A Love so Tragic and Legendary: Queering the Prose Lancelot

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Abstract

The Old French *Prose Lancelot* is a work that is famous as part of the *Vulgate Cycle* of Arthurian Old French romances. Indeed, it is the inspiration for a number of late medieval to early modern retellings of these stories. This dissertation focuses on two key characters: Lancelot du Lac and Sir Galehaut of the Strange Isles. In this project, I work to queer the relationship between the two men to show how their companionship can be read a model for homoromantic feelings between men in thirteenth century French Romance.

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Introduction
Two Knights Walk into a Gay Bar

Let us imagine literary queer studies as a metaphysical gay bar and the characters often discussed as the patrons. Here you will find the usual suspects: Dorian Gray sipping gin in a dark corner, Achilles and Patroclus grinding on the dance floor, and Carmilla drinking something dark and red at the bar. Two Arthurian knights, Galehaut of the Strange Isles and Sir Lancelot du Lac hesitate in the doorway. There is a question in the eyes of Lancelot: *Do we belong here*? I imagine that Galehaut, the devoted companion, would take Lancelot's hand and pull him through the door. In this metaphysical gay bar, the two knights find their companionship reflected in the eyes of every pair of male-male friends who had their friendship dissected by queer theorists. Here they find themselves situated in a long tradition of homoerotic friendship that is something else, something deeper.

At this bar, however, they notice a distinct lack of medieval subjects, save for a few familiar faces, like Sir Gawain or Silence. There is a drink named after Eleanor Rykener. The reason for this is that queer theory of the Middle Ages is still evolving as a field – more so than others. As Erik Wade points out, medieval studies and queer theory have a tumultuous history (281). He explains that this goes doubly so for the studies of lesbians and trans folk, arguing, "Recent scholarship considers male same-sex desire but often at the exclusion of trans people and of lesbians" (284). Thus, the field of medieval queer studies has yet to catch up to its cousins in later times, particularly, the modern and postmodern fields. A response to this, and one that I have heard many times throughout my graduate program, is that of course later periods have a stronger development in queer theory, as many of those fields of studies (thinking particularly of nineteenth and later queer studies) are after the time in which queerness became an identity with

specific, recognized language. While I do acknowledge that point, and indeed talk more on this in subsequent chapters, pre-medieval studies, particularly studies in the classics, have a long history of queer theory and historical sexuality research. For example, the works of David Halperin and Kenneth J. Dover which focus on male homosexuality in ancient Greece, and more recently, Sandra Boehringer's[1] work on the poet Sappho and female homosexuality in ancient Greece. Those names represent a range of years from 1978 to 2021 of publication. In those years there were dozens – if not hundreds – more names of articles and books about homosexual practices in ancient Greece. Thus, if we consider the depth of queer theory scholarship after the medieval and *before* the medieval, it stands to reason that the medieval was not devoid of queer behavior and was certainly not limited to passing gestures of homoeroticism in literature.

There are books and articles dedicated to describing homoeroticism and queer practices in the Middle Ages. I am not suggesting that there is a complete void of scholarship, as scholars such as Carolyn Dinshaw, John Boswell, and Reginald Hyatte would prove me wrong in that regard. However, a good amount of these works, especially in the case of early books like Boswell's *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (1980), and Dinshaw's *Getting Medieval* (1999), focus on the *erotic* side of queer studies, with a rare glimpse into the emotional side. While my dissertation is not focused on the entirety of the medieval era, it is focused on a key aspect of medieval literature: chivalric romance, specifically, Arthurian chivalric romance. Thus, the scope and scale of the historical queerness I uncover and dissect is limited to the literary, and the chivalric, and is confined to the twelfth through thirteenth centuries. Furthermore, eroticism is a small piece of my argument as I am more concerned with the

[1] Halperin, David. *100 Years of Homosexuality*. Routledge, 1989.
Dover, Kenneth J. *Greek Homosexuality*. Harvard University Press, 1978.
Boehringer, Sarah. *Female Homosexuality in Ancient Greece and Rome*. Routledge, 2021.

emotional aspect of love and affection between two male knights, which proves to be the crux of the problem with medieval queer studies.

