lanceloet* is not complete: it is missing about two thirds of the first part of the story. Though the *Lanceloet* is translated into verse, it is very true to the French version and does not alter that much in the translation.<sup>9</sup>

The *Lancelot Compilation* contains more than a translation of the *Lancelot-Queste-Morte Artu*, as the corrector also added seven Arthurian novels to the Compilation. These are integrated into the structure of the story, like a modern soap opera with consecutive episodes. They feature their own adventure, but also are part of the larger whole. They are probably derived from existing Middle Dutch texts in verse. In this thesis, I will analyze a textual portion of the *Lanceloet*, in the context of the *Lancelot Compilation* as a whole. Below is a picture showing the various constituent parts of the *Lancelot Compilation*.<sup>10</sup>



### Narrative structure of the *Lancelot Compilation*

The *Lancelot en prose* and the *Lanceloet* can be characterized by its interlace structure, and its references to important themes. The narrative structure will briefly be explained in this section, after which I will specifically apply it to the brother sequence. I will discuss the themes of the *Lancelot Compilation* in the next section.

### Narrative threads

The *Lancelot en prose* and the *Lanceloet* are characterized by an interlace structure. Though the story speaks of several knights and many adventures, an impression of continuity is created by representing the threads one at a time, mostly focusing on one knight. The important adventures of the knight are narrated, and periods where nothing happens are suppressed. By briefly mentioning these suppressed episodes however, the illusion is created that the knights remain in perpetual movement, even without involvement of the listener. The only points of rest in the story are the court scenes.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Besamusca & Gerritsen, p. 14-17.

<sup>10</sup> Besamusca & Gerritsen, p. 17-20.

<sup>11</sup> Brandsma (2010), p. 34-36.



The periods of suppression are what Brandsma calls a *durative state*. When a narrative thread of a knight is introduced, he emerges from this durative state. The text can often explicitly mention that nothing of consequence happened in this durative state. For example:

5531-5536

<i>Davonture seget hier ter steden:</i>	The story tells here:
<i>Also van Agraveyn was gesceden</i>	When Agravein had parted
<i>Van sinen gesellen, als gi horen</i>	From his companions, as you could have heard
<i>Mocht inden boec hier te voren,</i>	Before, in this book,
<i>Dat hij reet lange in dat lant</i>	He rode in that land for a long time
<i>Dat hi gene avonture ne vant</i>	While nothing happened to him
<i>Die te vertelne wardich si.</i>	That would be worth telling.

It is clear Agravein was in this durative state, because his previous activities were not '*vertelne wardich/worth telling*'. The narrative thread of the previous knight, Mordred, is ended (for now) and the tread of Agravein is picked up. This is what Brandsma calls *Alternation*. Through *Alternation*, the primary narrative threads are made clear.<sup>12</sup>

There are also secondary narrative threads. These are created by *Combination*, when a knight on which the primary narrative thread focuses meets another knight (from a previous narrative thread) or *Separation*, when two knights are traveling together but go their separate ways, with the narrative now only focusing on one knight. Here, the focus of the narrative changes without there being a clear and formal switch: without a formula that ends or begins the durative state of the knight.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Narrative threads in the brother sequence*

This sequence of narrative threads can also be found in the brother sequence (5077-10740). In the brother sequence, there are four acting knights, the brothers of Walewein: Mordred, Agravein, Gurrees and Gariet. They are focused on in the primary narrative threads by way of *Alternation*. In 5077, Mordred is introduced, but before his adventure starts the physiques and characters of the brothers are broadly described. Mordred's actual adventures start in 5253. This results in Mordred having two introductory formulae, that say quite the same thing.<sup>14</sup>

5077-5080

<i>Davonture seget hier ter steden,</i>	The story tells here,
<i>Also Mordret was gesceden</i>	When Mordred had parted,
<i>Van sinen gesellen, dat hi den dach lanc</i>	From his companions, that he, for the whole
<i>Reet sonder ate ende sonder dranc.</i>	day
	Rode without food and without drink.

5253-5256

<i>Also Mordret gesceden was</i>	When Mordred had parted
<i>Van sinen gesellen, als ic las,</i>	

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<sup>12</sup> Brandsma (2010), p. 34-37.

<sup>13</sup> Brandsma (2010), p. 34-37.

<sup>14</sup> Brandsma (ed.) (1992), p. 539-550 (bijlage 2).

*Dat hij alden dach dore reet,  
Dat hi etens noch drinkens ontbeet.*

From his companions, as I have read (*in my source*),  
That he rode for the whole day,  
While neither eating nor drinking.

After Mordred, Agravein's story is narrated (his introductory formula was just mentioned (5531-5536)). During Agravein's narrative, a remarkable change of perspective appears. After Agravein has killed the knight Dryas, Agravein (severely wounded and in no state for further combat) is taunted into blowing a horn (that will most certainly result in further combat). After the taunt, Agravein, characteristically, says he will blow the horn and then:

5821-5824, 5835-5838

*Hi nam ende blies den horen  
Datmen ene half mile mochte horen.  
ende Die ridders vanden lande wisten al bloet  
Bi den blasene dat Dryas was doet.  
(...)  
Mar Dryas broeder Sornahan  
Was drove ende als een verwoet man  
Was hi ende buten sinen gedochte,  
al So datten niemen vertroesten ne mochte.*

He took up the horn and blew it  
So that men could hear it over the  
distance of half a mile.  
And the knights of the land knew for  
certain  
By that sound, that Dryas was dead.  
(...)  
But Dryas' brother Sornahan  
Was mad with sadness and out of his  
mind,  
So that none could comfort him.

Anyone who hears this horn knows that Dryas is dead, and thus so does his brother Sornahan. The moment Agravein blows the horn and the sound starts travelling the perspective shifts to those who hear the horn, Sornahan amongst them. This is what Ruberg calls a *Klangraum*.<sup>15</sup> There is no formula. The perspective switches back a few lines later. Sornahan makes his intentions for Agravein clear, he wishes to take revenge, and the perspective switches back to the aforementioned. Sornahan angrily leaves with his horse:

5874-5878

*Dear hi den ridder vinden waende  
Die sinen broeder doet hadde geslegen.  
ende Agraveyn sprac nochtogegen  
Die joncfrouwe, als die gerne hare  
Troeste van haren mesbare.*

For he wanted to find the knight  
Who had killed his brother.  
And Agravein, at that moment, spoke to  
The damsel, as he would very much like to  
Comfort her sadness.

Things, as expected, do not go well for the wounded Agravein in the following combat (where the perspective also switches a few times, see table 1), and he gets captured by Sornahan. Two hundred lines later, the perspective is formally switched to Gurrees, by way of *Alternation*.

6095-6097

*mer Davonture swiget hier ter stede*

But the story will be silent here

<sup>15</sup> Brandsma (ed.) (1992), p. 69 and Ruberg, p. 85-88.

*Van hem ende van Agravein ende gewaget des  
 Wat sine broeder gevel, Gurrees.  
 Davonture seget: tirst dat waren  
 Die gesellen elc van andren gevaren  
 Vander cruce, als gi horen  
 Mocht inden boec hier te voren,  
 Dat Gurrehees, Waleweins broeder, doe  
 Reet toten middage toe.*

Of him and Agravein and will tell  
 What his brother Gurrees befell.  
 The story tells: when  
 The companions had parted  
 At the cross, as you may have  
 heard earlier  
 In the book,  
 Gurrees, Walewein's brother,  
 Rode till noon.

In his adventure, Gurrees meets Sagrimor and Agravein. After Gurrees' adventures have been narrated, the perspective switches to Gariet.

8542-8543

Nu gewaget davonture das,  
 Also Gariet gesceden was  
 Van minen here Waleweine,  
 Dat hi lange reet alleine,

Now tells the story that,  
 When Gariet had parted from  
 Lord Walewein,  
 He rode alone for a long time,

Gariet meets the knights Brandalis and Gosengoes during his adventure. At the end of his adventure, he also meets Agravein and Gurrees. With the end of the primary narrative of Gariet, so also ends the brother sequence. The narrative structure of the brother sequence is thus:

Knight	Lines	Combination/Separation
<b>Mordred</b>	5077/5253-5530	
<b>Agravein</b>	5531-5581 5880-5920 5927-5949	Agravein's perspective becomes alternated with Sornahan's without a formal switch. It then seems to switch back and forth, creating a thrilling combat sequence. <sup>I</sup>
<b>Those who hear the horn, most prominently: Sornahan</b>	5822-5879 5921-5926 5950-6096	Sornahan is not part of the 'main cast' of the knights of the round table
<b>Gurrees</b>	6098-8541	In line 7478 Gurrees meets Sagrimor ( <i>combination</i> ) and they leave each other in line 7841 ( <i>separation</i> ). <sup>II</sup> The focus stays with Gurrees. <sup>16</sup> In line 8426 Gurrees meets Agravein in prison ( <i>combination</i> ) and they stay together until the

<sup>16</sup> Brandsma (ed.) (1992), p. 542.

		primary narrative switches to Gariet. <sup>III</sup>
<b>Gariet</b>	8542-10740	In 9042 Gariet saves Brandelis ( <i>combination</i> ). Together they meet Gosengoes in line 9117 ( <i>combination</i> ). <sup>IV</sup> In line 9170-9176 Gariet recommends they separate and they do ( <i>separation</i> ). <sup>V</sup> The narrative stays with Gariet. In 9842 Gariet saves Agravein and Gurrees from prison ( <i>combination</i> ). <sup>VI</sup> They stay together until the end of the brother sequence.

Table 1 Narrative structure of the brother sequence. In appendix one a supplement to this table can be found.

My focus in this thesis will be on the knights that are part of the primary narrative: Mordred, Agravein, Gurrees and Gariet. Of the four, damsels play the smallest role in Agravein's narrative. I will relate the found norms for the behavior of knights toward damsels and vice versa to *the Lancelot Compilation*. Therefore, I will go into the important themes of the *Lancelot Compilation* and the brother sequence in the next section.

### Thematic structure of the *Lancelot Compilation*

#### *The Brother sequence and the tale of the Lanceloet*

Even though a large part of the *Lanceloet* translation is missing, there is still a huge amount of material left: almost 37.000 lines.<sup>17</sup> The remaining part can be analyzed within the context of these lines but, because of the connection to the *Lancelot en prose* and the similarity of the translations, also within the narrative context of the missing lines. The brother sequence takes place in the third part of the *Lancelot en prose*. I will give a short summary of the narrative preceding the brother sequence.

The first part of the *Lancelot en prose* details Lancelot's youth. He is the son of one of the last vassals of King Arthur in Gaule. His father Ban dies and Lancelot is raised by a fairy foster mother, unaware of his heritage. At eighteen, he is presented at the court of King Arthur and he falls in love with Queen Guenevere. Inspired by her love, he successfully completes many adventures and comes to know his name and heritage. Eventually, Lancelot and Guenevere develop a sexual relationship. Lancelot is completely driven by his love for Guenevere and wholeheartedly devoted to her. In the second part of the *Lancelot en prose*, the love of Lancelot and Guenevere is frequently tested. Lancelot's main adversary is Méléagant, whom he repeatedly fights and finally kills at the end of part two.<sup>18</sup>

Méléagant is still haunting Lancelot, because the third part starts with the accusation of Agrondas that Lancelot killed Méléagant treacherously. Lancelot successfully completes many

<sup>17</sup> Besamusca (2000).

<sup>18</sup> Brandsma (2010), p. xiv-xvii.

adventures and Bohort decides to follow him, also completing deeds of honor. At some point, Bohort defeats Agravein in a test, which proves Lancelot still holds his status as the best knight. To extract information, Lancelot promises an old lady to follow her at her request. When she invokes the promise and he rides away with her, he is very much missed at court. Thus, Walewein organizes a search, in which his brothers obviously take part. In the brother sequence, the brothers are engaging in this quest, but they are completely unsuccessful in achieving their goal, and learn nothing of Lancelot's whereabouts.<sup>19</sup>

### *Theme's in the Lancelot Compilation and the brother sequence*

Apart from analyzing the *Lanceloet/Lancelot en prose* for its narrative structures, many scholars have also analyzed the thematic structure of the *Lanceloet/Lancelot en prose*. But what is a theme? Falk mentions that the word can have various meanings. It could, for example, be attributed to 'merely' the material characteristics of the text: this is a story of knights who go on adventures. Falk however uses it in a different, more broad, way:

*"But the term "theme" may also be assigned to the ideas that emerge from the particular structure of such textual elements as actions, statements revealing states of mind or feelings, gestures, or meaningful environmental settings. Such textual elements I designate by the term "motif"; the idea that emerges from motifs by means of abstraction, I call the theme. (...) themes emerging from motifs are ideas with which textual elements are pregnant within their contextual, structural coherence."*<sup>20</sup>

Reading through a text, we will get a sense of a motif, but then abstracting from it, we can find the important themes of the text. Authors such as Brandsma and Kennedy have found slightly dissimilar main themes in several different portions of the *Lanceloet*. As theme-finding is an act of abstraction and the themes do not have to be similar throughout the work, this is not entirely surprising.

For the first part of the *Lancelot en prose*, Kennedy defines the themes of Identity (Lanceloet is still coming of age), Love, Court, Magic and the Grail.<sup>21</sup> For the third part of the *Lancelot en prose* (of which the brother sequence is a part), Brandsma discusses three main themes: Status, Love and the Grail. Because this thesis is concerned with the third part of the *Lancelot en prose*, I will briefly explain the themes defined by Brandsma and mention the role they play in the brother sequence. But first, I will mention the tension between two contradicting ideals that is visible in the text.

### *Double esprit*

The story of the *Lanceloet* trilogy can be characterized by a *double esprit*: throughout the text two different knightly ideals are developed, sometimes overlapping in their aspirations but also, sometimes contradicting: the ideal of the 'old' worldly knight, and the ideal of the 'new' heavenly knight. The crux of the tension between these ideals can be found in the adventures of Lancelot.

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<sup>19</sup> Brandsma (2010), p. xvii-xx.

<sup>20</sup> Falk, p. 2-3.

<sup>21</sup> Kennedy, p. vii.



At the start of the *Lancelot Compilation* Lancelot is predestined to be the best knight and able to complete every adventure. The love Lancelot has for Guenevere is the main inspiration for his heroic deeds. Because of his love and devotion, he is able to complete great acts of prowess and courage: it is his love that enables him to be the best knight. This illustrates the ideal of the 'old' worldly knight.

The first signs of another type of ideal appear quite subtly. In the midst of various adventures (Lancelot is still proving himself as a good knight and trying to win over Guenevere) Lancelot is unable to complete an adventure that involves him opening a tombstone. Only a knight that is predestinated to find the Grail is able to open the tomb. Lancelot's love for Guenevere, a love that is worldly and adulterous, disqualifies him as a Grail knight. It seems the love between Lancelot and Guenevere now also has negative consequences for Lancelot. Here, we see the ideal of the 'new' heavenly knight emerging, an ideal that plays a large role in the Grail theme.<sup>22</sup>

### Grail

In light of the Grail adventure, a new chivalry is about to emerge. Emulating worldly knightly values is a prerequisite for being a grail knight: only if a knight obtains the highest standard in worldly chivalry will the next step, participating in the grail adventure, become available. Because of his worldly accomplishment, Lancelot's role in the Grail adventure is bigger than that of most other knights (excepting the Grail knights). And Walewein, also a very good worldly knight, is honored by a visit to the Grail castle, though his visit is quite unsuccessful. Bohort's rise to success through worldly prowess also indicates his role in the Grail adventure.<sup>23</sup>

This theme of the Grail, and the rules for heavenly knights, plays virtually no role in the brother sequence. Shortly preceding the brother sequence, Walewein and his brothers encounter a *reserved* adventure. This is a special type of adventure, that only one specific knight can complete.<sup>24</sup> They are asked by a knight to fix a broken sword by matching the pieces together, because:

2267-2272

<i>Vordien dat di die gene sal</i>	In case the person who will complete all the
<i>In sine hant houden die al</i>	Grail adventures, in true nature, will hold
<i>Die avonturen, in ware dingen,</i>	you in his hand.
<i>Van dien Grale ten inde sal bringen.</i>	And the moment that you are in his hand,
<i>ende Tirst dattu coemst in sine hant,</i>	The pieces will join right away.'
<i>Die stucken sullen vergaderen thant.'</i>	

Unfortunately, Walewein fails the test, and so does Ywein and everyone else present. The brothers also fail the test, but they are not named:

<sup>22</sup> Brandsma (ed.) (1992), p. 99-105.

<sup>23</sup> Brandsma (2010), p. 173, 195-199.

<sup>24</sup> Brandsma (2010), p. 169-170.

1958-1959  
*Ende alle hare gesellen mede,  
Ende si faelgierden alle tesamen*

And all their companions also,  
And they all failed together

Thus, before their adventure has even started (the knights have not yet broken up to search for Lancelot) ten knights of predominantly good reputation fail the Grail test. They are disqualified as Grail knights; they do not represent the new emerging type of knight. Having been unsuccessful in the Grail test, it is perhaps not surprising that the brother sequence focuses on the *old* knightly values and on how well the knights measure up. These are values the knights might still emulate.<sup>25</sup> And, despite the emerging of a new kind of knight, the worldly ordering of knights is something that still counts, and that the knights are much concerned with. This is the second important theme in the *Lanceloet*.

### Status and Love

The two other themes in the *Lanceloet*, *Status* and *Love*, are closely connected to the old ideals of the worldly knight as a good worldly knight strives for status and is motivated by love. Within the theme of status, which I will call the theme of *kighthood* (as Brandsma does in his introduction to the Dutch edition), the different knights compete with one another for the status of the best knight. From a worldly perspective, this hierarchy is based on their knightly prowess. As knights of the round table usually do not fight each other (except in tournaments or when they are not aware), this ranking needs to be made indirectly.<sup>26</sup>

Though nobody can best Lancelot in combat (Lancelot often appears in disguise at tournaments) and he is thus the best worldly knight, he loses this title for not being able to be a Grail knight. It is thus clear that a Grail knight is ranked higher than (merely) a worldly knight. Walewein's brothers thus receive a lower ranking (they are no Grail knights, and they do not visit the Grail castle). A further way to rank the knights is the capture-release pattern. When a knight (A) defeats a knight (B) who captured another knight (C), knight A takes hierarchical precedence over C. In the brother sequence, Gariet defeats Sornahan, who previously captured Agravein and Gurrees. Gariet is thus ranked higher than Agravein or Gurrees.<sup>27</sup> Rutledge comes to a ranking of: Lancelot, Bohort, Gauvain (Walewein) & Hector, Yvain, Gariet & Agloval, Guerehes (Gurrees) and Agravain (Agravein), Dodonel, Sagrimor and Keu. She finds Mordred difficult to place, because of his more privileged status as a grail knight (he encounters a reserved adventure with Lancelot).<sup>28</sup>

Generally, I think the hierarchical (worldly) order of the brothers will be: Walewein, Gariet, Gurrees & Agravein (ranked evenly and often appearing as a duo) and finally, Mordred. Mordred's low ranking position follows from his behavior at the *Penigue tournament*, where he is bested by his brothers.<sup>29</sup> I will explain this further on, but the brother sequence seems to indicate a slightly different ranking, where Gurrees is ranked above Agravein, instead of evenly. Near the end of the *Lanceloet*, the knights also create their own ranking. In it, they

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<sup>25</sup> Brandsma (2010), p. 169-172.

<sup>26</sup> Brandsma (2010), p. 115-140.

<sup>27</sup> Brandsma (2010), p. 119.

<sup>28</sup> Rutledge, p. 142.

<sup>29</sup> Brandsma (2010), p. 119, MIV, LXXVI, 39:48; S V, 84/35-87/37.

rank Walewein before Gariet. They do not specifically rank the other brothers, but they thus have a lower ranking than these two.<sup>30</sup>

Most of the *Lancelot* however, does not focus on the status and knighthood of all the knights of the round table, but rather on the status of one knight in particular: Lancelot. Is he the best knight, or is he not? Challenges to this status often come from the Walewein brothers. But they challenge Lancelot in the area where he is strongest: they try to be better worldly knights, while the true challenge to Lancelot's knighthood comes from his inability to complete the Quest for the Grail. But the brothers of Walewein, who are all excluded for this Grail adventure, cannot compete with Lancelot on this terrain.<sup>31</sup> I will come back to the rivalry of the brothers toward Lancelot in chapter two, when I describe Gurrees' adventure.

The third theme, the love theme, also focuses predominately Lancelot and his love for Guenevere. But it can also involve other knights, as in the novel *de Ridder met de Witte Mouw*. Lancelot is inspired by his love for Guenevere and able to complete great feats of strength and endurance in her honor. He is completely obedient to her. Brandsma found that the love theme plays no role in the brother sequence: while Mordred and Gurrees lust for damsels, this is a sexual interest, not one based on love.<sup>32</sup> I will come back to this in chapter two.

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<sup>30</sup> 30880, Ed.- Jonckbloet.

<sup>31</sup> Brandsma (2010), p. 115-140.

<sup>32</sup> Brandsma (2010), p. 141.

## A gendered approach

### *The construction of damsels in the text of the Lancelot Compilation*

In this thesis, I take a gendered approach, analyzing what the narrative dictates about how knights should behave toward damsels and vice versa. The knights usually do not know the damsel before the encounter, so they base their behavior on the gender of the encountered damsel, and other factors, such as social position. The *Lanceloet* mostly deals with people of higher standing and it seems that gender is quite a defining characteristic within this group. Using Judith Butlers gender approach, I will analyze behavior and norms connected to gender and apply it to the construction of norms for and concerning women in the brother sequence of the *Lancelot Compilation*.

In this section, I will give a broad overview of feminist thinking and the position of Judith Butler, who focuses on the construction of gender and does not take a feminist viewpoint. This is the theoretical framework I will use when answering the research questions in the following parts of the thesis. I will also address the danger of the heterosexual matrix, and what I think is a common misconception: that in the middle ages the rules for men and women were 'clear'; that they were 'simple' times.

### The construction of the female category

In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler has introduced a nuanced way of discussing and analyzing gender, placing much emphasis on the female gender and the relation to feminism. Butler points out that the rise of feminism has necessitated a need for a definition of a female subject. Only to this female subject could representation be extended. This judicial formation of a subject, by language and politics, might be another way of exercising power. As Butler says it: '*the feminist subject turns out to be discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation*'.<sup>33</sup>

Butler discredits the statement that there is a universal female subject; the female subject is constructed. There is thus also no universal basis for feminism. In this thesis, my aim is to explicate workings of power for the construction of norms for and about the female subject in the *Lanceloet* (this is thus an analysis of gender construction *on the go*). Like Butler, I focus on (judicial) norms. How is a woman supposed to behave? And what behavior can she expect of a man? I do not think there is a commonality among all women, but I do think a text could create this image.

In Butler's analysis, power workings for the construction of women are conceived in language, for example literature, and then applied to the body. Because this is a medieval text, we can only analyze the construction, the body is no longer. However, the same norms that formed the female category that interplayed with bodied beings, will have been utilized to create images of women in the text. These images of women will have subsequently played a role in the (further) constitution of the female category. Both the text and the bodied being where part of the same normative structure.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Butler, p. 1-5, quote p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> Butler 5-7, 14-18.

When gender is understood as a constructed category, this begs the question of choice: can a potential subject reject a constructed category, or is one under a cultural compulsion to become one? Will a person marked as a woman in the Middle Ages have been under the compulsion to behave conforming to strict gender based rules? I think most of the formation of identity comes from the struggle between cultural rules and personal preferences. I am assuming a soft kind of determinism where there is a limit to the freedom of choice.

As Butler says: *'The limits of discursive analysis of gender presuppose and preempt the possibilities of imaginable and realizable gender configurations within culture.'* In the *Lanceloet*, we sometimes see very generic, almost *cardboard like*, female characters, but we also see other types of women, with strong personalities, who reject and conform to given categories and rules. The most obvious example is Guenevere, who is a very strong character in her own right. But also, the last damsel encountered by Gurrees has a vivid personality that seems to *jump* off the page.<sup>35</sup>

As I will explain in the next section, I think these texts functioned in a context of discussion in public readings, where the, perhaps sometimes stereotypical, norms acted out in the stories might come under scrutiny. The questionable behavior of the knights in the brother sequence could have functioned as a normative study. It can even be considered a thought-experiment: what if this type of knight encounters this type of damsel? The role of knights and women being under discussion, and the limits of the cultural possibilities of gender on full display, especially because the knights seem to get it wrong.

In this thesis, I will analyze the brother sequence and its normative thought experiments, looking for elements of construction of norms for and about women. The focus will be on the dynamic between men and women. I will include passages where the nature of a woman is directly described. But not only passages like that can be utilized thusly. I will also include implicit rules, rules that arise from the narrative threads. What we can witness in the text of the *Lanceloet* is the construction of courtly womanhood in process: *'(..) woman itself is a term in progress, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end.'*<sup>36</sup> Caught in the heterosexual matrix, this becoming is however not free.

### The heterosexual matrix

Several thinkers, Butler among them, but also Irigaray, Wittig and Beauvoir have pointed to the danger and influence of what they call the heterosexual matrix. This matrix creates an artificial binary relation between men and women, suppressing the multiplicity of sexuality.<sup>37</sup> But the matrix could do even more damage.

Irigaray has pointed to the feminine as being linguistically absent from the matrix. She analyses women as being part of masculinist discourse. Women are simply an 'Other' for men. Men are the focus, women are the mirror, or more specifically, a *speculum* through which a man can also enter. When a woman submits to any theory of subject hood, she is re-

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<sup>35</sup> Butler 12-13, quote p. 13.

<sup>36</sup> Butler, p. 42.

<sup>37</sup> Butler, p. 22-26.



objectifying herself within a male construction.<sup>38</sup> Wittig makes a similar argument, but for her women are not absent from the matrix, but marked. Men can claim the universal, women remain bound to the particular.<sup>39</sup>

The female characters in the *Lanceloet* have probably been created by people constructed as men and thus might be part of such a masculinist discourse. Apart from the (narrative) construction of a mere duality of men and women, the words that are used and the grammar and speech can, according to Irigaray, also influence our gender perspective. She explains this extensively in her book: *to speak is never neutral*.<sup>40</sup> While this is an interesting viewpoint, it is beyond the scope of this thesis. I analyze a small portion of the *Lanceloet*, but it is still over five thousand lines. Analyzing these lines word for word would be too extensive a research.

I disagree with Irigaray (and partly Wittig) on an important matter: I do not think there can be such a thing as *male* power, there is only power that works on different subjects, power within which the male and the female are constructed. I do however think there is a danger of the female being constructed as subservient to the male (even without there being a distinct intention to do so), especially if women and man are only seen in their relation to each other. As Irigaray points out, there is a danger of the women getting *lost*, and men becoming the focus.

A striking example of this can be found in the *Lanceloet*. All through the *Lanceloet*, the acting knights will generally be named, whereas the damsels often do not receive a name, even if they accompany the knight for hundreds of lines. The personal identity of the damsel, her name, seems to have been forgotten or irrelevant. This absence of naming a damsel even stretches out to characters that play a large(r) part in the narrative and also to damsels that are repeatedly mentioned, sometimes even if they are mentioned more than 10.000 lines apart. Their context was evidently deemed enough to remember them. On the other hand, there are also plenty of male characters that do not receive a name. In the *Lancelot en prose*, Micha found more nameless knights (125) than damsels (106).<sup>41</sup> The acting knight, that is named, encounters all kinds of nameless figures: both male and female.

In the *Lanceloet*, and generally in medieval literature, the narrative only leaves room for one type of sexual love: that between men and women. And it might even seem that the core of Butler, Wittig and Irigaray have described as the heterosexual matrix, was conceived in these Arthurian tales: when active men fought gallantly for the safety of passive damsels. Prowess as the male characteristic *per excellence* and chastity and passiveness as female characteristics. It is also exactly the relationship between men and women the brother sequence is most concerned with. In an era that we want to rid ourselves of the heterosexual matrix and the suppression of subjects, is it still viable to study such a text, especially from a gender perspective?

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<sup>38</sup> Irigaray (1992), p. 133-151.

<sup>39</sup> Wittig, p. 76-89.

<sup>40</sup> Irigaray (2002).

<sup>41</sup> Brandsma (2014), p. 29-35.

I would certainly not stress that the *Lanceloet* is the pinnacle of feminist literature and there are many examples to be found of quotes or instances that we would presently consider as degrading toward the constructed category of women. But at the same time the *Lanceloet* also does not present the 'simple' image of men and women one might expect from a knightly tale. As Putter has pointed out, and this will also become clear over the course of the two upcoming chapters, the Arthurian literature far from presents a single heroic ideal. Putter says: (the) '*male identity is an extremely unstable concept in Arthurian literature*'.<sup>42</sup>

While the previously mentioned thinkers would probably not compliment him for forgetting the female identity, Putters raises an important point: both rules about the male and the female are under construction and heavily debated in Arthurian literature. Larrington mentions the same for the construction of the female: '*Arthurian femininities are both multiple and labile, dismantling the popular stereotypes of queen, damsel, enchantress and hag*'.<sup>43</sup> McClain, while seemingly staying closer to the idea of perfect manly prowess in his short essay, even goes as far as to say that the popularity of Arthurian texts is based on the representation of gender anxiety.<sup>44</sup> And Sterling-Hellenbrand says that: '*Romance describes a process of courtly self-definition, of becoming, of forming the identities of men and women in the audience*'.<sup>45</sup> There is thus agency to be found in and through interaction with the text, both for the categories of men and women.

Different views can arise from the same text. The aim of this thesis is to look for these debated norms in the brother sequence. In the second chapter, I will discuss rules related to sexuality, courting and consent. Can a stronger knight take whatever he wants? How should a damsel behave toward an encountered knight? In the third chapter, I will explore the themes of duty and obligations: what obligations do knights have toward maidens and vice versa?

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<sup>42</sup> Putter, p. 34-49, quote p. 48-49.

<sup>43</sup> Larrington, p. 266.

<sup>44</sup> McClain, p. 193-199.

<sup>45</sup> Sterling-Hellenbrand, p. 9.

## Engaging with the *Lanceloet*: debating and laughing?

If in over a thousand years, a researcher would analyze an episode of the *Bold and the Beautiful*, featuring Liam, Hope and Steffy, he would see only part of the cultural phenomenon that is characterized by 'Team' *Lope* (Liam/Hope) or *Steam* (Steffy/Liam). What the researcher would miss is the context of discussion these episodes functioned in, an example of which is given in picture 3.

The *Lanceloet* also was enjoyed in a certain context. In the Middle Ages, the *Lanceloet* functioned in a performative context: the work was read out loud or performed and thus often experienced via listening instead of reading, with various people present. Because of this joint, social context the *Lanceloet* could, and probably did, create debate and perhaps laughter amongst the (many) listeners. I will explain this in this section.

Moreover, the *Lanceloet* functioned in a certain social setting. The *Lanceloet* was conceived in a time where courtly culture was very popular. I will not be able to go into this in much detail because it is beyond the scope of this thesis, but I will devote some words to it at the end of this section.

### 'Reading' the *Lanceloet* in the Medieval context

#### *Reading?*

The *Lanceloet* is a piece of narrative fiction, of which Hawkes made a definition. For him, narrative fiction is: '*the narration of a succession of fictional events*'. This implies that narration is a communication process and that it is verbal in nature. The *Lanceloet* also confirms to the last requirement: it is fiction, though the pseudo-historical work does aspire to being a chronicle.<sup>46</sup> The story of the *Lanceloet*, the object, is in the text, but the narration (either verbal or while reading) is just as important: they are the two metonymies of the text.<sup>47</sup>

It is thus important to realize that the object of the text, the lines of the *Lanceloet*, functioned in a contemporary context of narration. This context of narration is undoubtedly very different from the context of narration I experienced as a researcher, where I (mostly) quietly read the text, sometimes struggling with a Middle Dutch that is not my mother language (though I am



Picture 2 I have taken a screenshot from the B&B facebook early morning on the 18th of June. A mere photo of Steffy visiting Liam in prison (posted 17:41 on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June) has spawned over 1200 reactions. The reaction of miss Williams, who is clearly team Lope (as shown above), has spawned 71 responses, ranging from agreement to people who would denounce watching the show of Steffy were not in it.

<sup>46</sup> Fulton, p. 151.

<sup>47</sup> Hawkes, p. 1-5.

Dutch) in an edition that is supplied with various notes and ideas for further research. But how will the medieval narration have taken place?

For French Romance, of which we have already established a strong connection to the *Lanceloet*, Vitz has proposed quite a radical way of analyzing the context in which these romances were 'read'. She thinks the romances were *performed* at twelfth and thirteenth century courts. Both at public feasts and official events, accompanied by minstrels and *jongleurs*, and at the middle (a professional entertainer) and the low end of the performance spectrum, the public and private reading at the informal domestic setting. She mentions an abundance of literary references to performance. This strength in her argument is at the same time its weakness as, for obvious reasons, there are little other sources she can reference to make this point.<sup>48</sup>

Nonetheless I think Vitz compellingly demonstrates that private solitary reading was far from the norm. Readers were *listeners* who watched the novel being performed or listened to it in small groups. As Ong has pointed out, there was a context of *Orality*: speaking and listening as the primary way of coming in contact with the narrative.<sup>49</sup> The performance took place in a social context and the content of a chosen text may have been carefully considered and selected.<sup>50</sup> Crosby makes a similar point, regarding the English tradition. She mentions the texts will usually have been transmitted by either *jongleurs* or via *reading out loud*. She also focuses on a context of listening.<sup>51</sup> Besamusca adds that the novels were probably only listened to by the higher class: the social elite.<sup>52</sup>

### *Debating*

How would the listeners have responded to these texts? Would they have fostered as much discussion as the *Bold and the Beautiful* does today? Though there is no way of checking whether they discussed something, or not, we can analyze the structure and the themes addressed in the *Lanceloet*. Are there clear in textual solutions to presented problems, or is the solution left to the imagination of the audience? In other words: is the work setting the stage for a discussion?

Nykrog called Chrétien a *romancier discutabile*, for his texts do not provide clear cut answers or recommendations but rather different options, which are then open to discussion.<sup>53</sup> This is a problem Bruckner has pointed out, not for the middle ages, but for recent scholarly literature. She noticed that various scholars could give vastly different interpretations of the *Chevalier de la Charette*, and thus that the romance is very much open for discussion.<sup>54</sup> Another author, Hunt, describes: '(...) *important is the critical spirit with which Chrétien and his contemporaries treat their themes, themes that are shown to be problematic and which*

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<sup>48</sup> Vitz, p. 164-224.

<sup>49</sup> Ong.

<sup>50</sup> Vitz, p. 225-227.

<sup>51</sup> Crosby, 88-110.

<sup>52</sup> Besamusca (2017), p. 129-130.

<sup>53</sup> Nykrog, title of book.

<sup>54</sup> Bruckner, p. 159-180.

present the hero with a dilemma which he has to resolve. (...), the constitutive feature of the twelfth-century romance is more convincingly identified in its casuistical nature.<sup>55</sup>

The *Lancelot en prose* should thus not be regarded as a *Thesenromance*, but rather as a problem romance: the texts do not promote one specific social and moral idea but rather raise problems that the audience can debate. They set up so called *jue parti*'s: fundamental dilemmas. Heterogeneous audiences are bound to disagree on these dilemmas.<sup>56</sup> We can thus also not expect to find clear answers and resolutions in the lines of the brother sequence.

I will illustrate this with an example. A dilemma that frequently occurs in the Gurrees' adventure in the brother sequence is that of the loyalty of a damsel toward a knight that saved her or a member of her family. When Gurrees has saved the father of a damsel, she tells him, presumably under the impression that he will not hold her to her promise:

6259-6268

<p>here 'Ic ben u sculdich sere te minnen, Want gi hebt mi, bi mire trouwe, Geworpen ut groten rouwe Dear ic in moeste gevallen sijn, Ne haddi niet beschudt den vader mijn Ende bracht uut groter noet Van dien dine wouden slaen te doet. Nu biddic u dat gi over mi gebiet. Ic ne sout willen weder seggen niet Van dien des ic mochte doen, here.'</p>	<p>Lord, 'I owe it to you to love you very much, For you have, truly, Freed me from great sadness In which I would have descended, If you had not protected my father And freed him Of those who wanted to strike him dead. Now I ask you to take command over me. I will not refuse you anything, lord, That is within my powers.'</p>
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The damsel, with her speech seemingly indebted to courtly values, states she will forever be in Gurrees' debt and that, basically, he can do with her as he pleases. Gurrees, who is quite interested in the physical aspect of the love of a damsel, asks her for this during a walk in a romantic garden. The lady, of which we are reminded that she is a '*maegt*' (6287), refuses him quite bluntly: '*Ic hadde sot gesijn, Haddic u gegeven mine minne*' (6295-6296). Later, Gurrees finds himself in a similar situation, and once again gets rejected (7131-7392). The damsel is however very keen for him to stay and he does not seem to have lost face.

I think this is an example of a dilemma in the *Lanceloet*: when a damsel so explicitly promises her all, can a knight hold her to this promise? I think there is no easy answer to who owes what, at least not an answer we can deduct from the text. There is no clear narrative clue to solve this dilemma. It is thus likely this would have led to debate. But the texts may have also invoked another type of human behavior: laughter.

### Laughing

Regarding romance, Busby makes himself abundantly clear: '*There can be little doubt that humour is a fundamental characteristic of the genre of Arthurian romance.*'<sup>57</sup> In the same

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<sup>55</sup> Hunt, p. 18.

<sup>56</sup> Kelly, p. 144-148.

<sup>57</sup> Busby, p. vii.



volume, Milland-Bove explains how the aforementioned misadventures of Gurrees were probably funny to medieval listeners.<sup>58</sup> That this was also the case for the Middle Dutch audience can be deduced from Ladders text, where he mentions several examples of Middle Dutch stories featuring the relationship between men and women.<sup>59</sup> Besamusca has also frequently described humorous episodes from the *Lanceloet*.<sup>60</sup>

How can we analyze gender, if the rules and situations that are presented to us might be funny? Böhn, in a research combining gender and humor, emphasizes that humor often comes from incongruity. There is a discrepancy between what is expected and what is actual. This is especially funny when something is highly regarded.<sup>61</sup> Playing with gender roles is an excellent way to create incongruity in the text. If the public conceives a certain construction of gender as fixed, it can be very funny if a character behaves the different than is expected based on his or her gender. For an analysis, it matters if the listeners laugh affirmatively or subversively. If their laugh is affirmative, they are agreeing with the presented rule or construction, and gender roles are confirmed. If they laugh subversively, the image presented conflicts with constructed gender roles, and attention for the gender role is diverted.<sup>62</sup> We however do not encounter many of this incongruent gender based humorous passages in the brother sequence.

In this thesis, my emphasis will be on an analysis of behavior connected to gender, not on an analysis of the humor of the presented episodes. I will reference the possible comic nature of an episode, but I will not make an in-debt analysis. For most of the potential humor I have recognized in the episodes, I have based myself on the work of Green, specifically his concept of dramatic irony. This is a type of humor where the audience is aware of a, usually important or incriminating, fact, while another character is not. I will explain this further in chapter two.<sup>63</sup>

### Medieval courtly context

The work that is studied in this thesis was created in a certain time and place, and thus also in a certain social setting. As I have mentioned, the French *Lancelot en prose* was probably written between 1215 and 1225 and the *Lancelot Compilation* was compiled around 1320.<sup>64</sup> It was at this time that a dominant culture was present at many European courts: a culture of courtliness or, also, chivalry.

In *'The Origins of Courtliness'*, Jaeger describes the formation of a new type of ideal in the medieval courts, in the period preceding the conception of these works. For him, this movement and the flowering of literature connected to it, was: *'(...) aimed at taming the reckless assertiveness of the European feudal nobility, at limiting its freedom in manners and morals, at restraining individual willfulness, and at raising this class from an archaic and*

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<sup>58</sup> Milland-Bove, p. 105-115.

<sup>59</sup> Braet, Latré & Verbeke, p. 181-190.

<sup>60</sup> For example: Besamusca (2010).

<sup>61</sup> Böhn, p. 51.

<sup>62</sup> Böhn, p. 50-52.

<sup>63</sup> Green, p. 250-286.

<sup>64</sup> Mentioned on page 7, of this thesis.