Love as an emotion is a hard thing to quantify, harder still to argue for or against. Love as a concept is nigh impossible to grasp in its ever-fleeting, transient nature. I am not the first person to wax poetic about love, nor will I be the last. The writers of chivalric romance constructed love in a variety of different ways: there was the love of the body and flesh – a base, erotic love; there was the love of the divine and the holy; and finally, there was the lofty concept of courtly love, or *fin'amor*, that gets so widely discussed when speaking on chivalric romance. Charlie Samuelson discusses this in his book *Courtly and Queer: Deconstruction, Desire, and French Literature*, as does Richard Zeikowitz in his book *Homoeroticism and Chivalry.* Samuelson's focus is how French courtly literature queers different forms of desire, using a variety of examples, one of which is, of course, the *Prose Lancelot*. Ziekowitz, not only focusing on the French but rather a broader spectrum of chivalric practices across Western Europe, dissects how chivalric practices utilize homoerotic themes, especially when constructing ideas of *fin'amor*. In a similar vein, Anne Callahan's book, *Writing the Voice of Pleasure: Heterosexuality Without Women*, discusses French troubadours and their invention of poetic love. Her arguments about love and desire in the courtly system are like Samuelson's but differ in that her concentration is more so on how heterosexuality gets invented by men writing about women without women present in the text, and how it often borrows from homosocial and homoerotic modes of male friendship. While not discussing knights the way that Samuelson and Ziekowitz bring up chivalric knighthood, Callahan's arguments are just as vital to my dissertation in constructing a framework of medieval poetic sexuality. Callahan and Samuelson show that diverse types of love pair with one another, such as the case with Lancelot and Guinevere in

almost any story where they are lovers. These stories are about the pairing of the base, erotic love with *fin'amor*. The questions I seek to answer with this dissertation are thus: where does romantic love fall between men? What happens when male companionship exceeds the bounds of friendships and lands itself firmly in the court of *fin'amor*, but without the eroticism present?

Due to the focus on the romantic and erotic, it is important to give some background on romantic relationships and eroticism in the Middle Ages. On romantic relationships, Gwenyth Hood writes, "Socially and politically, Medieval society was structured inconveniently for romantic lovers" (20). Hood argues that this is the case because of the way marriages were often a political move, with the romantic feelings of those in question not mattering much, if at all. Of course, this reading on marriage focuses on the aristocracy and not the common folk. This is an important distinction as I am also not speaking of commoners and their romantic practices, as the two knights I have written about are nobility. The genre of chivalric romance focuses on the nobility and the actions of knights of a certain class. In a larger study, I would love to compare how the chivalric examples of male companionship and love function differently from examples of rustic companionship – if any examples are not from the lens of the aristocracy. However, the scope of this project centers directly on the *Prose Lancelot* and its contemporaries, namely Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain ou Chevalier au Lion* and *Erec et Enide*, and the *Prose Tristan* among others. All of these utilize courtly themes.

If we look back to Hood's quote regarding medieval society being inconvenient in structure for romantic lovers and apply it to the heterosexual couples of the text, we can see it represented in both the *Prose Lancelot* and the *Prose Tristan*. For both Lancelot and Guinevere, and Tristan and Iseult, their romantic relationships end in tragedy. Both couples are dead by the end of their respective narratives, and while Tristan and Iseult are buried together, Lancelot and

Guinevere are not. Lancelot is buried instead with Galehaut. The heterosexual couples cannot be together because they go against the established rules for marriage – both couples commit adultery which is common in tales of *fin'amor*. Their romantic love intertwines with sexual love. In the case of Galehaut and Lancelot, however, Galehaut cannot sexually act upon the romantic love he feels for Lancelot. Thus, he cannot be both a romantic lover and a sexual lover.

Galehaut as a romantic lover without outright sexual overtures places him in stark contrast with the other medieval patrons of our metaphorical queer studies gay bar. Take, for example, Sir Gawain. Sir Gawain has long been the poster boy for medieval erotic studies, specifically Sir Gawain in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The homoerotic tensions between Gawain and Lord Bertilak are blatantly apparent. A myriad of interpretations has been leveled at the text, from Carolyn Dinshaw's argument about the text attempting to establish a heterosexual norm while being fascinated by homosexual tensions[2], to Gail Ashton's argument that the text represents the fear of homosexual desire through heterosexual performances[3]. The case of Gawain as a heterosexual construct battling against homoerotic desires is apparent here. His role in queer theory discourse as a convenient starting point for medieval queer studies is due to a variety of reasons: the first, is that the text is not subtle with homoeroticism, and second, it is a widely available text. Most, if not all students who study English literature have read *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* or at least excerpts of it, usually in an introduction to British literature survey course. For those that have not, the work was just adapted into a major motion picture in 2021, and thus, the story entered the public consciousness again, especially when that film (*The Green Knight*) has homoerotic scenes of its own between Bertilak and Gawain, despite the story

[2] Dinshaw, Carolyn. "A Kiss is just a Kiss: Heterosexuality and its Consolations in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*." *Diacritics*, vol. 24, no. 3, 1994, pp. 205-226.
[3] Ashton, Gail. "The Perverse Dynamics of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*." *Arthuriana*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2005, pp. 51-74.

itself being quite different than the original fourteenth-century poem. While Gawain and his story is not as famous as King Arthur pulling the sword from the stone or Lancelot and his affair with Guinevere, it has, however, been read widely enough for a general audience to be familiar with the name and some of the plot.