*primitive stage of social and civil life to a higher stage, imbuing it with ideals of modesty, humanity, elegance, restraint, moderation, affability, and respectfulness.*<sup>65</sup>

Literature is an important part of this courtly culture, a culture that worked toward civilizing nobles who were otherwise much concerned with fighting. The literature was used to set the example, it thus shows an idealized world. The nobles were taught to enjoy more sensibilities, primarily in the field of love.<sup>66</sup> This was part of a culture that now required knights to be both strong in fights and civilized in court.<sup>67</sup>

A medieval author that intimately explored the formation of these types of courtly rules is Andreas Capellanus, in his work *'On Love'*, composed around 1180 in France. He writes about different situations. For example: what to do when a man of higher nobility addresses a common girl (and proposes love to her). In this text, we are presented with a dialogue between the two. The girl mentions that she is unsure the love of the nobleman will persist because of her low status. A dilemma such as this is also explored in the brother sequence, in Gurrees' adventure, as I will explain in chapter two.<sup>68</sup>

This new culture had many consequences, and made itself felt in various fields: more civilized ways to have meals, protocols for parties and tournaments, but also rules about the right way to love and the interaction between men and women.<sup>69</sup> All these rules were explored in, taught by or criticized in literature. Looking at these rules connected to knights and damsels in a portion of the *Lanceloet*, is the objective of this thesis.

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<sup>65</sup> Jaeger, p. 3.

<sup>66</sup> Brandsma (2015), p. 190-191.

<sup>67</sup> Bumke, p. 395.

<sup>68</sup> Capellanus, p. 87-97.

<sup>69</sup> Bumke.

## Chapter two: sexuality, courting and consent in the brother sequence

### Introduction

The brother sequence contains the adventures of the four brothers of Walewein: Mordred, Agravein, Gurrees and Gariet, and the adventures they get into while searching for Lancelot. It starts with an extensive introduction of the brothers, both physical and with regard to their character, and how they differ from Walewein. After that, at times, this story becomes a study on how to behave as a knight, with the brothers making different types of mistakes, mistakes that are already hinted at in their respective introductions. The narrative surrounding Mordred and Gurrees, and their behavior, focuses extensively on the courting and sexual persuasion of damsels, with the knights even persuading damsels who already have a relationship. This chapter will predominantly focus on these two knights. Agravein and Gariet have less interaction with damsels, and they do not engage in sexual behavior with them, nor do they try to.

Though it predominantly concerns two knights of the brother sequence, the theme of sexuality, courting and consent is so important in their respective narratives, that I felt it necessary to devote a chapter to it. Especially because within the construction of sexual norms, there is also a construction of men and women toward each other. This chapter thus focuses on the theme of sexuality, courting and consent in the brother sequence (mainly in Mordred's and Gurrees' passage). It will also focus on the relation of this theme to the overarching theme of love in the *Lancelot Compilation*, as especially Gurrees seems to confuse sexual and loving motivations.

In the brother sequence, both Mordred and Gurrees encounter a damsel that they have repeated sexual relations with. From a modern perspective, these scenes are questionable, especially from the point of consent. These damsels, who are both in a relationship with someone else, repeatedly stress their reluctance to engage in these activities, but they are persuaded, tricked or physically forced. This chapter will explore how this theme of sexuality and consent, very relevant today as shown by the #MeToo movement, was explored in this medieval narrative.



Picture 3 #MeToo Protesters, a picture from Amnesty International

It is the goal of this thesis to analyze the construction of (systems of) norms for men and women and their behavior toward each other. In this chapter, I will focus on norms relating to sexuality, courting and consent. Both the knights and the damsels are constructed characters, with seemingly consistent personality traits. I will analyze these constructed characters, and the way they function in the narrative, looking for implicit norms. I will answer the following two research questions:

- *What system of norms for the behavior of knights and damsels concerning sexuality, courting and consent can be distilled from the brother sequence?*

- How can the system of norms for the behavior of knights and damsels concerning sexuality, courting and consent from the brother sequence be connected to the *Lancelot Compilation*?

In this chapter, I will analyze the system of norms relating to sexuality, courting and consent in the brother sequence, from the perspective of the main actors in the narrative: the knight (Mordred or Gurrees), the damsel and, with Mordred, the damsel's *amie*. I will relate my finds to the larger theme of love, a theme that (as explained in chapter one) is very important all through the *Lanceloet*.

In this chapter, I will first discuss the sequence featuring Mordred. Then, I will briefly discuss the passage featuring Agravein, but the theme of sexuality, courting and consent hardly plays a role in his adventure. It does play a large role however in the adventure of Gurrees, so I will extensively discuss this passage. The adventures of the last brother featured in het brother sequence, Gariet, are reserved for the chapter three. I will end with a conclusion.

### Sexuality and Rape in Arthurian Romance

While Payer mentions that Christian sexual ethic was straightforward: '*Sexual intercourse was allowed only between a man and a woman legitimately married to each other, if done in a natural manner*', this is not at all the image that arises from the *Lancelot Compilation*.<sup>70</sup> Adultery and sex with unmarried damsels is entirely commonplace. That this was more in line with reality can be derived from the work of Capellanus. Among the several subjects discussed is a letter from the Countess of Champagne, in which she asks if true love can play a role in marriage. The answer: '*We state and affirm unambiguously that love cannot extend its sway over a married couple*'. There was evidently a whole world of love to explore outside the bonds of marriage.<sup>71</sup> This thesis is however only concerned with the rules for sexuality and courting arising from the *Lanceloet*.

In this thesis, I will also address the subject of rape. I am here not concerned with the actual (horrible) consequences of forced sexual activity, but with the theme of rape that arises from the *Lanceloet*. However, I do want to say a few things about the concept of rape in the Middle Ages. Rape, in the sense of the Latin word *raptus*, will, for a medieval listener, usually mean that a woman is carried away and forced into a relationship or marriage (and thus also sex) with the abductor. It could also entail the incidental forcing of a sexual act on someone, but this first definition is more commonplace. The woman is being stolen.<sup>72</sup> I will explain this further on, but Mordred's sexual act with an unwilling damsel was probably not seen as rape, where it would be today. Gurrees, who leads a damsel away (also forcing himself on her that night) was probably seen as engaging in rape. This act starts the moment he takes her away, whereas for a 21st century reader only the forced sexual act would be rape.

Raping is thus a very physical act, that requires strength. Women in Arthurian Romance are generally not able to ward off physical attacks; they are thus in constant need of protection. Christoph's analysis of honor and gender sheds some further light on this. Christoph explains that, whereas man regains honor from battle, women regain most honor from modesty. It is

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<sup>70</sup> Payer, p. 1.

<sup>71</sup> Capellanus, p. 155-157, quote on p. 157.

<sup>72</sup> Payer, p. 169-170.

a symbol of their virginity, something they can never regain, ones lost: *'Women's qualities are (...) associated with what they are – beautiful, faithful, modest – rather than with what they do'*.<sup>73</sup> The female state of virginity should thus be protected by the knights of the round table. Rape is the most direct threat to the virgin state that provides women with honor.

Gravdal has done extensive research into the sexual violence and rape in French medieval literature and law. In her chapter on Arthurian romance, she points out that the significance of rape in Arthurian romance is not often discussed, but she considers that sexual violence is built into the premise of Arthurian Romance: *'It is a genre that by its definition must create the threat of rape'*. Within the tradition, Chrétien sometimes blurred the lines between seduction and aggression, making it no longer clear whether there is a violation.<sup>74</sup>

Usually however, the threat of rape arises comes from outside the Arthurian circle, and the acting Round Table knight proves his prowess by saving the damsel and defeating the rapist.<sup>75</sup> An example of such an evil raping knight can be found in the passage shortly preceding the brother sequence. Hestor meets a knight who:

4385-4388

<i>want</i>	<i>Hi neemt onse dochtren dagelike,</i>	For he takes our daughters every day,
	<i>Scone kindren ende rike,</i>	Beautiful and wealthy children,
	<i>Op dat si sijn magedekine,</i>	If they are still a virgin,
	<i>Ende plegeter mede te sine.</i>	And then has intercourse with them.

The knight is confronted by Hestor, who wants the knight to promise: *'Dat gi nembermee gere joncfrouwe Onnere doen sult/That you will never bring dishonor to a damsel again'*<sup>76</sup>. The knight refuses and is defeated and thus the order of things is seemingly restored. In the start of Gurrees' episode, Gurrees conforms to similar knightly obligations as he repeatedly saves women from male (sexual) violence, something he is praised for.<sup>77</sup>

Both Mordred and Gurrees, however, are, despite the expectation that they will protect the virtue of damsels, a sexual threat to them. And not only that, the threat materializes. While Gravdal points out that Chrétien would often use tricks to soften the actual consequences of the rape for the listeners, thus greatly removing its impact, this is not the case in Gurrees' episode. The damsel is completely distraught after the sexual and violent encounter and many lines are devoted to her voicing her grievances. Later, it is repeated.<sup>78</sup>

It seems that the rape theme in the brother sequence might be an uncharacteristic, and thus special, exploration of the theme within the *Lancelot compilation*: these are instances when the threat of rape comes not from outside, but from the knights of the round table themselves. In this chapter, where I will explore the themes of sexuality, courting and consent, I will also explore the theme of rape within the text.

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<sup>73</sup> Christoph, p. 28-30.

<sup>74</sup> Gravdal, p. 43.

<sup>75</sup> Gravdal, p. 44.

<sup>76</sup> 4452-4453.

<sup>77</sup> See Gurrees' adventure, p. 42-60, of this thesis.

<sup>78</sup> Gravdal, p. 44-51.

## Mordred, the damsel and the 'cuckold'

In this chapter, I set out to distill norms for romantic and sexual behavior of knights toward damsels and vice versa, from the brother sequence. My method will be close reading of passages from the brother sequence, to find ex- or implicit norms therein. In this section, I will look at a passage from Mordred's part of the brother sequence. One where he encounters a damsel and convinces her to sleep with him behind her boyfriend's back, even in the same tent.

I will first mention the details surrounding the contact between Mordred and the damsel (necessary for close reading of the passage). Then, I will make a character sketch of the three main characters. As the personality traits of the characters are generally consistent, I will mention their characteristics, and the values they represent or infringe. Their behavior and results of this behavior can be used to analyze the norms considering sexuality, courting and consent arising from the brother sequence.

I will relate their personae to other characters in the *Lancelot Compilation*, more specifically: I will relate the damsel to the character of Ydeine from *De Wrake van Ragisel*. I will end the section with a general analysis: what normative message considering sexuality, courting and consent arrives from this passage of the brother sequence, in its relation to the *Lancelot Compilation*? Later in the chapter, I will mainly look at another passage, featuring several damsels and the knight Gurrees.

### The passage

The brother sequence opens with an introductory formula that introduces Mordred as the acting knight. The story is however immediately interrupted to provide an extensive introduction of the brothers in comparison to Walewein. Then, after another introductory formula that introduces Mordred, Mordred's adventure starts. Quite quickly, his horse is shot at by a dwarf: the horse drops dead. Mordred does not take this lightly and starts abusing the dwarf.<sup>79</sup>

The owner of the dwarf provokes him into combat and Mordred easily kills the knight. He gives the knight no chance to surrender; he simply beats him until his brains are seeping out of his skull. Mordred is again on his way, when he encounters a beautiful lady and asks her if he can stay the night. She is nervous to accept because she is not sure her lover will approve, but he promises her he will leave if her lover does not accept their agreement.<sup>80</sup> Then:

5334-5339

ende Hi dede sinen helm af doe.  
Si besach den ridder na desen,  
Die hare scone ende jonc dochte wesen,  
Endi hi besach die joncfrouwe mede,  
Die hi vol vant van groter scoenhede.

And he took off his helmet.  
She looked at the knight after this,  
Whom she thought of as beautiful  
and young,  
And he looked at the damsel too,

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<sup>79</sup> 5253-5285.

<sup>80</sup> 5286-5333.

*ende Hi versochtse van minnen sonder beide,  
Dat si thant al weder seide  
Ende seide sine ware so licht niet  
Dat hi dat an hare vonde iet.*

Whom he found to be filled with beauty,  
And he readily asked her to make love with him,  
Something she immediately and strongly declined  
And she said she was not so frivolous,  
that he would get something like that from her.

This passage seems to involve an acceleration. It takes them five lines to look at each other, and only two to have their main conversation. Mordred asks her to sleep with him without hesitation: ‘*sonder beiden*’, he is not sugarcoating it (like Gurrees, who has a better way with words<sup>81</sup>), and she immediately and strongly declines. Though the phrase, ‘*sonder beiden*’, could also be added merely to make the rime fit, it would fit the further acceleration of the passage. Mordred does not take no for an answer:

5343-5348

*Mer Nochtan bat hi so vele dat si dat  
Niet ontseggen ne woude dat hi bat.  
ende Si waren daer allene onder hem tween,  
also Dat si soe droegen over een  
Dat hi daer bi hare lach  
Ende met hare sire minnen plach.*

But he asked her so many times, that she,  
Did not want to refuse what he asked.  
And they were alone, just the two of them,  
So, that they thus decided  
That he lay with her there  
And made love to her.

Here, there is also a certain speed to the lines. The damsel says no at first, but Mordred insists so much that she cannot refuse anymore. This sexual encounter is not enough for Mordred and the story turns into a bit of a farce. Because of deeds done by this brother Gariet, Mordred gets an honored position at the house of knight (the lover of the damsel).

5385-5388, 5396-5409

*Ende bat har dat si des ware bedacht  
Dat si bi hem quamen slapen dien nacht.  
Si sprac: ‘Ic ne macht in gere wise.  
Ic moet liggen bi minen amise.’  
(...)  
Si sprac: ‘Ende ocht hi wort in wake,  
So sal hi u ende mi mede  
Beide doet slaen dar ter stede’.  
Mordret antworde hare doe:  
‘Ic hope hi slapen sal emmertoe.  
Ende wort hi oc in wake, ic sal  
U wel behoeden jegen hem al,*

And he asked her if she would think about  
Coming to sleep with him that night.  
She said: ‘I could definitely not.  
I have to lie with my boyfriend.’  
(...)  
She said: ‘And if he were to wake up,  
He will kill you, and also me,  
there.  
Mordred answered her thus:  
‘I hope he will sleep without interruption.  
And if, however, he were to wake, I will,  
Protect you against him completely,

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<sup>81</sup> See Gurrees’ adventure, p. 42-60, of this thesis.



<p><i>ja Waerre II sulc alse hi es. Nu sijt al sonder sorge des.'</i></p> <p><i>ende Mordred sprac jegen hare So vele eens ende anders dare Dat si hem geloefde dat si sal Daer af doen sinen wille al, Dies Mordred was blide sere.</i></p>	<p>Yes, even if there were two men such as him.</p> <p>Now you can thus be without worry.'</p> <p>And Mordred spoke to her So much That she promised him that she would Do all that he wanted, This made Mordred very happy.</p>
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In the aforementioned passage, he convinces the woman to sleep with him again, this time with her lover right next to her (in the same tent). Apart from him repeatedly questioning her, seemingly wearing her out, Mordred also makes an argument that is perhaps convincing to the damsel: he tells the damsel he will protect her from any harm done to her by her boyfriend. He thus makes clear he is the stronger party, and able to defeat her boyfriend in combat. This is a promise he keeps. When she is thus convinced and rises to change beds, Mordred receives her 'blidelike'.<sup>82</sup> The position of the damsel is not made clear.

5429-5431, 5435-5456.

<p><i>Als te gader waren gelegen, Si moisten al sulker feesten plegen Else bestont te sulker minnen. (...)</i></p> <p><i>ende Als also lange hadden gelegen Onder hem II haerre minnen plegen,</i></p>	<p>Thus, when they were laying there, They provided themselves with all joys Connected to that type of love.</p> <p>And when they had lain there for quite a while Making love to each other,</p>
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Like the damsel feared, her *Amise* awakens and is less than pleased. He voices his grievances in many lines and is so appalled by Mordred's behavior that he is sure this knight cannot be the brother of Walewein.<sup>83</sup> He calls him a liar and a '*ribaut*'<sup>84</sup> and then makes Mordred one final promise:

5480-5484

<p><i>mer Nu weet wale dat ic nu meer u Nu versekere van sake negene, Sonder vander doet allene, went Bedi sekerlike die een Sal hier sterven van ons tween.'</i></p>	<p>But now I know I will not Promise you anymore than, Death alone, Because I am sure that one Of us will die here.</p>
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He does not keep this promise. Mordred quite easily defeats him, and the knight yields without much of a fight. He then forgives Mordred and the damsel. But then the tale ends bleakly:

5511-5514.

<p><i>Dat hit vergave hare daer,</i></p>	<p>So that he forgave her there,</p>
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<sup>82</sup> 5248.

<sup>83</sup> 5457-5479. Oddly, as it was Gariet on whose behalf the knight was doing Mordred all these honors.

<sup>84</sup> 5471.

*Mar dat gelof brac hi daer naer,  
Want hise in sinen gedochte  
Noit daer naer meer minnen en mochte.*

But that promise he thereafter broke,  
Because in his in heart he,  
Could never love anymore, thereafter.

### *A funny scene?*

I have mentioned that the passage contains some elements that are *farce*-like. More specifically: the passage contains elements of dramatic irony. The knight does Mordred great honor, unaware that Mordred has already slept with his girlfriend, and that Mordred plots to sleep with her again. Green defines dramatic irony as: *'the senses of discrepancy felt by an audience in face of a character acting in ignorance of his situation.'*<sup>85</sup> It is a comedic trope that can frequently be found in romance and in other medieval narratives.<sup>86</sup>

In this case, the dramatic irony is coterminous with the plot of the passage: the passage (almost) starts with the beginning of the affair, and ends when the adultery is found out and the consequences 'resolved'.<sup>87</sup> To underline the unexpectedness of Mordred's behavior for the knight and his servants, the passage mentions, just before Mordred drives off:

5517-5520

*ende Den cnapen wonderde vandien  
Omdat si niet en hadden gesien  
Noch gehort vor dien tid  
Van den II ridders den strid.*

And that (*Mordred leaving*) made the  
servants wonder  
Because they had not seen  
Nor heard before that time  
The battle of the two knights.

Surely, Mordred's behavior would have shocked them: he played everyone for a fool, profiting from his brothers' reputations. The audience, on the other hand, knew the whole time. The question that arises is whether this passage would be considered funny, as irony is part of comedy and could create a comedic response: perhaps laughter.<sup>88</sup> Apart from the presence of dramatic irony, there are no further indications that this episode was meant to be funny: none of the characters in the text are laughing. It is thus not completely clear whether this was meant as a funny scene, more serious, or something in between. As mentioned in chapter one, this is not something I will explore in debt.

### *The damsel*

In this section, I will enquire into the character of the damsel. There is only some information about this damsel. We do not learn her name, but we know she is beautiful and that she has a boyfriend. The text gives us clues about her character and her interests. I think the text suggests, as I have cited in the previous passage, that she is immediately physically attracted to Mordred. The text mentions that she objects to his advances. The arguments she uses for that are exclusively practical. She voices concerns with her safety and position if she engages in sexual acts with him. By using his prowess, Mordred is able to soften or eliminate these

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<sup>85</sup> Green, p. 251.

<sup>86</sup> Green, p. 251-254, Dempster, p. 7-9.

<sup>87</sup> Green, p. 253.

<sup>88</sup> Green, p. 10-12.

consequences. The damsel, who is seemingly also worn out from Mordred's nagging, then agrees.

This damsel can be compared to a damsel found in *De Wrake van Ragisel: Ydeine*. *De Wrake van Ragisel* has often been interpreted as a satiric novel, and I agree. De Bundel thinks the novel mocks the, highly valued, ideals of '*prowess inspires love*' and '*love inspires prowess*'.<sup>89</sup> Two characters, the Lady of Galastroet and the character of Ydeine seem to take these standard romance tropes a little too seriously. For the lady of Galastroet this manifest itself in a maddening love for Walewein (whom she does not know or recognize but who once won a tournament). For Ydeine, this ideal has more practical consequences, as she is interested in whichever man is currently strongest. I will not go into this novel in detail, but I do want to highlight two passages, featuring Ydeine and Walewein (the acting knight in the novel). In this first passage, Ydeine is approached by Walewein (in magical disguise).

3<sup>de</sup> boek, 12882-12889, ed.- Jonckbloet  
*Doe trac Walewein hare bat nare*  
*Ende sprac te hare vrindelike,*  
*Ende si weder dier gelike.*  
*Doe geviel ten etene daer*  
*Dat si vergaderden echt daer naer,*  
*Soe dat si te gadere aten.*  
*Dies was si blide utermaten,*  
*Want hare dat ridderkin wel bequam.*

*Translation, 1722-1729, Johnson & Claassens*  
Then Walewein drew close to her  
and spoke to her in friendly fashion,  
and she was in return equally courteous.  
It so happened that at mealtime  
they joined one another immediately,  
and so they ate together.  
She was beside herself with joy at this,  
for that little knight pleased her well.<sup>90</sup>

In this passage, Ydeine's physical attraction to the disguised Walewein is suggested, subtly. She becomes '*blide utermaten/beside herself with joy*' when the knight approaches her. In the passage featuring Mordred and the damsel, there is a similar indication of her physical attraction to Mordred. Walewein then goes on the court Ydeine, and after he wins a game he claims her as a prize:

3<sup>de</sup> boek, 12914-12927, ed.- Jonckbloet  
*'Joncfrouwe,' seit hi, 'nu sidi mine.*  
*Nu willic minen wille van u*  
*Tnacht hebben, dat secgic u.'*  
*- 'Here, dan mach gescien nu niet.'*  
*- 'Joncfrouwe, beraet u wel ende besiet,*  
*Ic wil hier hebben dat ic wan.'*  
*- 'Here, sidi soe coenen man....*  
*Ic licge in die camere mire vrowen,*  
*Dordi u selven so wel getrowen,*  
*Dat gi daerin wel dorret gaen....*  
*Ic late die dore open staen,*  
*Ende alse min vrowe slapen es*  
*Soe comt te mi.' - 'Sijt seker des,'*  
*Sprac Walewein, 'ic sal daer comen.'*

*Translation, 1754-1767, Johnson & Claassens*  
"Damsel," he said, "now you are mine.  
Now I want to have my way with you  
tonight, this I tell you."  
"My lord, this may not happen."  
"Damsel, consider carefully and understand,  
I want to have what I won here."  
"My lord, are you so brave a man?  
I sleep in my lady's chamber.  
If you have such confidence in yourself  
that you dare enter there,  
I will leave the door open.  
And when my lady is sleeping  
then come to me." "Be assured of this,"

<sup>89</sup> de Bundel, p. 30.

<sup>90</sup> English translation, Johnson & Claassens. In this book, it is a translation of lines 1722-1729, p. 122-123.

spoke Walewein, "I shall come."<sup>91</sup>

Ydeine first declines Walewein advances but she does not do this very convincingly. The passage mirrors the one where the damsel first declines Mordred but then gives in, twice. Just like the damsel, Ydeine mentions practical problems, including a similar dangerous location for the sexual activities, in this case, the room of the queen. The knights, both Walewein and Mordred, can still court the damsel, if they overcome these practical problems. The knights are presented with an extra challenge, which seems to make Mordred, but also the satirically presented Walewein, all the more eager to court the damsel. Neither damsel makes any references to moral or religious reasons to abhor from the sexual activities.

There are also some differences between the damsel and Ydeine. Ydeine is considerably more easily persuaded than the damsel. Perhaps, this is part due to the satirical nature of the *Wrake van Ragisel*. I think Ydeine can be considered as a funny character throughout the, also funny, novel and thus her behavior can be more gratuitous than the behavior of a damsel acting in the not satirical *Lanceloet*. Ydeine is even the one who suggests the manner by which Walewein can come visit her. In the *Lanceloet* passage, Mordred comes up with this plan.

While I think Ydeine is the over-the-top version, the damsel is a similar character. She is framed as someone impressed by male beauty and prowess and thus eager to engage in sexual encounters with attractive knights. Her objections only being concerned with practicalities and risks. Just as the behavior of Ydeine<sup>92</sup>, I think her behavior will generally be frowned upon and there is a textual clue for this: the narrative ends with the claim that her boyfriend is from now on unable to love, and thus unable to love her. Her behavior, it is suggested, has cut her off from love. But the evil nature of the knight Mordred should also be considered.

### Mordred

Mordred is not a knight of benevolent character, which contrast him to his brother Walewein, who is chivalrous and always willing to help those in need.<sup>93</sup> When the four brothers of Walewein are introduced, a great many lines are devoted to describing Mordred's unkind and cruel nature.

5221-5232

*Mordret was van hem allen te samen*

Mordred was of all of them

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<sup>91</sup> English translation, Johnson & Claassens. In this book, it is a translation of lines 1754-1767, p. 124-125.

<sup>92</sup> There are numerous textual clues for this, most prominently Waleweins 'outburst' at the end of the novel, and his subsequent unwillingness to forgive her:

3de boek, 13099-13103 &	13142-13148, ed.- Jonckbloet
- 'Ay mi!' sprac hi, 'live God,	'Ydeine, ic segt hier u,
Hoe dul es hi ende wel sot,	Gi hebt alsoe hier u geproeft,
Die wiven geloeft nembermere!	Dat ghi geen orkenscap behoeft,
Ay,' sprac hi, 'ic vergaf u lange ere	Want u gewerke provet wale.'
Ene valsce daet, quade vrouwe;	Ydeine sprac met sereger tale
	Ende smeecte ende bat omtrint,
	Maer en besloet haer niet en twint.

<sup>93</sup> 5105-5158.

<i>Die smaelst ridder van lichamen,</i>	The knight smallest of body,
<i>Mar die archste ridder daer bi</i>	But also the meanest knight,
<i>Van allen broderen so was hi.</i>	Of all the brothers was he.
<i>Nochtan haddi genoech stoutheden,</i>	Nevertheless he was very brave,
<i>Mar dat was meer ter quaetheden</i>	But he used it more for bad
<i>Dan ter doeget dat hi des plach.</i>	Then for good.
<i>Nochtan sloech hi menegen sconen slach.</i>	Nevertheless he struck many to death.
<i>Hi was pijnlic ende fel</i>	He was malicious and cruel
<i>Ende daer af gewone wel</i>	And because of that, it was his habit
<i>Dat hi noit sint dat hi ridder wart</i>	That he never since he was a knight
<i>Noit minne ne droech ten goeden ridder wart.</i>	Fostered affection for a good knight.

The text then also mentions his very negative role in the Arthurian legend.<sup>94</sup> He ends up being one of the main architects of Arthurs downfall, as well as his murderer. When Agravein tells Arthur of the intimate relation between Lancelot and Guenevere, Mordred is present (as is Gurrees) and corroborates the story. It is also Agravein, Mordred and Gurrees who spy on Lancelot and Guenevere and confront them in her bedroom.<sup>95</sup> Mordred's sharp dismissal of the relationship between Lancelot and Guenevere can be contrasted to his own sexual adventures. He clearly does not find it problematic to court a damsel who has a boyfriend.

When reading the introduction of the character, it is clear that the text frames Mordred as an unscrupulous man. I would analyze his unkindness as an essential characteristic of his persona. Another of his characteristics however, is one that is generally positive for a knight: Mordred does excel in the area of prowess. His introduction makes clear he is very brave (and beautiful), even if he uses it for evil endeavors. His introduction ends with something I interpret as a warning:

5244-5249	
<i>Nochtan was hi tallen sinen daegen</i>	Nevertheless he was, for his whole life
<i>Herde scone man van lichamen</i>	A very beautiful man of body,
<i>Ende van leden bede tesamen</i>	And of limb as well,
<i>Ende begonste sijn ridderscap antieren</i>	And he started his life as a knight,
<i>In zer(.....) manieren,</i>	In an excellent way,
<i>Mar het gedeurde onlange stont.</i>	But that did not last very long.

Mordred started his career as a knight in an excellent way, but this did not take long. Prowess and good looks might reap benefit on the short term, and bring temporary glory, but in the long run, one does not win out. In this passage, this dualistic tendency is also visible: while he is successful in persuading the damsel, it ends in conflict and, at least in the eyes of her boyfriend, to dishonor for Mordred. He is able to 'save' the situation because of his fighting skills, but the end of the passage does give a clue that such a course of action does not bear well on the future, and we do know that Mordred's behavior will eventually turn out bad for him.

<sup>94</sup> 5238-5240.

<sup>95</sup> 4de boek, 4039-4495, ed.- Jonckbloet.

Guerin has a different, more positive interpretation of this scene, reading from the *Lancelot en prose*. Guerin thinks Mordred is here, though hesitantly, still portrayed as a good knight. She points out that Mordred does not commit undue cruelty, for he lets the dwarf live, and he spares his opponent. Described positively here, Guerin thinks that there is a turning point only later in the story, when Lancelot and Mordred hear an awful premonition about their negative impact on the Arthurian kingdom, which prompts Mordred to kill the hermit upon hearing this. It is then, that Mordred's behavior starts deteriorating.<sup>96</sup>

I do not see textual arguments for this more positive reading of the behavior of Mordred in this scene in the *Lancelot*. His only reason for not killing the dwarf is being interrupted by a knight<sup>97</sup>, and he does not kill the boyfriend only because the boyfriend immediately yields and agrees to Mordred's demands. As I will explain in the next section, this is not an act of kindness on Mordred's part, but an emasculation of the boyfriend. As is mentioned in his introduction, Mordred is a cruel knight, and this is evident from his adventure.

### The boyfriend

Another important character in this passage is the boyfriend of the damsel. The damsel almost immediately refers to her boyfriend in the conversation with Mordred, but he himself arrives only after Mordred has already been with the damsel. He is completely unaware of the danger Mordred presents to him, he is even doing him great honor, because of the deeds done by his brother Gariet. Within the theme of dramatic irony, he is the one who is unknowing. Being maliciously cheated, one might expect the knight to be described sympathetically, but this is not the case. His failure to guard his damsel while he is away, is only repeated when he also fails to defend his honor in combat. And despite his promise to kill Mordred or die, he goes back on his words when he is defeated. He is, to use a name from the French Fabliaux: cuckolded.<sup>98</sup>

As Besamusca has pointed out, the idea and tests to prove (in)fideliy are numerus throughout Arthurian Literature. From all the knights of the round table, only Craddocke seems to have a faithful wife.<sup>99</sup> But the knight in this passage seems to be especially lacking in watchfulness, as he is not even the least bit suspicious when he finds a strange man with his girlfriend. He leaves them alone and gives Mordred ample time to persuade her. Then, when he finds out about the transgression, he is unable to defend his honor in combat, thus failing in every aspect.

### Analysis and conclusion of the Mordred episode

What does this passage suggest for norms concerning sexuality, courting and consent? Let us first enquire into the concept of consent. The position of Mordred toward the sexual encounter is clear: he wishes it to take place. The position of the knight is also clear: he wished that the sexual encounter had not taken place. What about the damsel? Looking at it from a

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<sup>96</sup> Guerin, p. 34-40.

<sup>97</sup> 5280-5285, the dwarf starts shouting when Mordred threatens to kill him.

<sup>98</sup> See for example: Eichmann and Duval.

<sup>99</sup> Besamusca (2010), p. 289-299.

modern context in 2021, this is not a situation of consent. All her protests are completely disregarded and she is only finally persuaded, after Mordred has repeatedly requested her.

In this section, I have compared the damsel to the character of Ydeine. The character of Ydeine is consenting to various proposals of courting in the *Wrake*-text. When Ydeine refuses, it is made quite clear that she is misrepresenting her wishes for the sake of courtliness, as visible in the aforementioned passage. She also conceals her true acts and intentions more often in the text (when Walewein finally realizes this, this is also his reason to send her away).<sup>100</sup> This damsel behaves a lot like Ydeine and I think a medieval listener would have assessed her similarly. I have also mentioned in the introduction to this chapter that a situation of rape in the Middle Ages would more generally entail physical violence, and the leading away of a damsel, for it to be recognized as such. I thus do not find it likely a medieval listener would have experienced this passage as rape, where a 21<sup>st</sup> century reader would probably see this as such.

This however does not at all mean that Mordred's behavior in this passage can now be considered good. From the narrative structure within the Mordred-passage, I derive an argument for the position that this is actually described as bad behavior. In this passage, bad behavior pays off. At the start of the passage, Mordred kills a dwarf, is reprimanded for it by a knight, but then he defeats and kills the knight. This is odd. It is clear the knight had the moral upper hand: Mordred's honor should not allow him to attack weaker opponents. In combat, it is expected that the one who has the moral upper hand also wins the fight. In this passage however, this is not the case. Mordred wins. I am thus led to the conclusion that when Mordred wins the second combat, the one against the *amie* of the damsel, he also wins despite his bad behavior: bad behavior pays. The second winner of this combat is the damsel: she wins forgiveness. Her 'bad' behavior has thus also paid:

5507-5511

<i>ende Mordret sprac: 'Ic wille gi meer doet.</i>	And Mordred said: 'I want you to do more.
<i>Ic wil dat gi vergheft uwen evelen moet</i>	I want you to give up any will that you
<i>Deser joncfrouwen die hier es.'</i>	have for
<i>ende Hi sprac: 'Ic bem gereet des,'</i>	The damsel that is here.'
<i>Dat hit vergave hare daer,</i>	And he said: 'I am prepared to do that,'
	So that he forgave her,

Though Mordred and the damsel are the 'winners' of this passage, the text seems to suggest that they will not be winners very long. For the damsel, her luck is very brief, as in 5512 it continues:

5512-5514

<i>Mar dat gelof brac hi daer naer,</i>	But that promise he later broke,
<i>Want hise in sinen gedachte</i>	Because he, in his heart,
<i>Noit daer naer meer minnen en mochte.</i>	Could never love again after that.

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<sup>100</sup> See footnote 92, of this thesis.



The moralization of this passage seems to be related to the general moralization of Mordred's character: though prowess and good looks might reap benefits in the short term, they will not pay off in the end. Mordred and the damsel should have shown more restraint in their behavior; the knight should have not been so easily fooled. The rules considering courting and sexuality are clear: this is how *not* to do it.

The scene in Mordred's adventure seems a pastiche of the worst type of behavior concerning courting and sexuality. Mordred is a sexual predator with no remorse, the damsel is too easily persuaded and the knight too easily fooled, creating a cuckold-type story. It seems this story is less aimed at reflection or discussion, but more on the creation of a clear negative image of a situation of adultery: this is not what one wants.

## Agravein

In this section, I will briefly mention the adventures of Agravein, as the perspective switches to Agravein after Mordred has left the damsel and her distraught boyfriend. I will summarize his adventures and highlight some passages that are relevant to the questions posed in this chapter. However, as Agravein does not engage romantically or sexually with damsels, this section will be a lot shorter than the others.

Like Walewein and Mordred, Agravein is on a quest looking for Lancelot, when he encounters a valuable tent. He finds a dead knight and grieving bystanders, and he sets out to avenge the knight: to thus kill the knight Dryas. Agravein fights and defeats Dryas and brings his head to the people in the tent. Despite being wounded and in no shape to fight, he again climbs the mountain and blows a horn, knowing that the knight Sornahan will come to avenge his brother Dryas. The wounded Agravein loses to Sornahan, who wants to decapitate him, but is persuaded by a damsel not to: she also informs Sornahan that Agravein is the brother of Walewein.<sup>101</sup> Agravein then ends up in prison.<sup>102</sup>

Although Agravein encounters a few damsels and even has interaction with some of them, he engages with none of them romantically or sexually.<sup>103</sup> He also does not get propositioned by a damsel. His introduction makes clear this probably has to do with his lack of attention for the subject of love and courting.

5163-5165, 5169-5173

*Ende goet ridder genoech mede,  
Ne hadde gedaen sine pijnliche.  
(...)*

*Hi was sonder genadichede  
Ende sonder enichge minne mede  
Ende sonder enichgen goeden sede.*

And he was a very good knight,  
Except for his evil nature.

He knew no mercy  
And he was without any feelings of love  
And without any good quality.

In the *Lancelot en prose* (in the part that is missing in het *Lancelot Compilation*) Agravein attempts to rape a damsel, but he stops when he finds out her leg is mangy, and then he insults her. She predicts he will be punished, and this also happens. Walewein also scorns him for this behavior.<sup>104</sup> It seems that Agravein is so evil, vain and loveless, that he pays little to no attention to damsels, and when he does, it is not out of love.

The narrative is, however, not completely consistent in portraying him as ‘just’ evil and uncaring. In the text, he does attempt to comfort a damsel. He even lets her address him with ‘du’, even though that could be interpreted as an insult. You would expect the vain Agravein to quickly take insult, and respond to that.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> The damsel uses a so-called *don contraignant*. This will be explained in chapter 3, p. 66, of this thesis. 5981-5986 and Brandsma (1992), p. 111.

<sup>102</sup> 5531-6097.

<sup>103</sup> For example, in line 5507, 5807 and 5974.

<sup>104</sup> Brandsma (1992), p. 107.

<sup>105</sup> Lulofs, p. 71-92.

5876-5878, 5989-5910

*ende Agraveyn sprac nocht oe jegen  
Die joncfrouwe, als die gerne hare  
Troeste van haren mesbare.*

And Agravein, at that moment, spoke to  
The damsel, as he would very much like  
to  
Comfort her sadness.

((...)) In the intermittent section Agravein talks to  
a dwarf and prepares for the battle against  
Sornahan)

*ende Alse die joncfrouwe wart geware  
Dat hi wech voer, si voer nare,  
Ropende ende wenende al in een  
Ende so drove dat si sceen  
Altemale uten sinne wesen,  
Ende si seide na desen:  
'Du heves minen here doet, waer gastu?  
God ne moete niet gedoegen nu  
Dune moets doet sijn ocht verwonnen al  
Eer dese dach inde nemen sal.'*  
*mer Acgraveyn sweech al stille  
Ende liet hare seggen haren wille*

And as the damsel noticed  
That he was leaving, she walked after  
him,  
Continuously shouting and crying  
And so sad that it seemed  
That she was completely out of her mind,  
And she said after this:  
'You, who has killed my lord, where are  
you going? (using 'du', instead of the  
polite 'ghi')  
God should not allow  
That you will not be killed or completely  
defeated  
Before this day will be over.'  
But Agravein was quiet  
And just let her have her say

In this passage, Agravein starts by behaving courtly, he does address the sad damsel, but he seems to become distracted, for in the next lines (omitted here) the damsel is no longer mentioned and Agravein is preparing for battle. Only when he tries to drive away, thus leaving the sad damsel and having been unable to cheer her up, he once again talks to the damsel. Not because he wanted to himself, but because she addresses him (quite sternly). He is again unable to provide her with comfort and gives no response to her grievances. However, he also does not respond negatively. He neither strikes nor insults her. Nevertheless, her negative predictions for him bear truth, he is indeed defeated, and thus, his uncourtly behavior to her avenged.

In this adventure, Agravein is not very successful in his endeavors as a knight. While he does commit one good deed, he slays Dryas, he is overwhelmed in the second fight and subsequently captured.<sup>106</sup> He is also unable to adequately respond to grievances voiced by a damsel. Having committed one good deed however, he is one notch above his brother Mordred, who has only created trouble in his adventure. Perhaps, this is also the reason that Agravein's adventures, while he is the oldest of the Walewein brothers, are narrated after Mordred's adventures (who is the youngest). In the character introductions at the start of the brother sequence Agravein, as the oldest, is mentioned first. I find it plausible that the narrative sequence of the brothers in the brother sequence (Mordred, Agravein, Gurrees and

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<sup>106</sup> Brandsma (1992), p. 111-112.

then Gariet) is deliberate; as though to create a ranking from this worst to best. This is something I will also explore in the next section. Here, it suffices to say that Agravein is more successful in his knightly endeavors than Mordred.

## Gurrees

After Agravein has been carried off to prison, the perspective switches to Gurrees. The viewpoint stays with him for quite a while, for about 2500 lines. In his adventure, he tries to court three damsels. He meets the knight Sagrimor and, as also Gurrees ends up in Sornahan's prison, later Agravein. It is a rich story in which all kinds of elements play a role. In this chapter, I will look at the elements connected to sexuality, courting and consent. Again, my method will be the close reading of passages.

In this section, I will mention the details surrounding the contact between Gurrees and the last damsel he encounters (necessary for close reading of the passage). Then, I will make a character sketch of the two main characters in this part of the adventure: Gurrees and the damsel. Their behavior and the results of this behavior can be used to analyze the norms concerning sexuality, courting and consent arising from the brother sequence. I will relate their personae to other characters in the *Lancelot Compilation*, more specifically: I will relate both Gurrees and the damsel to Lancelot. I will devote explicit attention to the rape scene in the text. The section will end with an analysis: what normative message considering sexuality, courting and consent arrives from this passage of the brother sequence, in its relation to the *Lancelot Compilation*?