This is not the case for Sir Galehaut. His full story, as we know it, is found only in the *Prose Lancelot* with a few mentions in the *Prose Tristan*, and as a name in a few other works. The first use of the name "Galehaut," or "Galehot"/ "Galehault[4]", appears in the thirteenth-century *Prose Lancelot* as part of the *Lancelot-Graal* cycle, also known as the *Vulgate* cycle, of Old French romances, which includes the *Estoire de Merlin*, and the *Estoire de Saint Graal*. This romance cycle falls into a larger tradition of Arthurian romances, as it utilizes pre-existing stories to reimagine old characters and craft new ones, as is the case of Galehaut. The *Lancelot-Graal* cycle comes after the stories of Chrétien de Troyes, Marie de France, Robert de Baron, and Geoffrey of Monmouth, all of whom contributed to the collection of Arthurian tales now known as the *Matter of Britain*. Galehaut does not appear in any of these previous works. Thus, Galehaut is a French invention to the story of Lancelot and Guinevere; a story which had been told a century earlier in *Lancelot, le Chevalier de la Charrette* by Chrétien de Troyes without any mention of Galehaut. Chrétien's work features Lancelot and his adulterous affair with Queen Guinevere. The *Prose Lancelot* expands on this tradition and Lancelot's story. Later in the 13th century, however, the *Lancelot-Graal* cycle was rewritten into the *Post-Vulgate* cycle. This cycle omits the *Prose Lancelot* portions of the *Lancelot-Graal*, choosing instead to focus on the *Estoire de Saint Graal*, and in doing so, erases much of Galehaut and Lancelot's story.

[4] The Old French texts spells Galehaut names in a variety of different ways throughout the story, including Galehot, Galehos, Galehault, and Galeholt.

The *Vulgate*/*Lancelot-Graal* cycle was wildly popular. To illustrate this, the University of Pittsburg's *Lancelot-Graal Project* provides a map of when and where the *Lancelot-Graal* was published and circulated in France. The first manuscript, *Modena Bibliotecha Estense alpha E 39*, was distributed in the North of France, around the Champagne region (*Lancelot-Graal Project*). From there, the variations of the manuscript, some illustrated and some not, appear from 1210 to the early 1500s across different regions of France (*Lancelot-Graal Project*). Thus, the *Lancelot-Graal*, along with the *Prose Lancelot*, was circulated for over three hundred years in medieval France. Its contemporary work, the *Prose Tristan* was also widely circulated and mentions Galehaut and specific events that happen to him in the *Prose Lancelot*. From there, Galehaut gets a brief mention in Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, though Malory none of the relationship between Galehaut and Lancelot.

In the fourteenth century, Giovanni Boccaccio used Galehaut's name as a subtitle for *The Decameron*, calling it *Prencipe Galeotto*. Despite Boccaccio using Galehaut's name as a subtitle, he is not mentioned or even alluded to in any of the tales in *The Decameron*. Even the name "Galeotto" is debatable because the man himself is absent. María Rosa Menocal points out that the word "Galeotto," "has always been an interpretive conundrum" (178). She goes on to say that the word is rife with several meanings, chief among them are textual references, particularly towards a half-giant prince mentioned in the *Prose Lancelot*. While Menocal does not mention the *Prose Lancelot* by name, she does talk about the line in Dante's *Inferno* in which Galehaut is expressly mentioned: "Galeotto fu il libro e chi lo scrisse" / "A Galehault was the book and he wrote it" (5:137). The book mentioned here is the section of the *Prose Lancelot* in which Galehaut features. In this section, Galehaut acts as secret keeper for Lancelot and Guinevere's affair. He does so because of his love for Lancelot – Galehaut wants nothing more than to make