Even though my focus is on the final damsel Gurrees encounters, his behavior thusly can only be analyzed within the context of his previous rejection by other damsels. Therefore, I will start with a summary of his previous adventures, supplemented with passages in which the damsels voice their rejections and the reasons for the rejection. In his adventures, Gurrees shows a development, but a development toward the negative: he becomes less and less of a courtly lover, being called out for previous behavior.

### The (romantic) adventures of Gurrees

Gurrees' adventure starts ominously as he meets a donkey driver who immediately runs off, in great fear of the knight (who is in fact not a threat to him). Gurrees then hears cries for help and saves an old man who he brings home safely. There, he meets his wife and daughter who are very pleased their father and husband is saved and pledge Gurrees their obedience. The very beautiful daughter mentions:

6259, 6266-6268 (full quote in chapter one)<sup>107</sup>

here 'Ic bem u sculdich sere te minnen,  
(...)

*Nu biddic u dat gi over mi gebiet.  
Ic ne sout willen weder seggen niet  
Van dien des ic mochte doen, here.'*

Lord, 'I owe it to you to love you very much,  
(...)

Now I ask you to take command over me  
I will not refuse you anything, lord,  
That is within my powers.'

Gurrees, who will show himself to be quite fixed on the pursuit of love throughout the story, asks her for this. When she learns of his high status, the damsel, who is a 'maegt' (6287) immediately refuses.

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<sup>107</sup> Mentioned on page 23, of this thesis.

6295-6298

*'Ja,' sprac si, 'Ic hadde sot gesijn,  
Haddic u gegeven mine minne,  
Bedi git sijt te rike man, als ict kinne,  
Te minnen sulke joncfrouwe als ic bem.'*

'Yes,' she said, 'I would have been a fool,  
Had I given you my love,  
For you are too important a man, as far as I  
know,  
To love a damsel such as myself.'

She is suggesting a man such as Gurrees will not want to pursue a long-term relationship with the damsel and that he is thus looking for an incidental sexual encounter. The damsel then switches the topic to discuss a knight she is romantically interested in: Lancelot. Gurrees makes clear that he considers Walewein a better knight:

6309-6312

*Ic soude seggen openbare  
Dat geen beter man ne leeft  
Heden, die ridders name heeft,  
Sonder Walewein mijn broeder allene,*

I would say explicitly  
That no better man is alive  
Today, who is a knight, (*meaning: that there  
is no better knight*)  
Expect only my brother Walewein,

She is however smitten with Lancelot, whom she saw once:

6328-6337

*want Hi dunct mi die scoenste ridder sijn  
Die noit en saegen die oegen mijn.  
ende Vergave God dat hi nu ter tijt  
Also gesont ware alse gi sijt  
Ende hi mi also gewaerlike woude  
Minnen als icken gherne minnen soude,  
Also helpe mi God, ic en souden dan  
Wisselen willen om genen man,  
ja Om vrouwe te sine geheellike  
Van alden lande van erderike.'*

Because to me he is the most beautiful  
knight  
I have ever laid eyes on.  
And if God would give that he would now  
Be as healthy as you are  
And he would want me just as sincerely  
To love as I would gladly love him,  
So, help me God, I would not then  
Trade him for any man, or, yes, for being  
The lady of all the lands in the world.

The damsel clearly chooses Lancelot as a romantic partner over Gurrees, and also, over Walewein. Their conversation is interrupted by the donkey driver, who has lost his donkey due to his fright, but now receives a horse on Gurrees' request. Gurrees achieves some heroic feats in battle and then leaves the damsel. Even promising her to forward her words to Lancelot, if he sees him.<sup>108</sup>

Gurrees then encounters three women, who invite him to dinner. The youngest is the daughter of the lord of Bresteles, who is very sad because she is married to a jealous man. She is repeatedly humiliated by him and this has worsened after she publicly compared him to Lancelot: a comparison that was greatly in Lancelot's favor. Gurrees promises to help her.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> 6550.

<sup>109</sup> 6532-6790.

Before Gurrees can assist her, however, he needs to help the oldest women of the three. Threatened by force, she has promised her daughter to a knight who has maltreated and murdered his wife in the past and therefore she asks Gurrees to help her avoid the wedding. He promises to do so and indeed defeats the knight. Alone with the damsel he has just saved, he asks her for love, something she refuses.<sup>110</sup>

7128-7135, 7144-7155, 7180-7189

ende Hi sach optie joncfrouwe binnen desen,  
Die hem so scone dochte wesen  
Dat hem wonder dochte van hare.

ende Hi versochtse van minnen daer nare.  
Si sprac: 'Here, na dien dat gi  
Mi versoect van minnen, wie siedi?  
Nochtan en weet ic niet wel  
Ocht gi met mi hout u spel.'

((...) Gurrees explains who he is.)

Ic hebbe genoech gehoren  
Spreken van u hier te voren.  
Ic kinne wel dat gi goet ridder sijt  
Ende gi hebt een scone lief nu ter tijt  
Ende hovardich ende so hoge vrouwe  
Dat ic wel weet bi mire trouwe  
Dat gijt niet en sout willen laeten om mi,  
Ende gi versocht mi van minnen, bedi  
Dat gi mi wout proven.' Ende hi seide doe  
Dat hi geen lief en hadt, ende hi swort toe,  
Ende dat hise utermaten gerne soude  
Minnen op dat sijt also woude.

((...) Gurrees further assures the damsel he loves his previous girlfriend no longer, leading the damsel to believe his love for her would also be temporary).

here 'Ic hebbe wel daer mede gevaren  
Dat gijt mi hebt geseit, tuwaren.  
want Ne haddic niet geweten die waerhede,  
Ic hadde u gemint mede,  
al Daer ic grote sotheit an hadde gedaen.  
want Sekerliken ende sonder waen  
Gi sout mi hebben gelaeten also gi  
Uwen wille hadt gehadt met mi,  
Also gi die andre liet, ende bi desen  
Haddic sere bedroegen gewesen.'

And in the meantime, he looked at  
the damsel,  
Who looked so beautiful to him  
That he was amazed by it.  
And he asked her for her love after  
that.  
She said: 'Lord, since you  
Have asked me for love, who are  
you?

I am not sure if you are making a  
fool of me.'

(...)

I have heard enough  
Spoken of you before this.  
I know you are a good knight  
And that you have a beautiful  
girlfriend at this moment,  
A proud lady of noble birth,  
one that you would not leave for  
me,  
But that you asked for love me  
because

You wanted to test me.' And he  
said then

That he had no girlfriend, and he  
also swore an oath on it,  
And (*he said*) that he would very  
much

Love her if she would also want it.  
(...)

Lord, 'I have been lucky  
That you have told me that (*who  
he is*).

Because, had I not known the  
truth,

I would have loved you too,  
And I would have acted foolishly.

<sup>110</sup> 6972-7127.



Because certainly and without a doubt  
 You would have also left me,  
 when you  
 Had made love with me,  
 As you have dumped the other  
 girl, and by this,  
 I would have been profoundly  
 deceived.'

The damsel refuses and explains her reasons. Even though it becomes more and more clear that Gurrees is asking for incidental sex, at the same location where she has just been saved from her captor, the damsel steers the conversation toward love and a proper relationship, scorning Gurrees for the dishonor he has brought another damsel. Gurrees then switches to an even more direct approach.

7190-7197

<i>joncfrouwe</i>	<i>'Al dat gi segt ne diedt niet nu, Ic moet minen wille hebben van u.</i>	Damsel, 'All that you say is of no use, I need to have my way with you.
<i>want</i>	<i>Wi sijn hier allene, ic ende ghi, Ende verre van lieden, dat siedi.'</i>	Because we are alone, me and you, And far from people, as you can see.'
<i>en trouwen</i>	<i>'Here, wildi dat met crachte doen?' 'Nenic,' antworde die baroen, 'Mar ic bidde u vriendelike Dat gijt wilt doen goedertierlike.'</i>	'Lord, do you wish to do that ( <i>make love</i> ) with force?' Really, 'No', said the nobleman, 'But I ask you kindly That you will do it willingly.'

The damsel is barely able to persuade him not to rape her. Her clear refusals only seem to vex Gurrees. Her final argument seems to persuade him: she asks him if he would want to make love when he was sure the other party was unwilling, something he denies.

7205-7210

<i>here</i>	<i>'Nu segt mi,' sprac si thant, 'Es enichge joncfrouwe in dit lant Ocht in erderike binnen Die gi bi minnen wout minnen Ende gi wel wist dat si u Haette ende onwart hadde nu?' 'Sekerlike neent,' seide hi.</i>	Lord, 'Now tell me,' she then said, 'Is there any damsel in this land Or on the world Who you wanted to make love to from love While you knew that she hated you and despised you?' ( <i>meaning: would you want to make love to a damsel being aware that she hated you during?</i> ) 'Certainly not,' he said.
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She tells him then that she cannot love him, as she is thus unwilling. Because he has courted, and presumably slept with, this high-born lady and abandoned her, she even looks down on him. She explains that Gurrees' conduct towards women is wrong. He feigns true love when he is looking for incidental sexual encounters:

7238-7250

*Also wive te bedriegene  
Met scoenre spraken ende met liegene  
In gelike van vraye minnen,  
Bedi men machse lichte verwinnen.  
Ende mi dunct dat gi mocht mere  
Daran scanden bejagen ende onnere  
Dan eren, na dien dat ic merke,  
In te doene sulke gewerke.'*

To deceive women  
With sweet talk and lies  
and the outward appearance of true love,  
as they are easy to win with that.  
And I think that you will  
Receive more shame and dishonor of that  
Than honor, as I know,  
Through doing such things.

The damsel attributes a certain weakness to women, a weakness for smooth talking and love. According to her, Gurrees has taken advantage of this weakness when courting his previous girlfriend. Gurrees has now tried to persuade her for more than a hundred lines, and she has extensively voiced and substantiated her refusal. Only when she mentions she loves another, he finally succumbs and apologizes. The damsel immediately (*tehand*) accepts his apology.

7279-7293

*ende Hi sprac: 'Joncfrouwe, ic sect u.  
Allen begerdic u nu also sere  
Als ic enich wijf dede noit ere,  
Gi hebt u so wel van zulken saken  
Ontsculdicht jegen mi met spraken,  
Ic ne versoeke u niet vort an tuwaren  
Van stucken die u moegen verswaren,  
Ende seggu tote heden den dach  
Van al den mageden die ic oyt sach  
Dat ic noit gene en vant sekerlike  
Die sprac also getrouwelike  
Also gi hebt gedaen, ende ic bidde u  
Dat gi die mesdaet mi vergevet nu  
7292 Vanden worden die ic nu hebbe gehadt  
Jegen u,' ende si dede tehand dat.*

And he said: 'Damsel, I tell you.  
Even if I would now very much desire  
you,  
As I have never desired a woman before,  
You have justified yourself so well in this,  
against me,  
That I will, from now on, not ask you  
For things that may displease you,  
And I tell you that till this day  
Of all the virgins that I ever saw  
That I have certainly never found one  
That spoke so sincerely  
As you have done, and I ask you  
That you will forgive me for the  
reprehensible words that I have spoken  
To you,' and she immediately did that.

The two then return home, and Gurrees delivers the damsel to her mother as promised. Apparently, the damsel feels Gurrees has not lost his honor, for she speaks very favorably about him to her mother. She even seems to shift the dynamic of power between them, forcing him to stay and even stating she is willing to sacrifice a great deal to make him stay. Apparently, she feels his valor in saving her life wins out over his previous misbehavior toward her, and he becomes an honored guest.

7304-7313, 7330-7335, 7349-7352

The damsel says about Gurrees to her mother:

*Van mi ne maket bliscap negene,  
Mar van desen ridder allene,  
Die bi sire groter doeget sonder waen*

Do not make me the target of your joy,  
But make it this knight,

<p><i>Doer u ende mi hevet gedaen Wine mochtent verdienen te gere uren. want Hi heeft hem geset in avonturen Om u ende om mi heden den dach, Nochtan dat hi mi noit ne sach. Dar om laet ons pensen tavont mere Hem te diennen ende te doen eere.</i></p> <p>(...) The damsel wants Gurrees to stay: <i>Ende seide tot hem: 'Wat soes gesciet, U ontseggen ne helpt u niet.</i></p> <p><i>want Gi moet hier bliven met crachte nu, Wildi oft ne wilt, dat seggic u.'</i></p> <p><i>ende 'Ic sal bliven,' antworde Gurrees, 'Op dat ic gaen mach alst mijn wille es.'</i></p> <p>(...) The damsel wants Gurrees to stay longer: <i>want 'So helpe mi God in goeder trouwe, Ic hadde liever dat ic te hande Verlore een deel van minen lande Dan gi tavont sout sceden van mi.'</i></p>	<p>Who, no doubt, by his great bravery Has for you and me accomplished That what we could never deserve. Because he has risked his life For you and me today, Even though he has never seen me before. Therefore let us try even more To serve him and to do him honor.</p> <p>And she said to him: 'Whatever happens, It will not help you to refuse this. Because you have to stay here by force, Whether you want it or not, I tell you.' And 'I will stay,' answered Gurrees, 'If I can go when that is my will.'</p> <p>Because 'So help me God in good faith, I would rather now Lose a part of my land Than that you would part from me.'</p>
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Gurrees has to leave to save the daughter of the lord of Brestele, however. Before he leaves, he informs the mother of the damsel that he had tried to court her and was refused. The mother thinks this to be very smart of the damsel.

7382-7389

<p><i>Ende Gurrees hadde doen verstaen Der vrouwen hoet was vergaen Tusschen harre dochter ende hem, binnen Dien dat hise versochte van minnen Ende wat antworde si hem gaf, Die vrouwe was herde blide daer af Ende si seide tote Gurrees: 'Dat si vroet es, here, sijt seker des,</i></p>	<p>And Gurrees had told The lady, how it had been Between her daughter and him, when He had proposed her And the answer that she gave him, The lady was very happy about that And she said to Gurrees: 'That she is smart, lord, is certain,</p>
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He leaves the damsel, and in his next adventure he meets Sagrimor and together they defeat the knight who was wronging the daughter of the lord of Brestele. There are no romantic interests for Gurrees in this adventure. After the successful completion, Gurrees and Sagrimor run into Agloval's sister and Sagrimor goes with her. Gurrees is now on his own and encounters four tents. This leads into the next adventure, one where Gurrees seems to lose sight of the knightly values connected to courting he has previously demonstrated.

### Gurrees and the damsel in the tent

After his encounters in the previous adventure, it seems that Gurrees is now taken by sexual frustration. He behaved courtly toward the first damsel, but he second damsel was barely able to persuade him not to have his way with her out there in the open. Gurrees seems to become

increasingly more frustrated and aggressive in his attempts to secure sexual interaction. He then encounters four tents. He is looking for a place to sleep and decides he would like to sleep in one of these tents. In the first tent, he finds food and a meal, the second has a dwarf in it, the third houses two sleeping damsels and the fourth, a lady and her husband, but Gurrees is unaware the husband is present.

7882-7889

*Ende ginc in een ander, daer hi sach  
Ene joncfrouwe die bi haren lieve lach  
In een bedde ende hem dochte das  
Dattie joncfrouwe herde scone was  
Daer hise sach liggen, mare  
Des ridders en wart hi niet geware,  
Bedi dat op sijn anscijn lach  
Een orcussijn, dat hine niet ne sach.*

And he went into another (*tent*), where he saw  
A damsel who was laying with her lover  
In a bed and it seemed to him  
That the damsel was very beautiful  
He saw her lying there, but  
The knight he did not see,  
Because there was on his face,  
A pillow, so that he could not see him.

It is implicit, but I assume the room he just ate in does not have a bed in it, and Gurrees therefore does not consider it as a place to sleep. His decision leads him to choose the tent of the damsel that, he thinks, is sleeping alone.

7898-7903

*ende Doe pensede hi dat best ware  
Dat hi ginge slapen bi hare  
Die hi allene liggen liet.  
Biden II joncfrouwen ne woudi liggen niet,  
Noch biden naen des gelike,  
Ende hi moeste slapen indelike.*

And he thought that it was best  
That he would sleep with her  
Whom he left sleeping alone.  
He did not want to lie with the two  
damsels,  
Also not with the dwarf,  
And in any case he had to sleep.

He takes his clothes off and enters her bed:

7910-7922

*Als hi die kersen uut hadde gedaen,  
Dat hem tlicht niet in doegen soude slaen.  
ende Hi ginc liggen bider joncfrouwen siden,  
Die daer of niet wiste tien tiden.  
ende Als hi was gelegen ende sine besief,  
Si waende dat hadde geweest haer lief.  
Si begonsten te helsen vriendelike  
Ende si custen diere gelike  
Ende dede al sinen wille daer.  
ende Als si lange hadden gespeelt daer naer  
Begonste slapen die joncfrouwe,  
Diene pensede om gene ontrouwe;  
So dede oc Gurrees an dander side.*

When he had extinguished the  
candles,  
So that the light would not shine into  
this eyes,  
And he lay down at the damsel's side,  
Who noticed nothing of this  
And as he was lying there and she felt  
him,  
She thought that he was her lover.  
She embraced him in a friendly  
manner  
And she kissed him similarly  
And made love to him there.

And as they had played for a long time  
thereafter  
The damsel, who did not even think of  
infidelity, fell asleep,  
And so did Gurrees on the other side.

Gurrees is 'finally' welcomed with open arms, something he has been trying to achieve for a while, but has, until now, been unsuccessful in. There has been a mistake, however: the damsel is not aware she is sleeping with him; she thinks she is sleeping with her husband.<sup>111</sup> Her husband awakes and is less than pleased. He is so sad that he *'hi uut sinen sinne waent varen'/That he thought he would lose his mind* (7931). The knight throws Gurrees out of the bed and angrily holds his naked wife by her braids (that she will cut off later in the story).

This passage has a parallel much later in the *Lanceloet*, when Guenevere discovers Lancelot with Pelles' daughter. As in this passage, they are in the same room and Lancelot, also a faithful lover, is completely unaware he has slept with the wrong person (*'Hi waende in goeder trouwen, Dat hadde geweest sijn vrouwe.'*/In good faith he thought, That it had been his lady (35595-35596, ed.- Jonckbloet). Like the damsel, he is barely clothed and on display for the others present. This similarly causes him great confusion and discomfort. Guinevere experiences a similar sensation to that of the knight, for also she *'Woude uten sinne varen bedi.'*/Wanted to lose her mind because of this (35664, ed.- Jonckbloet).<sup>112</sup>

In the passage, Gurrees then takes his sword and attacks the damsel's husband, who is unarmed. He immediately kills him, causing the damsel great sorrow.

7956-7960, 7966-7982

*Ende hi viel doet ter erde.  
Die joncfrouwe die dat sach, mesberde  
Sere ende dreef den meesten rouwe  
Die enich sins mochte driven joncfrouwe,  
Ende si viel in onmacht tier stede  
(...)  
'Ay, haer riddre, hoe hebdi  
Jegen Gode verraden mi  
Ende jegen die werelt des gelike,  
Die minen here doet hebt dus jamerlike.  
Nu segt mi waer bi ghi comen sijt  
In dit lant nu ter tijt  
Niet dan om mi te nemene van hemelrike  
Die bliscap ende van erderike:  
Die bliscap van erderike daer bi  
Dat gi minen man hebt genomen mi;  
ende Die bliscap van hemelrike sonder waen  
Naemdi mi met dat gi mi hebt gedaen  
Breken die helege wet*

And he fell death on the ground.  
The damsel who saw this, wailed  
Very much and was overcome with the  
most sorrow  
That could overcome a damsel in any  
way possible  
And she passed out at that moment  
(...)  
'Ay, lord knight, how badly have you  
betrayed me in the face of God and the  
world,  
You who have so sadly killed my lord.  
Now tell me why have you come  
In this land at this time  
If it was not to take from me joy, both in  
heaven and on earth:  
Joy on earth you have taken from me by  
That you have taken my husband from  
me;

<sup>111</sup> 'hare getrouwede man', r. 7925.

<sup>112</sup> 2<sup>de</sup> boek, 35621-35709, ed.- Jonckbloet.

*Die Onse Here hevet geset  
Van te houdene dat huwelike.  
Dus hebbedi mi in al gescaedt swaerlike.'*

And joy in heaven without a doubt  
You took by making me  
Break that sacred vow  
Postulated by our lord  
Not to break wedding vows.  
Thus, you have greatly damaged me in  
every way.