Lancelot happy, and thus, he keeps Lancelot's affair with the queen a secret. He is the reason that Lancelot and Guinevere can have the affair. In the *Inferno,* the character who mentions Galehaut is Francesca, who is in the fifth circle because of her love affair with Paolo after reading the story of Lancelot and Guinevere. The name "Galeotto" in the Inferno means both "pander" (Ciardi 64) and is a reference to Sir Galehaut's part in Lancelot's love affair. The double meaning of the word, coupled with it being said by Francesca in the circle of lust, compounds the idea that it is Galehaut whom Dante writes about and is the same Galehaut that Boccaccio utilizes for his subtitle. However, Menocal incorrectly translates this name as Galahad and devotes an entire section to her argument about how Galahad was a go-between for Lancelot and Guinevere. The issue, however, is her mistranslation of the name, which in turn misunderstands the very nature of Galehaut's relationship. For Galehaut the prince is as much in love with Lancelot as Guinevere is, and Galahad is Lancelot's son, and his love for his father is a different kind of love. Thus, the name Galehaut or "Galeotto" would be used by both Dante and Boccaccio as part of the tragic love model between Lancelot, Galehaut, and Guinevere.

Boccaccio invokes Galehaut's name as a subtitle because the stories of his *Decameron* focus on love, and Galehaut is a figure who famously, "died for love of Lancelot" as inscribed on his tombstone. He does not expand on Galehaut's story and leaves the name to serve as an ambiguous reminder of courtly love. Galehaut's name comes up again in Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur* towards the end of the fifteenth century. Like Boccaccio, Malory leaves out the rest of Galehaut's story, relegating the knight to a name and nothing more. Thus, Galehaut's name survives his own story.

The question that I ask throughout Chapter 2 of my dissertation is *why*, specifically, does his name survive but not his story? What about his story was so transgressive that its details

cannot get reprinted, but his name can while his story must be erased? The answer is simple, and it is just a mistranslation like in the case of Menocal's book. However, that mistranslation in and of itself holds a weight. It speaks of a larger erasure of Galehaut's story, so much so that a scholar like Menocal or her secondary readers did not catch that Dante or Boccaccio were not referring to Galahad when writing "Galeotto." It tells us that the name Galehaut had become so obscure by the time Menocal wrote her book in 1991 that it was – and still is – a common mistake to make. The erasure is something that is very queer about Galehaut. It is a familiar sort of pain that queer people feel. I speak on this not only as a scholar of medieval queer theory but as a queer person. Galehaut is a figure that has his reflections in the eyes of every gay man who has been in love with his best friend, of every queer person who has faced heartbreak at the hands of someone they love with their entire being. His experience is one lived by many, and to see that reflected in a character from a thirteenth-century story is a powerful recognition that our queerness has a story and that he belongs in the metaphorical queer studies gay bar.

The textual editions of the *Prose Lancelot* that I draw from are Alexandre Micha's and Oskar Sommer's[5] publication of the Old French texts and Norris Lacy's English translations. The subsequent chapters of my dissertation seek to tell the story of Galehaut and his intense love for Lancelot. I do this by analyzing the very structure of male companionship through the critical lens of a homosocial and homoromantic reading, by constructing a queerness in death, and finally, by discussing Galehaut's racial construction as a giant and linking it to the Othered queerness that he experiences in both life and death. I divide my dissertation into five chapters: the first is the introduction, then three subsequent body chapters, and a conclusion.

[5] Oskar Sommer compiled his Old French publication primarily from the British Library Add MS 10292-10293, Ff. IA to 129A manuscripts and Alexandre Micha compiled his from Corpus Christi College 45 (siglum A). I utilize both as there are slight variations in the manuscripts. Oskar Sommer's is a more complete version, whereas Micha's text omits a few passages. Both were used by Norris Lacy for Lacy's English translation of the text.

In the first chapter, "Who Could be Worthy of This: Homoromanticism through Literary Friendships," I discuss companionship as homoromantic practice, utilizing Lancelot and Galehaut as my primary examples. I use the arguments about *compagnonnage* as put forth by Reginald Hyatte[6] and place them into conversation with homosocial theory as pioneered by Eve Kosofky Sedgewick[7], and furthered by scholars such as Scott Kiesling[8] and Jammie Price[9]. Throughout the chapter, I argue that in the Prose *Lancelot*, there remains a continuum between homosexual, homosocial, and homoerotic that is not just unbroken but is furthered by the concept of homoromanticism. I define homoromanticism as the romantic feeling between men without the physical act of sex being present. I built a framework to analyze literary medieval friendships under the lens of homoromantic theory. Furthermore, I place Lancelot and Galehaut against other knightly friends, such as Yvain and Gawain from *Yvian* to show how Lancelot and Galehaut's *compagnonnage* goes a step further than normal homosocial male friendships.