The damsel accuses Gurrees of doing wrong, and she states both the heavenly and worldly rules that he has violated. She is very upset, claims that she is sadder than any damsel ever, and she starts kissing her husband's bloody dead lips, praising him and even forgetting she is naked.<sup>113</sup> In the Pelles' daughter sequence, Lancelot also forgets to put on clothes before acting, after he has been dismissed by the Queen '*Mar hi ginc alsoe naect of/But he went off naked, (35673, ed.- Jonckbloet)*'. Similarly, he is completely distraught: '*Hi hadde den rouwe soe groet, Dat hi wel woude wesen doet,/He was overcome with so much sorrow, That he wished to be dead,*' (35693-35694, ed.- Jonckbloet).

Meanwhile, Gurrees is focused on something else entirely. With the husband out of the way, he now wishes to court the damsel, something she is - surprisingly - not interested in. He forces her to come with him, attributing his actions to love:

8004-8010

*ende Hi seide: 'Dat ontseggen ne help u niet,  
Ic minne u soe seer, wats soes gesciet,  
Al woudic selve, ine soude nu  
Niet moegen wesen sonder u.  
ende Nu biddic u op rechte trouwe  
Dats u niet en vernoye, joncfrouwe.  
want Het doet mi cracht van minnen dat ict doe.'*

And he said: 'To refuse will not help  
you,  
I love you so much, for any price,  
Even if I wanted to myself, I would not  
Be able to live without you.  
And now I ask you in good faith  
That that may not displease you,  
damsel.  
Because it is through the power of love  
that I do this.'

After finding out his name and status, she begs him not to force her to be his girlfriend. She asks him: '*Bi der trouwen die gi sijt sculdich mi/By the faithfulness that you owe me*'.<sup>114</sup> He refuses and forcefully takes her away with him. They meet a knight at the entrance of a forest, who fights on her behalf but is beaten by Gurrees. Later, he forces her to sleep with him again:

8082-8085

*Optien nacht lagen si in ere steden  
Met enen goeden man onder hem beden  
In een bedde te gader, als ict las,  
Weder het hare lief of leet was.*

That night they stayed in a place  
With a good man, together in the same bed,  
as I have told,  
Whether she wanted that or not.

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<sup>113</sup> 7982-7991.

<sup>114</sup> 8030.

She gets her brothers to try and save her, but they also lose against Gurrees. Before going into battle, Gurrees assures her of his love:

8100-8111

*ende Hi antworde weder ende seide: 'Minne,  
Also lange als ic lijf hebbe inne  
Ne laet ic u om genen noet,  
Noch oec om vrese vander doet.*

*ende Al comen si u soeken,' sprac Gurrees,  
'Si moegen wel seker wesen des:  
Sine gecrigen die macht niet  
Dat si u mi nemen, wats gesciet,  
Also lange als ic u sie met oegen.*

*ja Ene dinc willic u toegen:  
Al waer ic al moedernaect nu,  
So ware mijn scilt wel die minne van u.'*

And he answered and he said: 'My love,  
For as long as I have life in me  
I will not, in any circumstance, let you go,  
Not even for fear of death.  
And if they come looking for you,' said Gurrees,  
'They can be sure:  
They will not be able to  
Take you from me, whatever happens,  
And as long as I see you with my eyes.  
Yes, One thing I want to make clear to you:  
Even if I were now naked as a baby,  
Then my love for you would be my shield.'

In line 8100, he uses 'Minne' to address her and thereby he appropriates her. She only manages to avoid Gurrees further attempts at courting when she joins a convent, cutting off her braids.<sup>115</sup> After she has joined the convent, she gives Gurrees quite a speech, in which she again emphasizes his (continuing) behavior toward her as bad. She feels he has forced her into dishonor:

8284-8288

*Daer af ne mochte mi nemmere  
Niet af sijn comen dan onnere,  
Bedi weet wel, here, in bem niet  
Van so nederen geslachte dat ic iet  
Met manne sculdich te varne ware  
Als sine amie harentare.'*

Nothing but dishonor could ever befall me of that,  
Because know, lord, I am not  
Of such low birth that I would in any way have to  
go touring with some man as his girlfriend.'

This defiant damsel is indeed not of low-birth: she turns out to be related to Lancelot.<sup>116</sup> Now left by the damsel, Gurrees has no choice but to return to his original quest: to find Lancelot, despite having perhaps troubled his alignment with Lancelot by defiling his relative. However, he is almost immediately captured by Sornahan and thrown into the same prison as Agravein.

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<sup>115</sup> 8237.

<sup>116</sup> 8303.



### A funny scene?

Like the passage I have described in the section about Mordred, this passage contains elements of dramatic irony. The audience is aware that Gurrees is sleeping with a married damsel, but the characters themselves are not yet aware of the situation. However, the eventual situation that ensues is so dramatic and conceivably horrible, that is difficult to imagine that this passage would be considered as simply funny. Especially, because after this situation, Gurrees turns into a horrible character that forcefully takes the damsel away for her to perform sexual acts for him.

Milland-Bove mentions that the Gurrees story in the *Lancelot en prose* (also including Gurrees previous encounters with damsels) alternates between a light fabliaux type story and a more tragic story. She analyzes the story as a vehicle by which the dysfunctions of the courteous system put in place by Lancelot are brought to light. A funny element in the text is the use of comic repetition, Gurrees always doubles his chivalrous adventures with a request to the ladies, and is always refused.<sup>117</sup>

While the scene of rape features these more tragic aspects, it also features comic elements that could have been taken straight from a *fabliau*. Gurrees sleeps with her while her husband is right next to her, and the damsel forgets to get dressed when she is lamenting her husband. Milland-Bove thinks this unintentional nakedness would have been funny for a medieval listener.<sup>118</sup> However, the text features no in-textual laughter. I thus think there is no solid case to be made as to whether this text or passage would be considered funny.

If the text is funny, then according to Milland-Bove, it is Gurrees' obsession with sex and love, that makes him a ridiculous (and comical) antithesis to Lancelot, who is actually beloved by the ladies.<sup>119</sup> I will not go further into the question of perceived humorous nature of these two characters or the passage. I will devote attention to the juxtaposition of Gurrees and Lancelot. Gurrees increasingly seems to become the adversary and also a negative reflection of Lancelot, perhaps foreshadowing the events in *Arthur's Doet*, when the Walewein-clan indeed comes to oppose the Lancelot clan. But first, I will discuss the two main characters of this passage: Gurrees and the damsel.

### Gurrees as a character

I have mentioned that at the beginning of the brother sequence, before Mordred's adventure starts, the brothers of the Walewein-clan are introduced. In this introduction, it is their age that gives the ordering: after Walewein it starts with Agravein, the oldest, and ends with Mordred, the youngest. This is not the narrative order of the brother sequence. The sequence started with Mordred, followed by Agravein and Gurrees. I think the brother sequence has the knights ordered by their knightly accomplishments: ranked from worst to best.

Mordred's adventure has shown him accomplishing no good knightly deeds whatsoever. He has prowess, but he uses it for bad. Agravein is a notch above his brother because Agravein

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<sup>117</sup> Milland-Bove, p. 105-106.

<sup>118</sup> Milland-Bove, p. 108-109.

<sup>119</sup> Milland-Bove, p. 106.

does achieve one good knightly deed: he slays Dryas. Gurrees does a lot more good. He achieves several heroic feats: saving damsels and defeating vicious knights. However, during his adventure, the listener also becomes more acquainted with Gurrees' bad sides. His sexual frustration seems to eventually win out over his good courtly sides. His introduction describes him thusly:

5176-5194

<i>Hine slachte Agraveyne niet.</i>	He was not like Agravein.
<i>Hi was graciouser, als ict las,</i>	He was more charming, as I have told,
<i>Dan enich van Waleweins broderen was.</i>	Than any of Walewein's brothers was.
<i>Hi was vol van ridderscape,</i>	He was filled with knightly virtue,
<i>Scone ende van edelre scape.</i>	Beautiful and fair of shape.
<i>Hi was stout ende van lichten leden</i>	He was brave and light-footed
<i>Ende bewart van goeden seden.</i>	And he had good moral.
<i>Dien rechten arm hadde hi</i>	His right arm
<i>Langer dan den slinken daer bi.</i>	Was also longer than his left.
<i>Hi dede hoger daeden genoech,</i>	He performed plenty of great deeds,
<i>Daer hi nieman af en gewoech</i>	Of which he told now one
<i>Noch daer hi of woude beromen mede,</i>	Because he did not want to brag about this,
<i>Sonder alst hem cracht seggen dede.</i>	Except when he was forced to tell about his
<i>Hi was die oec meest minnen</i>	deeds.
<i>Van alden broderen hadde binnen</i>	He was also the most affectionate
<i>Ende hi was die wreetse van hem allen</i>	Of all the brothers
<i>Als hi in belgen was gevallen</i>	And he has the cruelest of them all
<i>Ende die best sprekende sekerlike</i>	If he had become angry
<i>Van alden andren gemeenlike.</i>	And certainly the smoothest talker
	Of all the others.

From the introduction, we can sense a certain duality within the *persona* of Gurrees. He is a good, virtuous, affectionate knight, but he is also a smooth-talker and he can be very cruel when angered. His positive qualities have more to do with his graciousness and his way of talk than his military prowess. Nevertheless, he has done '*hoger daden genoech/plenty of great deeds*'. This same duality is visible in his adventures.

Perhaps fueled by his many rejections, we gradually see the angry Gurrees arising from the gracious knight first presented in the narrative. With the first damsel, Gurrees is the perfect courtly lover and does not press her when she refuses his request for love. With the second damsel, Gurrees first descends to quite questionable persistence, but he sees the wrongness of his way and apologizes. But with the third damsel things change. While the narrative makes clear Gurrees really did not know he was participating in adultery, and can thus perhaps, in contradiction to Mordred, not be blamed for *that*, his behavior after the act is far from what you would expect of a knight.

Even though it is Gurrees' knightly obligation to protect damsels, he becomes a threat to them, when he forcefully takes a damsel as his girlfriend, to do with her as he pleases. There are signals in the narrative structure that corroborate the view that this was indeed considered wrong, most prominently in the end of the narrative. When Gurrees has succumbed to rape

and force, this seems to have two consequences for him. There is first an intervention by representatives of God (via the convent): they take the girl away from him. Very soon after, he is also beaten in combat and thrown into prison: almost as if the narrative punishes him.

Another element that plays a role in Gurrees' passage is the indebtedness to his brothers, the Walewein-clan. For Mordred, his brother's honor was something he could use, but Gurrees seems to also intrinsically value his position within the clan. When the first damsel tells of her affection to Lancelot, he immediately makes clear that he considers Walewein a better knight. From the start of the adventure there is already a subtle juxtaposition between the Walewein-clan and Lancelot, something that we can also recognize in the character of the damsel.

### The damsel is related to Lancelot

We are introduced to the damsel when she sleeps with Gurrees, and it is made clear that she is unaware she is not sleeping with her husband. When she finds out she has deceived her husband, she is completely shocked. When her husband gets killed, she is distraught. She is unlike the damsel Mordred encountered, who saw the potential anger of her husband as a practical problem for herself. It is made clear this damsel loved her husband devotionally. Even after he has perished, and even despite her being completely unaware and having had no intention to deceive him, she is greatly troubled by the adultery.

After this already horrendous situation for the damsel, she becomes subjected to force and rape by Gurrees. Throughout this, she seems to stay truly virtuous. She then turns to a representative of God for resolution and is granted this: she can join the convent. She is portrayed as a pious, sincere, virtuous lady, who is already deeply troubled by her violation of heavenly rules, while she had no knowledge or intention to do so. Her exemplary good and just behavior is explained when she turns out to be of high birth: being related to Lancelot, Bohort and Lioneel.<sup>120</sup> Being of high-birth, it is likely that her subjection to rape and force is perceived as worse, than if she were of lower birth. With Capellanus even suggesting that lower born women needed a little force, to cure their shyness.<sup>121</sup>

Just as Lancelot, the damsel is a completely loyal lover. She does not wish to have sexual relations with Gurrees, and can only be persuaded by trickery or force.<sup>122</sup> Her honor and integrity are more important to her, and she thus joins the convent to escape her fate. In that context, the damsel's relation to Lancelot is perhaps not so surprising. In the damsel, who is also by blood related to Lancelot, we have a mirror of Lancelot's devotional love to Guenevere. Her relation to Lancelot furthers the contrast between Gurrees and Lancelot, something I will explore in the next section. Nevertheless, she is a strong and interesting character in her own right, demonstrating strength and agency in the light of horrible circumstances.

### Analysis of the Gurrees Passage

It is the goal of this thesis to analyze the construction of (systems of) norms for knights and damsels and their behavior toward each other. In this chapter, I focus on norms relating to

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<sup>120</sup> Kennedy, p. 70-86.

<sup>121</sup> Bullough & Brundage, p. 135-136.

<sup>122</sup> Brandsma (2010), p. 130-140.

sexuality, courting and consent. In the adventure of Gurrees, these norms seem to be under investigation as the protagonist, Gurrees, is repeatedly trying to court a damsel. I will make an analysis focusing on three subjects: the *problem romance* nature of this text, the theme of rape, and the juxtaposition between Gurrees and Lancelot. I will end with a conclusion where I will point out what the given analysis entails for norms of behavior concerning sexuality, courting and consent.

### *A problem romance*

Milland-Bove analysis this text as being comical: she thinks Gurrees is made fun of. She points to the use of comical repetition and dramatic irony as arguments for this.<sup>123</sup> I think the Gurrees passage is more nuanced than that. His introduction, unlike that of Mordred and Gurrees, portrays him as good knight. To come to an analysis such as Milland-Bove, you would have to interpret the introduction as satirical, and I do not see any reasons for that.

What I think is more likely, is that Gurrees is here positioned as a nuanced, intermediate character. If we look at the behavior of the first damsel, then we notice that she is quite rude. While she has first promised to do her all for him, if he asks her for love, she scoffs him and she immediately starts talking about another knight. Gurrees is however perfectly courteous. This is not comic behavior, this is good behavior of the knight, who is confronted with quite a rude damsel. Especially, because before this, he has done only good: he saved her father who was calling for help and he pledged to help her father some more, which he subsequently does.

In the Gurrees passage, unlike the Mordred episode, I think we have an example of a *problem romance*: the hero is presented with different options, with a dilemma he has to resolve instead of a narrative that only leaves room for one type of answer.<sup>124</sup> Especially with the first two damsels, it is easy to image audiences differing in opinion about the admissibility of Gurrees' behavior and the obligations of the damsel toward him. Almost like a thought experiment: what if a known womanizer encounters damsels that do not fall right into his arms after performing his brave deeds? What would happen? How should this be resolved?

When Gurrees encounters the third damsel, we seem to begin with the same kind of duality. It is clear that neither Gurrees nor the damsel know of the adultery. It is specifically said that Gurrees blows out the candles. Only after the escalation, we seem to shift to more stereotypically bad behavior: when Gurrees actually takes the damsel away. But even in this passage, Gurrees voices rationalizations for this behavior: he attributes it to love. Before getting into this theme, I want to further explore the existence of rape in the text.

### *Rape*

I have called this part of the passage, where Gurrees forces the damsel to come with him, a rape-scene. It is not called that in the text. But I think a medieval listener would also experience it as such, for it contains both forced sexuality (the damsel voices clear objections)

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<sup>123</sup> Milland-Bove, p. 105-109.

<sup>124</sup> See chapter one, section on '*debating*', p. 22-23, of this thesis.

as the leading away of a damsel.<sup>125</sup> While it is not clear from the start that the damsel is of such high-birth, we do know that she is not a local peasant girl, she is described as: '*joncfrouwe*', thus making clear her noble position. This is thus a scene where a noble woman is raped.

Apart from the narrative seemingly punishing Gurrees for this behavior as he is captured surely after, there is another textual clue that his actions are wrong: Gurrees himself states that this is bad behavior. He tells the second damsel that he would certainly not want to sleep with a damsel who would despise him while they are having sexual relations. While the third damsel makes clear she loathes him, his cruel nature has evidently gotten the upper hand and he does exactly the thing he said he would not do.

The brother passage covers the subject of rape, and thus the subject of sexual consent, and gives several textual clues that this is bad behavior. This is the behavior of a villain in the *Lanceloet*<sup>126</sup>, not of a knight of the round table. Gurrees' behavior has first been good, then more dual and in this passage, it has shifted again: he is now just behaving badly. However, Gurrees still voices reasons for his behavior, mostly attributing his actions to love. This is something I will explore in the next section.

#### *Love and Selfishness: the antithesis between Gurrees and Lancelot*

I believe Gurrees' behavior toward women is deliberately juxtapositioned to Lancelot's behavior toward Guenevere. The text positions Gurrees and Lancelot as adversaries, most prominently when Gurrees wrongs Lancelot's relative, thus foreshadowing the conflict between Walewein and his brothers and Lancelot in *Arthurs Doet*. First, I will explore the difference between Lancelot and Gurrees with regard to the love theme and their behavior toward damsels in the *Lanceloet*. I will mention their different conceptions of courtly love and the effectiveness of their approaches. Then, I will explore the rising adversarial status of the characters and how it is cultivated and used in the brother sequence and the influence this has on the rendering of norms.

In his adventure, Gurrees tries to court three different damsels and is refused by all of them. The first two have the same reason: because of his high birth, they do not feel Gurrees is interested in genuinely loving them, they think he is only interested in an incidental sexual encounter. The second damsel further substantiates her reasons for rejection. She thinks, also because Gurrees' earlier relationship with a high-born damsel, Gurrees is only approaching her with '*gelike van vrayer minnen/the outward appearance of true love (7240)*'.

The damsels want true love, something they think Gurrees does not feel for them. Knights being motivated and inspired by true love is an important theme in the *Lanceloet*. Knights such as Lancelot and the *Ridder met de Mouw* are inspired to perform great acts of prowess due to their love for a damsel.<sup>127</sup> There is a connection between love, which inspires prowess and prowess that inspires love. This latter connection is something Gurrees is evidently hoping for after he has saved the second damsel: that his courageous act will have inspired her to

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<sup>125</sup> See the passage on rape in this chapter, p. 27-28, of this thesis.

<sup>126</sup> See the passage on rape in this chapter, p. 27-28, of this thesis, where I also give an example.

<sup>127</sup> Brandsma (2010), p. 115-140.

love him. And she mentions (7180-7189) that this would have worked: if she had not realized his love was not sincere, she would have loved him.

Gurrees positions himself as a loyal lover. With the second damsel, he repeatedly ensures her of her just intentions and with the third damsel, he also attributes his behavior to love. However, in reality, Gurrees brings nothing but trouble for the third damsel. In lines (8004-8010), and in later lines, Gurrees mentions he is so enamored with the damsel that he simply cannot give her up. He is completely unconcerned with his personal well-being due to his love, but, more prominently, he is also unconcerned with her wellbeing or opinion: *'Mine roke wat gi segt te mi wart, 'Sprac hi, 'in dien dat gi met mi vart./I do not care what you say to me,' Said he, 'as long as you come with me.'*<sup>128</sup> He blatantly refuses the requests she puts to him, only granting her the life of her brother when she begs for it, a favor something that will cost him nothing, and he even asks her for her love and kind favor in return.<sup>129</sup>

Lancelot's love for the queen, by contrast, is completely sincere, for him it supersedes all other rules and he ends paying a high price for it: he is unable to find the Grail.<sup>130</sup> Lancelot does everything for Guenevere: he is, despite his loyalty being repeatedly tested, a loyal lover.<sup>131</sup> He is also inspired by his love for Guenevere, to achieve great feats of strength. Throughout the *Lanceloet*, but especially in the scene below, Lancelot is only concerned with the positive effects of their relationship. He seems to think the costs are worth it.<sup>132</sup> When the queen questions their relationship, he tells her:

21396-21396

<i>Ic ne ware niet comen, seggic u,</i>	I would not have been, I tell you,
<i>Te also groter hoecheden</i>	In this high esteem
<i>Alsic ben opten dach van heden,</i>	As I am today,
<i>En ware gi, dart mi al bi u es gesciet.</i>	If it had not been for you, through whom all of this has happened to me.

Lancelot would not have been able to achieve his feats of prowess, if not for the love of Guenevere. Like Lancelot, Gurrees is showing himself as a physically capable knight (though not at Lancelot's level). Gurrees has shown this throughout the adventure, and there are no references to supernatural abilities due to love in the text. He just simply wins a lot in combat. When he is attacked by the brothers of the third damsel, Gurrees himself mentions that his love for the damsel will protect him. The text however, does not give reason to believe that his subsequent behavior is supernatural. Moreover, despite him stating that his strength stems from his love of the damsel, he uses it to achieve an aim that is entirely negative for her: he slaughters her kin, her brothers. While he perhaps feels this love fuels his prowess and will thus bring him honor, the third damsel rejects this premise: she feels traveling with him will bring, at least to her, only dishonor.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> 8040-8041.

<sup>129</sup> 8145-8162.

<sup>130</sup> Brandsma (ed.) (1992), p. 105.

<sup>131</sup> Brandsma (ed.) (1992), p. 108-128.

<sup>132</sup> Postma (ed.), p. 257.

<sup>133</sup> 8285.

There is a serious discrepancy between Gurrees' and Lancelot's behavior toward damsels. While Lancelot loves sincerely, *vraer minnen*, Gurrees does not. He only makes it seem like his actions arise from love. The damsels unanimously prefer a man who is like Lancelot: who is truly devoted. The narrative highlights this difference by having various damsels praise Lancelot during the adventure. What is more, after Gurrees has first mentioned his love for the third damsel, the quest for Lancelot is brought up after ten lines.<sup>134</sup> I think the writer deliberately made a connection between Gurrees' mention of love for a damsel and the knight Lancelot there.

Both Gurrees and Lancelot are knights of the round table, and at this point in the narrative Gurrees' brother Walewein and Lancelot are still good friends. While they could engage in friendly contest to determine the best knight, measured by varying success in their respective adventures, neither knight is each other's opponent at this point. However, this will change. Gurrees will be present when Agravein and Mordred enter Guenevere's bedroom to expose them and Walewein and Lancelot will go to war after Lancelot has accidentally killed Gariet.<sup>135</sup> It seems this rivalry to come is foreshadowed in this adventure, where Gurrees seems to be outmaneuvered by the more courtly Lancelot, who is considered a more favorable lover by various damsels he encounters. In his frustration, Gurrees ultimately becomes an enemy to Lancelot's kin, when he leads away the damsel, related to Lancelot, against her will and forces sexual acts upon her.

I think the structure of the text creates the suggestion that Gurrees also becomes an enemy to Lancelot *himself*. Perhaps one of the most dramatic moments in the entire Lancelot is the scene where the queen discovers Lancelot with Pelles' daughter. This scene, that is also foreshadowed, sends Lancelot into madness, only to be cured by the Grail. I have referenced some lines of this scene when describing the scene in Gurrees. The situation is very similar: a loyal lover, in both cases someone in Lancelot's bloodline, is deceived into adultery. When this is uncovered, the true object of the lover's desires becomes very angry and the relationship is shattered. In the Gurrees passage by the death of the husband, in the Lancelot passage by the break-up between Lancelot and Guenevere and his madness.<sup>136</sup>

Gurrees is a similar character to Pelles' daughter: they have an identical function in the narrative. Had their sexes not been different, you could even interchange them. They both only have sexual motives (Galahad is already born, so the sexual encounter between Pelles' daughter and Lancelot serves no function whatsoever) and they both sleep with someone who is unaware he or she is sleeping with them. The only differences being that Pelles' daughter is aware of the deceit.<sup>137</sup> This creates a deeper layer to the juxtaposition of Gurrees and Lancelot: Gurrees is an interchangeable figure with someone who at that moment ruins Lancelot's life: Pelles' daughter. By committing adultery with someone of Lancelot's kin, Gurrees is also harming Lancelot himself.

This clash between Gurrees of the Walewein-clan and Lancelot is thus thematically brought up, by way of connection between scenes. It is also explicitly mentioned in the text. The

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<sup>134</sup> 8008, 8018.

<sup>135</sup> 4<sup>de</sup> boek, 4039-4494, 9081-9682, ed.- Jonckbloet.

<sup>136</sup> 2<sup>de</sup> boek, 35621-35709, ed.- Jonckbloet.

<sup>137</sup> 2<sup>de</sup> boek, 35621-35709, ed.- Jonckbloet.

damsel related to Lancelot calls Gurrees out on the inadequacy of his bloodline, that of Walewein, as compared to that of Lancelot. She says:

8297-8299

*ende Noch doe ic u ene dinc verstaen:* And I will also tell you the following:  
*lc hebben int geslechte mijn* I have in my bloodline,  
*Beter ridders dan int uwe sijn.'* Betters knight than there are in yours.'

Not only does the damsel have personal grievances with Gurrees, with this statement she relates it to his family and her family. She views it as a conflict between the Walewein-clan, of which Gurrees is part, and the Lancelot-clan. A conflict she thinks her family would win.

Lancelot himself is at this moment completely unaware of the situation. The story progresses (after the brother sequence) and the words of the damsel seem to be put to the test. Through various entanglements, Lancelot and Gurrees meet each other on the battlefield. Lancelot is fighting with Lioneel (part of Lancelot's kin) on one side, Gurrees with Gariet and Agravein, on the other side. Lancelot is thus on the opposing side of the brothers, and unaware of this. He easily bests the brothers in combat, thus seemingly making true the words of the damsel.<sup>138</sup> While the Walewein-clan here misses its most important fighter, Walewein, there is again a juxtaposition and an indication that Lancelot's kin is indeed the stronger one.

### Conclusion

In the Gurrees passage, the subjects of sexuality, courting and consent are abundantly explored, but this exploration retains a certain freedom: it seems that audiences could debate about and disagree with the behavior of the knight or damsel, or come to his or her defense. The knight Gurrees seems to be digressing from his initial courtly behavior. And at the end, the knight even starts engaging in violence and rape. There are textual indications that this behavior is considered bad.

In the Mordred passage, no reference is made to love, he is clearly only seeking for incidental sex. Gurrees, who is described as a smooth talker, does make ample reference to love. The damsels however, do not believe him and indeed the narrative suggests he is not a faithful lover, but instead looking for sexual encounters with various damsels. He is repeatedly contrasted to Lancelot, preferred by the damsels, because he is a faithful lover.

However, Gurrees achieves a whole lot more than his brothers Mordred and Agravein. Mordred brings nothing but trouble and Agravein gets almost immediately captured, having completed one knightly deed. Gurrees' passage is full of chivalrous behavior and feats of prowess. While he eventually succumbs to cruelty, the narrative implies he is a better knight than the other two. This is also suggested by his, more positive, introduction. I think the brothers in the brother sequence are ordered from worst to best, and Gurrees thus takes position after his brothers Mordred and Agravein.

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<sup>138</sup> 13193-13284.



This makes Gurrees a knight with a certain duality: he has good and bad sides and thus has an intermediate position. It is possible to debate about his behavior and exactly a knight like this could force the audience to reflect on their own opinions about sexuality, courting and consent. What do they consider admissible?

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed three knights in the brother sequence. The final knight to appear in the brother sequence is Gariet, but none of his adventures are connected to courting. In his adventure, his relation to damsels is much more one of duty instead of love. Therefore, I will discuss his adventure in the next chapter, when I will focus on this subject. That means that the analysis to answer two sub questions is complete:

- *What system of norms for the behavior of knights and damsels concerning sexuality, courting and consent can be distilled from the brother sequence?*
- *How can the system of norms for the behavior of knights and damsels concerning sexuality, courting and consent from the brother sequence be connected to the Lancelot Compilation?*

More specifically, I have looked at the themes of sexuality, courting and consent in the brother sequence and related these to characters and episodes in the *Lanceloet*. I have used close reading to analyze likely rules and themes in the passages. The passages function almost as a thought experiment: what if this happens, what should be a response, what are the relevant rules? The adventures of Mordred and Gurrees in the brother have received the most emphasis this chapter because of their subject matter: they are extensively concerned with the theme at hand.

The text makes clear that Mordred is a bad person, and uses his knightly prowess for bad. This is also something we see in his passage. He is a sexual predator with no remorse. He encounters people that are considered equally bad within the text: a damsel who is too willing and knight who is unable to protect his girlfriend and also *himself* against strange knights. It is an example of inadmissible sexual adulterous behavior.

In the episode of Gurrees there is more duality. The theme seems to be that Gurrees, a known womanizer, is now confronted by damsels who are not so willing to sleep with him, even if he commits great acts of prowess. He first behaves very courtly, but at the end of the passage his sexual frustration seems to get the better of him, and he resorts to rape and force. The adventure leaves room for discussion about courting, the refusals of damsels and how a knight should respond to that.

The Gurrees passage, also connects the themes of sexuality, courting and consent to the theme of true love. Gurrees, who seems to fancy any young woman in his vicinity, is repeatedly contrasted to Lancelot, whose love is true and unbendable. Here, the text does seem to have a preference: the damsels unanimously prefer Lancelot. But this message is suggested subtly and one can imagine listeners to disagree on this.

## Chapter 3: duty, obligation and damsels

It is the goal of this thesis to analyze norms for the behavior of knights toward damsels and vice versa. In the previous chapter, I have analyzed norms considering sexuality, courting and consent. These norms have mostly to do with the romantic interaction between damsels and knights. But the interaction of knights and damsels entails more than just possible romantic interaction. This is something Gurrees learns when he saves a damsel, but is subsequently rejected when he asks for romantic contact: evidently these themes are split. And in the following Gariet passage the focus of Gariet's interaction with damsels is not romantic at all, but based on duty. A sense of duty that then becomes problematized in his adventure.

In this chapter, I will answer the following research questions:

- *What system of norms for the behavior concerning duty and obligation of knights toward damsels and vice versa can be distilled from the brother sequence?*
- *How can the system of norms for the behavior concerning duty and obligation of knights toward damsels and vice versa from the brother sequence be connected to the Lancelot Compilation?*

The damsels meant in this research question are encountered damsels: damsels the knight meets while on their adventure. They are thus not currently the knight's lover or Queen. While the theme of duty and obligation is addressed in the brother sequence, most prominently in the Gariet passage, it receives fewer attention than the theme of sexuality, courting and consent. This chapter will therefore be shorter than the previous one: there are simply less passages to cite. The chapter will start, perhaps surprisingly, with the adventures of Walewein that *precede* the brother sequence. I will explain this further on. After that, I will discuss the relation of the brothers to this theme, most prominently that of Gariet. I will end with an analysis and conclusion.

### Walewein and the quest for Lancelot

In this section, I will narrate a section of the adventures of the oldest of the brothers, Walewein.<sup>139</sup> While these adventures precede the brother sequence, I feel there is a meaningful relation between these adventures and the subsequent adventure of Gariet, that is part of the brother sequence and the focus of my analysis in this chapter.

With all the adventures the brothers get into, one would almost forget that the original goal of the quest was to find Lancelot. Time and again, the brothers find their knightly prowess called upon or simply become distracted by attractive damsels. It is lucky that Lancelot is indeed fine, for where he not, the brothers would not have saved him.<sup>140</sup> This chapter is concerned with incidences where the brothers get sidetracked from their mission because they are responding to requests from damsels. What is their duty toward these damsels?

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<sup>139</sup> From line 2927-4263, thus Walewein's adventures as part of the quest for Lancelot.

<sup>140</sup> From 11523 onward, Lancelot is healthy and well.

When it comes to damsels, Walewein is very receptive to the needs of them. This also evident from his introduction in the brother sequence. Walewein is, despite his adventures not being narrated in the brother sequence, introduced therein. First, his physique and courtly manners are very positively described, and then:

5118-5125, 5149-5152

*Men sprac van Garite nochtan  
Dat hi na also vele tien tide  
Met wapinen mochte dogen stride,  
Mar hine droech te gere stede  
Sulke sorge alse Walewein dede,  
ende Die, so wat dat hem gesciede,  
Altoes minde arme liede  
Ende was hem soete ende goedertiere.  
(...)  
Mar hovesscher dan enich ander was hi,  
Daer ne vrouwen ende joncfrouwen minden bi,  
Meer dan bi dien dat hi dede  
Met ridderschepe teneger stede.*

Though of Gariet it was said that  
he could fight with weapons  
almost as well as Walewein,  
But he never cared as much for  
others as Walewein did,  
And, who (*Walewein*), whatever  
would happen to him,  
He always cared for poor people  
And was kind and compassionate  
to them.  
(...)  
But courtlier than any other was  
he,  
For which women and damsels  
loved him more than for his  
knightly acts.

Walewein is helpful and kind, especially to ladies. This is very flattering introduction can be somewhat contrasted to the previous adventure Walewein has had. I will make this clear by giving a brief overview of these adventures.

From line 1703 onward, ten knights have pledged themselves to go on a quest for Lancelot, Walewein and his brothers among them. The first adventure they encounter, still as a group, is one brought to them by a damsel. When Walewein sees the sad damsel, he – characteristically – approaches her, and when she explains the problem (a knight in danger) he immediately charges in to help.

1861-1865, 1873-1874

*Dat si ontmoetten ene joncfrouwe  
Op een part, drivende groeten rouwe.  
Ende Alse her Walewein quam bat nare,  
Hi groettese ende vragede hare  
Waer omme si weende zo sere.  
(...) *The damsel explains that a good  
knight is in danger*  
Hi seide: 'Joncfrouwe, wist ons waer  
Ende leet ons lieden dar ter steden.'*

Then they met a damsel,  
On a horse, overwhelmed with sadness.  
And when Walewein came closer to her,  
He greeted and asked her,  
Why she was crying so much.  
(...)  
He said: 'Damsel, show us where  
And lead us to that place.'

They save the knight, but are unsuccessful in completing the quest he presents to them.<sup>141</sup> This is connected to the Grail theme I have explained in chapter one. I have used this passage as an example, so will not repeat it here.<sup>142</sup> Walewein and the knights of the Lancelot quest where, however, able to help the damsel: they have saved the knight. Soon, after Walewein separated himself from the other knights, he gets requested by a damsel to fight for her in a tournament.

3020-3025

<p><i>ende Nu biddic u, here Walewein, Ende mane u bider trouwen Die gi sijt sculdich allen vrouwen Ende den coninc Arture, uwen oem, Dat gi mijns liefs wil nemen goem Morgen ende hem te staeden staen.</i></p>	<p>Now I ask you, lord Walewein, And I insist with you by the loyalty That you owe to all women And the King Arthur, your uncle, That you will care for my lover Tomorrow and will help him.</p>
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The damsel says she thinks Walewein owes it to her to fulfill the obligation. He owes it to all women. Walewein agrees. But then something happens that is quite unexpected, presumably also for Walewein: he loses the tournament. Walewein does not take this well, he wishes he were dead. His public shame and his lost obligation to the damsel are too much for him.

3253-3255, 3265-3266, 3295-3298

<p><i>mer Hi dreef den rouwe so over groet Dat hi wel woude wesen doet Endi hi in die plaetse niet bliven dorste. (...) al Dus porrede Walewein, begrepen Met rouwen ende met erscepen, (...) Walewein later talks about the knight that beat him: Hi heeft mi heden sonder waen Die alre meeste scande gedaen Die mi noit vor dien gesciede,</i></p>	<p>But he was overcome with so much sorrow That he wanted to be dead And that he did not have the courage to stay on the field. (...) So Walewein drove away, filled with grief and anger, (...) He has today without a doubt Done me the most dishonor That ever happened to me before,</p>
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But Walewein's week gets even worse. On his way to the Grail castle, where he will also be humiliated, he encounters the lady in the bathtub. She is trapped in a bathtub of very hot water, she is in pain and asks Walewein to save her. Walewein is unable to do so (this is an adventure meant for Lancelot)<sup>143</sup> and the damsel does not take it lightly.

3622-3630

<p><i>'Here riddre, an dese avonture Hebbedi gefalgert, dinket mi. ende Nu mogedi wel seggen dat gi Van henen nu sult sceden niet Sonder scande ende verdriet.'</i></p>	<p>'Lord knight, in this adventure You have failed, I think. And now we can say that you Will not depart from here Without shame and sadness.'</p>
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<sup>141</sup> 1873-2336.

<sup>142</sup> Mentioned on page 14-15, of this thesis.

<sup>143</sup> 14843-14872.

<p><i>Walewein seide toter joncfrouwe: 'Het is mi leet ende ic hebs rouwe Dat ic u niet verloeste nu. ende Ic deder mine macht toe, seggic u.</i></p>	<p>Walewein said to the damsel: 'It hurts me and I am sad That I have not freed you now. And I did what I could, I tell you.</p>
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The passage could suggest that she means he is a shameful knight for not being able to complete this task, but an alternative reading could be that she forewarns the happenings in the Grail castle.<sup>144</sup> In any case, Walewein has now failed two damsels, experiencing great feelings of embarrassment (especially when he failed in a public setting). He has also achieved nothing by way of his original quest: he learned naught of the whereabouts of Lancelot. After this, he is humiliated in the Grail castle. Because of the vision he has had there, explained to him by a hermit, he becomes very upset.<sup>145</sup>

4248-4253

<p><i>Mar vander tale te mayhierde Walewein doe herde sere Ene toende bliscepen mere Dan hem sine herte gaf ende sijn sin.</i></p>	<p>But of his words Walewein became very upset And he showed more happiness Than he felt in his heart.</p>
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This is the mental state with which Walewein is brought into the durative state by the narrative: for a few lines later Hestor is introduced and Walewein's narrative thread is left for now. Then, the first time we hear of Walewein again, is in this very flattering introduction to the brother sequence. One might think the introduction is thus ironical, but there are no (textual) clues for that. Busby, who reads the counterpart in the *Lancelot en prose*, calls an ironical reading most unlikely.<sup>146</sup>

It is not the aim of this thesis to extensively analyze Walewein's adventures, and you could not do this without giving ample attention to the Grail theme, but there is a certain set-up here. Walewein's willingness to help damsels is problematized, because he is unable to do so. And then, perhaps, these detours become just that: unnecessary diversions from his main objective. This is something I will explore in the Gariet passage. But first, I will discuss the other brothers.

## Mordred

In this chapter, I discuss duties and obligations that knights have toward damsels and vice versa. This theme of loyalty toward damsels, or damsels toward knights, does not play a very large role in the narrative of Mordred. He does make the damsel a promise:

5399-5404

<p><i>Mordret antworde hare doe: 'Ic hope hi slapen sal emmertoe. Ende wort hi oc in wake, ic sal U wel behoeden jegen hem al,</i></p>	<p>Mordred answered her thus: 'I hope he will sleep without interruption. And if, however, he were to wake, I will, Protect you against him completely,</p>
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<sup>144</sup> Besamusca & Postma, p. 329, T 3624-6.

<sup>145</sup> 3657-4262.

<sup>146</sup> Busby, p. 341.

ja Waerre II sulc alse hi es.  
Nu sijt al sonder sorge des.'

Yes, even if there were two men such as  
him.  
Now you can thus be without worry.'

As explained in chapter two, he does indeed keep the promise. However, the reason for this promise is completely from self-interest: he wants something, sexual acts, from the damsel and he will only protect her when she endangers herself performing these acts. Apart from this passage, the theme of duty and obligation does not seem to play a role.

### Agravein and Gurrees

As mentioned, Agravein does not encounter many damsels. Despite his lack of concern for love and courting however, there are two damsels that take kindly toward him. The first of these, I have already mentioned in chapter one, for a damsel saves his life by pointing out his relation to Walewein.<sup>147</sup> But also, she uses a *don contraignant*: she asks for a favor, without specifying what the favor will be.<sup>148</sup> Sornahan promises her and she asks if he will save Agravein's life, which his promise now forces him to do.

The second damsel also takes kindly toward Gurrees, so I will first discuss him. Unlike Agravein, Gurrees encounters many damsels. When a damsel is in danger, Gurrees seems to understand his obligations toward her perfectly: he has to save her, and he repeatedly does so. After he has saved the life of the second damsel, he asks her if he has performed his duties toward her, something she confirms.

7109-7112

<i>ende Gurrees quam toter joncfrouwen weder</i>	And Gurrees approached the damsel
<i>Ende seide: 'Joncfrouwe, wat dunct u,</i>	again
<i>Hebbix genoech gedaen nu?'</i>	And said: 'Damsel, what do you think,
<i>'Ja gy, here,' antworde si,</i>	Have I done enough about this now?'
	'Yes you have, Lord' she said,

Then he asks her for love, something she refuses. He has a hard time accepting this refusal.<sup>149</sup> Gurrees seems to believe his act of prowess entitles him to a reward: sexual acts performed by the damsel. This damsel, and also the first damsel he encounters, inform him that this is not the case. After he has misbehaved toward the third damsel, and tells her of his plan to do this again, she begs him to not force her to be his girlfriend. She asks him: '*Bi der trouwen die gi sijt sculdich mi/ By the faithfulness that you owe me*'.<sup>150</sup> She thinks Gurrees has a duty to treat damsels properly, a duty he disregards.

Gurrees then soon ends up in prison, where Agravein is also held. In this prison, Agravein is well taken care of by a damsel, who is a niece of Sornahan: so much that he, and later also Gurrees, owe their life to her. They feel they can never repay her.<sup>151</sup> When Gurrees enters

<sup>147</sup> Mentioned on page 39-41, of this thesis.

<sup>148</sup> Besamusca & Brandsma (1988), p. 3.

<sup>149</sup> See Gurrees' adventure, p. 42-60, of this thesis.

<sup>150</sup> 8030.

<sup>151</sup> 9856-9861.

prison, Agravein explicitly asks him to thank the damsel, for all the good she has done for him. He does, and then we find out why the damsel has taken such good care of Agravein: she feels she is in debt to Gurrees, because he ones saved her from a knight who wanted to rape her. The maiden keeps spreading her kindness and they are thus very well treated in prison, enjoying every comfort.<sup>152</sup>

Gurrees prowess has finally been rewarded, but not with the reward he has been seeking his entire adventure. This damsel is kind to them, without providing romantic favors. It seems gratitude and kindness from damsels is the true reward for a knight who helps those in need. This is something Gurrees could also learn from his brother Walewein, who is always willing to help and expects nothing in return: this is something that will be explored in the next section. But perhaps Gurrees has already had some kind of revelation, because despite being in the vicinity of a damsel who takes somewhat kindly toward him, he has not yet asked her to make love to him. Of Agravein you could say that he receives kindness, while his personal acts, amongst others: he leaves a crying damsel, would not likely make him the recipient of such kindness.<sup>153</sup> This is similar to Mordred in the first adventure, who is treated with great hospitality because of deeds done by Gariet.<sup>154</sup>

### Gariet

In this section, I will discuss the adventures of Gariet and relate them to the adventures of Walewein. I have already mentioned my hypothesis that the order of the adventures in the brother sequence is to imply a ranking from worst to best. Gariet, closing these ranks, would be the best knight (of the brothers in this sequence, he is surpassed by Walewein). His introduction in the brother sequence also suggests this:

5196-5198, 5201-5218

<p><i>Een goet ridder, sijt seker des, Ende vromich in elke stede Ende van groten begripe mede. (...) he is strong, beautiful and more elegant than the brothers ende Hi hadde den adem so goet dat hi Vele mochte gedoegen dar bi, Mar so goet ne mocht hi niet sijn Alse Walewein, die ridder fijn. Hi plach gerne vrouwen te minnen Ende joncfrouwen met allen sinnen Ende si hem weder der gelike. Hi gaf hem gerne ende blidelike. Hi minde meest Waleweine Van allen sinen broeders gemeine Ende Walewein minde hem mede Meer dan hi enichgen broeder dede.</i></p>	<p>A good knight, that much is sure, And brave under any circumstance And also greatly enterprising. (...) And his stamina was so good, That he could take a lot of fighting, But so good could he not be As Walewein, that noble knight. He (<i>Gariet</i>) enjoyed loving women And damsels, with full commitment And they (<i>loved</i>) him just as much. He gave himself gladly and happily. (<i>probably meaning: he was generous</i>) He loved Walewein the most Of all his brothers And Walewein also loved him More than he did any brother.</p>
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<sup>152</sup> 8489-8536.

<sup>153</sup> See Agravein's adventure, p. 39-41, of this thesis.

<sup>154</sup> See Mordred's adventure, p. 29-38, of this thesis.



He is portrayed as a very good brave knight, who is loved by the ladies. Can such a good knight still be confronted with difficulties regarding damsels? Not difficulties of a romantic nature: in this passage Gariet has no romantic interaction with damsels, and he also does not strive for this. However, Gariet's sense of duty toward damsels will be challenged in his adventure. Like his brother Walewein, he assists damsels where he can, but unlike his brother, he does not make this his utmost priority.

Gariet's adventure starts with a fairly standard request put to him by a damsel. She is in trouble, what is rightfully hers has been taken from her, and has to be reclaimed by force. Her aggressor has agreed to fight a champion selected by her. She had hoped for Lancelot (another subtle juxtaposition between the Walewein-clan and Lancelot).<sup>155</sup> Now, she must 'settle' for Gariet.

8663-8667

*al Ende si wort wenende sere,  
so dats ontfarmde Gariette*

*Ende dat hi se in talen sette*

*Ende seide: 'Joncfrouwe, hebbedi goede orconden  
Van dat gi segt nu ten stonden?'*

And she started crying so much  
So that Gariet came to pity her  
And he spoke to her  
And said: 'Damsel, do you have  
trustworthy testimonies  
Of that what you say right  
now?'

When she starts crying, he takes pity on her, and then, when she substantiates her claims, he agrees to fight for her. By comparison: no such questions, or any substantiation of claims, are asked by Walewein about the tournament he fights in. The reason for the tournament is quite silly compared to the distress this damsel is in: the prizes are a sparrow hawk, a falcon and pretty headband.<sup>156</sup> Not exactly prizes that necessitate a break from searching for a friend, who might be in prison or mortal danger.

Gariet finds someone who further substantiates the damsel's claims: her cause is just.<sup>157</sup> There is another adventure in between: Gariet fights Guinas, a foe of Walewein. While escorting the damsel to place of the fight, Gariet encounters both a knight, and a damsel in distress.

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<sup>155</sup> 8650-8662.

<sup>156</sup> 2295-3028.

<sup>157</sup> 8728-8739.

8952-8963, 8968-8972, 8975-8979

They encounter six knights, three of which are abusing a knight, three of which a damsel. The knight is led around in a manner that is:

*Ene ridder ongetamelike  
Ende sloegen sere jamerlike.  
ende Si hadden sine hande tien stonden  
Hem op sinen rucge gebonden.  
ende Die ander II ridders daer toe  
Leiden ene joncfrouwe doe,  
In hare himde al naect,  
Sere drove ende mesmaect,  
Ende sloegense alle eenparlike  
Met dorninen roden ontfarmlike,  
al So dat si hare himde al roet sagen  
Vanden bloeden vanden slaegen.  
(...)  
Ende die den ridder hilden tien tiden  
Hilden ane der enere siden  
Van den wege entie die joncfrouwe  
Leidde, die dreef groeten rouwe,  
Reden an dander side al dare.  
(...) Gariet recognizes the knight:  
Ende was een ridder vander Tafelronden  
Ende was een vander questen tien stonden,  
Mar die joncfrouwe ne kindi niet.  
Hi wart pensende als hi dit siet.*

A knight unseemly  
And they hit him very pitiably.  
And they had bound his hands on his  
back.  
And the other two (=three) knights  
Were leading a damsel,  
Naked in her shirt,  
Very sad and hurt,  
And they all hit her  
With lashing rods made of thorny  
twigs,  
So that her shirt was showing red  
Of her bleeding because of the blows.  
(...)  
And those who led the knight  
Followed on one side  
Of the road and those who led the  
damsel, who was very sad,  
Drove on the other side there.  
(...)  
And he was a knight of the Round  
table  
And he was one of the quest (for  
*Lancelot*),  
But the damsel he did not know.  
And he (*Gariet*) lost himself in  
thought when he saw this.

In this passage, Gariet is confronted with a dilemma. He meets a damsel and a knight who are both in great distress, and he can only save one: does he save the damsel or does he save his fellow knight of the Round Table? It is no wonder that he stops and thinks, becoming 'pensende'. This also gives the audience time to think. What would they do in this situation? Gariet reflects on his duties.

8980-8892

*ende Hine weet wien irst helpen sonder waen.  
Hi siet die joncfrouwe vor hem staen,  
Die om helpe roept ende genaden.  
ende Ne staet hi hare niet in staeden,  
Hi es onteert ende bescudt hi oc niet  
Sinen geselle, dien hi siet  
Smerte gedogen ende groten toren  
Ende scande, hi es danne verloren,*

And he does not know who he has to  
help first.  
He sees the damsel standing before  
him,  
Who calls for help and mercy.  
And if he does not help her,  
His is dishonored and if he also does  
not protect

went *Bedi die vander Tafelronden*  
*Waren onderlinge gebonden*  
*Bi trouwen ende bi sekerheden*  
*Dat si souden in allen steden*  
*Elc andren helpen sonder ontbiden.*

His companion, who he sees suffering  
 pain  
 And shame, he is then lost,  
 For the knights of the Round Table  
 Are bound toward each other  
 On their word of loyalty and honor  
 That anywhere they would  
 Help each other without delay.

Gariet carefully weighs his two obligations. Jefferson, in a study of the first part of the *Lancelot en prose* (that features many of these dilemmas), points out that these kinds of problems would be common in the twelfth- and thirteenth century world. Sworn bonds function in a complex world: so, they are bound to create dilemmas. This is reflected in the *Lancelot en prose*.<sup>158</sup>

Gariet decides to help his fellow knight, Brandelijs, and leaves the damsel. He effectively saves Brandelijs, who had gotten himself in trouble because of an amorous liaison with a damsel with a boyfriend. He acted quite similar to Mordred in the previous passage, only he killed the boyfriend. The knights came to exact revenge, sending three after him and three after the damsel.<sup>159</sup> Gariet's decision to leave the damsel has grisly results: while the knight Gosengos saves the damsel, her hurts were already too bad: she dies of her wounds six days after.<sup>160</sup>

Later, Gariet has successfully defended the honor of the damsel that he vowed to be a champion for. But his past actions come back to trouble him: a damsel refuses to greet him, because of the decision he has made.

9630-9336, 9646-9653

He sees a damsel and greets her:

*Si kindene wel als sine horde,*  
*Mar sine gaf hem gene antworde.*  
*Hi groette anderwerven die joncfrouwe.*  
 ende *Si seide: 'Ridder, bi mire trouwe,*  
*Gi hebt mi over niet gegroet nu.*  
*Ic ne bem niet sculdich tantworden u,*  
*Noch gene joncfrouwe.' (...)*  
 (...) *'So mogedi wel seggen nu ter tijt*  
*Dat gi quaet ende dorper sijt,*  
*Nadien dat gi niet ne wart so coene*  
*Gine faelgiret hulpe te doene*  
*Eergistren ere joncfrouwen*  
*Die gi vor u oegen saeget blouwen*  
*Drie ridders, diese leidden doe*  
*Ende diese sloegen emmertoe.*

She did notice him,  
 But she did not respond.  
 He greeted the damsel again.  
 And she said: 'Knight, I swear to you,  
 You have greeted me to no avail.  
 I am not obliged to answer you,  
 Nor is any damsel.' (...)  
 (...) *'They can say now*  
*That you are evil and despicable,*  
*After that you have not been so brave*  
*You have failed to help*  
*A damsel yesterday*  
*Whom, before your eyes, you saw get*  
*beaten*

<sup>158</sup> Jefferson, p. 237-248.

<sup>159</sup> 9006-9113, the number of knights assaulting the damsel differs. In the previous passage it was two.

<sup>160</sup> 9114-9147.

By three knights, who were leading her  
away  
And who continuously hit her.

The damsel has no respect for him, now that he failed to save a damsel who was in great distress. She then also informs him that his brothers, Agravain and Gurrees, are in prison, and scorns him for not saving them. Gariet, however, did not know of their imprisonment. He tells her this, and he also explains to her why he has not saved the damsel: he could not save her, because a fellow knight of the Round table was in danger, and he had to save him.<sup>161</sup> This is the same reasoning of the previously cited 8980-8892.

If Gariet's loyalty toward encountered damsels and his loyalty toward his fellow knights of the Round Table are weighed against each other Gariet chooses his fellow knights. This does not seem to be a decision he regrets, even when he gets scorned by the damsel for this. Now that Gariet knows that his brothers are in prison, he goes on to save Agravain and Gurrees. He saves them, thereby also showing himself to be the better knight. In his adventure, there is no further relevant interaction with damsels. With the brothers saved, they set out to help the Duke Cales, and it ends in a grand battle. And so, ends the brother sequence.

### Analysis and conclusion

In this chapter, I have analyzed norms connected to duty and obligation of knights toward damsels and vice versa, to answer two research questions:

- *What system of norms for the behavior concerning duty and obligation of knights toward damsels and vice versa can be distilled from the brother sequence?*
- *How can the system of norms for the behavior concerning duty and obligation of knights toward damsels and vice versa from the brother sequence be connected to the Lancelot Compilation?*

I have included a summary of a portion of Walewein's encounters with damsels preceding the brother sequence, because the themes raised there seem to be connected to the themes raised in Gariet's adventure. One of Walewein's flaws, one that repeatedly comes back all through the Lancelot Compilation, is, as Busby says: '*his inability to adhere single-mindedly to a particular course of action*'.<sup>162</sup> He is so kind and compassionate, that he will help anyone, but especially damsels, even if this means a detour from his original objective. This is also an image that is invoked in his adventures questing for Lancelot, especially when he fights in a tournament that is mostly just for fun and show. Walewein is responding to a request of a damsel, but one can question the necessity of this request in the given situation.

Gariet however, seems to adhere to a different type of norm set in this passage. His obligation toward his fellow knights is more important to him, than his obligation toward damsels. This stance seems to be the opposite of his brother Walewein. The conflict receives no clear solution. Walewein meets dishonor in the tournament, but Gariet also meets dishonor: in the

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<sup>161</sup> 9677-9689.

<sup>162</sup> Busby, p. 322.

eyes of the damsel who does not greet him. It seems this passage is aimed at discussion, listeners can debate over the right solution.

I have now discussed the duty of knights have toward damsels, but do damsels also have a duty toward knights? Unlike Gurrees wishes, they do not seem to have a sexual duty toward knights that saved them. What they can repay the knight with, but I would hesitate to call this an obligation, is their kindness and gratitude. And luckily for the knights, this is something they quite generously offer, for it often saves their lives.

## Conclusion

It was my intention to make an analysis of the norms for the behavior of knights toward damsels in the brother sequence. While I have indeed found norms for this behavior, I have also found a lot of room for discussion and reflection. What it means to be a knight or a damsel is by no means fixed. We have seen powerful damsels overcoming knights with their strong reasoning, and we have also seen helpless damsels that need to be saved. The common misconception: that in the middle ages the rules for men and women were 'clear'; that they were 'simple' times, is once again shown to be completely wrong. Just as today, these norms were something people struggled with, as evident from the *Lancelot*.

At first glance, the brother sequence might seem to be quite a long intermezzo in the main narrative of the story: the brothers achieve nothing by way of saving Lancelot, their main objective. However, as I have hoped to show in this thesis, the brother sequence ties into many important themes explored in the *Lancelot* and we see a subtle opposition arising between the Walewein-clan and the Lancelot-clan. But even apart from that, it is a tremendously interesting passage, for there are many norms investigated here and adventures to be had.

In this thesis, I have explored the rules for knights toward damsels and vice versa. This, to answer the following research question:

*What (system of) norms for the behavior of knights toward damsels and vice versa can be distilled from the brother sequence within the context of the Lancelot Compilation?*

Reading through the brother sequence, looking for interaction between knights and damsels, one stumbles upon two major themes. The first is the romantic, but mostly sexual, interaction between knights and damsels. The second is the duties and obligations knights and damsels have toward each other. This had resulted in the following sub questions.

- *What system of norms for the behavior of knights and damsels concerning sexuality, courting and consent can be distilled from the brother sequence?*
- *How can the system of norms for the behavior of knights and damsels concerning sexuality, courting and consent from the brother sequence be connected to the Lancelot Compilation?*
- *What system of norms for the behavior concerning duty and obligation of knights toward damsels and vice versa can be distilled from the brother sequence?*
- *How can the system of norms for the behavior concerning duty and obligation of knights toward damsels and vice versa from the brother sequence be connected to the Lancelot Compilation?*

To answer these questions, I have made use of close reading of passages, and I have then related these passages to themes, passages, or characters of the *Lancelot compilation*. I have already written conclusions at the end of the chapters, so I will not repeat those in detail. Instead, I will give an overview of the brother sequence in sequential format. What are the norms explored in each of the adventures? And how do they relate to Lancelot and the *Lancelot Compilation*? I will build on my hypothesis that the narrative ordering of the brother sequence has the knights ordered from worst to best. It seems that these adventures in the

brother sequence function almost as thought experiments; what would happen if this type of knight would come across this type of damsel, or circumstance?

In Mordred's adventure, we have an evil knight demonstrating bad behavior. He also encounters people with similarly bad behavior. A damsel who is too easily persuaded, a man who is too easily *cuckolded*. Mordred, evil as he is, takes advantages of the circumstances, and especially of his honored position because of deeds done by his brother Gariet. This will probably not shine favorably on his family, but he seems to have no problems with this. This short adventure seems to be the most straight forward; this is not good behavior.

I have explored Agravein's adventure the least in this thesis, because he concerns himself least with damsels. Luckily for him, damsels are concerned with him and help him. His life is first saved by a damsel after his battle with Sornahan, she mentions Walewein's status, and then again in prison, for he is very well taken care off, because of the loyalty of a damsel towards Gurrees. Just like Mordred, he seems to be *free-loading* on the status and deeds of his brothers, but unlike Mordred, he is not damaging their reputation. Agravein is single-mindedly interested in status and in fighting, not in love. This does make him achieve one good knightly deed: the killing of Dryas.

The third knight is Gurrees, and he shows himself many a time to be a very good knight. However, his *persona* has a duality to it. He seems to be the intermediate between his brother Walewein and his brother Mordred. He is willing to help, he is brave, and he will not decline a damsel when she asks for help, here, we see similarities with the *persona* of Walewein. However, Gurrees also has a dark side. When he is confronted with his shortcomings, most prominently in the juxtaposition between him and Lancelot, and is refused by ladies, he becomes frustrated and very cruel. This results in horrible and cruel behavior, a cruelty his brother Mordred can also portray.

The damsels Gurrees encounters are, all three, strong minded women who know just what they want. Gurrees has longer conversations with the second and the third damsel, and in these conversations, the damsels excellently voice their positions and wants. They are searching for true love and they will not settle for some knight who only wants to sleep with them, no matter his prowess. The third damsel also explicitly points out Gurrees the juxtaposition between her heritage, her relation to Lancelot, and his, and his relation to Walewein.

Gariet, the best knight of the brothers in the brother sequence, has no romantic interaction with damsels in his adventure. However, he does encounter a challenge to his concept of duty. He is confronted with a moral dilemma: should he save an encountered damsel, or a fellow knight? He chooses the latter and his adventure seems to be a contrasted to the decisions made by his brother Walewein: who always helps a damsel, even if it impinges on his original quest.

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## Appendices

### Appendix one:

I	The perspective ends with Sornahan but Agravein is included: 6095-6097 <i>mer Davonture swiget hier ter stede Van hem ende van Agravein ende gewaget des Wat sinen broeder gevel, Gurrees.</i>
II	7477-7479 <i>Gurrees besagene ende vernam Dat Sagrimor was. Hi liep met desen Tote hem ende hietene wellecome wesen.</i> 7841 <i>ende Si scieden van Gurrees daer nare</i>
III	8425-8426 <i>Hi was in prisone geleidt na dien, Daer Agraveyn sijn broeder lach tier stonde.</i>
IV	9042-9043 <i>mer Hi quam te Brandelise ende ontbant Hem sine handen altehant.</i> 9116-9117 <i>Sagen si comen an dene side Gosengos van Strangeloet tien tide.</i>
V	9170-9176 <i>Doe sprac Gaheret tot hem lieden Dat goet ware dat si hem scieden</i> <i>ende Dat elc sinen wech name.</i> <i>ende Oec seide hi dat hem bequame Den rechten wech vort te varen doe, Die ginc vort ten castele toe Daer die joncfrouwe na hem ontbeet</i>
VI	9841-9845 <i>ende Alse Gariet hadde versien, Hi liep sere te hem wart Ende elc cussede andren metter vart Ende vragenden met willen groet Elc andren hoet met hem stoet.</i>

Table 2 Supplement to table 1