To fully show how *compagnonnage* functions, I discuss how a homosocial construction with heavy homoerotic and romantic undertones applies to male characters in a literary format. I also argue that in this construction, both the homosocial and the heterosexual will seek to reassert themselves in a fragile type of balance. I utilize Chrétien's *Yvain* to accomplish this, showing how Yvain works as a model of the homosocial-heterosexual construction of the Arthurian court. Then, to contrast, I show how Galehaut and Lancelot transgress this ideal but turn the typically male-female construction of *fin'amor* into a male-male version of it, thus completing the

[6] Hyatte, Reginald. *The Arts of Friendship: The Idealization of Friendship in Medieval and Early Renaissance Literature*, Ej. Brill, 1994.
[7] Sedgewick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. Columbia UP. 2016.
[8] Kiesling, Scott Fabius. "Homosocial Desire in Men's Talk: Balancing and Re-creating Cultural Discourses of Masculinity." *Language in Society*, vol. 34, no. 5, 2005, pp. 695-726.
[9] Price, Jammie. *Navigating Differences: Friendships Between Gay and Straight Men*. Routledge, 1998.

homosocial into the homoromantic unbroken continuum. I end the chapter by further arguing that friendship and romantic love are indistinguishable.

In Chapter 2, "Bury Your Gays: Coded Romantic Love as Death, Friendship, and Queer Catharsis," I use death as both queer action and queer place for which romantic love can be encoded into a story. Building off the homoromantic framework I established in the first chapter; I argue that death exists as a place where queer men in a literary work can find themselves together if they could not be together in life. I start off the chapter with this quote from David Halperin: "death is to friendship what marriage is to romance" (79) to show that male-male friendship and romantic heterosexual relationships have similar constructions in the *Prose Lancelot* by using death as a focal point. To fully construct this idea, I utilize the arguments about death and queerness as put forward by modern theorists such as Leo Bersani[10], Noreen Giffney[11], and Alexander Kennedy[12]. The work of these scholars, especially by Bersani and Kennedy, utilizes Freudian theory of the death drive and provides an effective way to dissect Freudian theory through a literary lens. Throughout the chapter, I utilize the idea of the death drive to show how Galehaut's frequent proclamations of not being able to live without Lancelot mirror the intense romantic desire he feels for the other man.

To accomplish this, I provide a series of close readings collected in three scenes I titled the "three deaths of Galehaut and Lancelot." Each scene features a death, whether physical or imagined, between the two men. The first scene centers around the first time Galehaut believes Lancelot died when in fact Morgan held Lancelot captive. Galehaut loses all hope only to regain

[10] Bersani, Leo. "Is the Rectum a Grave?" *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism*, vol. 43, 1987, pp. 197-222.
[11] Giffney, Noreen. "Queer Apocal(o)ptic/ism: The Death Drive and the Human." *Queering the Non/Human*, ed. Myra J. Hird, Routledge, 2016, pp. 55-78.
[12] Kennedy, Alexander. "Identifying the Death of Gender – The Ghost of Masochism in the Queer Subject." *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 48, no.2, 2004, pp. 61-81.

himself when Lancelot is discovered to be alive. The second scene is Galehaut's death by heartbreak when he discovers Lancelot's blood-soaked sheets. Galehaut's death mirrors similar deaths by noble women in other romances. I further discuss the displacement of bodily desire from Lancelot's body to his broken shield. The third scene in the close reading section centers around Lancelot discovering Galehaut's tomb and Lancelot dissolving into a suicidal grief-madness. Throughout these three scenes, I argue that the queerness inherent in death is coded romantic love that can only exist because Galehaut is removed from the physical narrative, thus removing the specter of a homosexual attraction in life yet can be received in death after they are buried together.

In the third chapter, "In the Footsteps of Giant: Queerness, Giants, and the Other," I explore Galehaut's queerness in relation to his role as a half-giant. Throughout the chapter, I argue that Galehaut performs a paradoxical identity of Arthurian knight and half-giant conqueror, and those two roles are opposed on a social and cultural level. Galehaut is made to be an Other, but an Other that attempts to erase his status of Other to fit further into the knightly paradigm. I place Galehaut alongside other giants in Arthurian romance such as Harpin in *Yvain*. My argument centers around the giant being a racialized Other whose violence is the core part of their identity in chivalric romance as it exists to challenge the established chivalric masculinity in those texts, and then how Galehaut both challenges that in some ways and represents it in other ways.

This chapter delves into the Otherness of Galehaut as a type of gender transgression. I focus on Galehaut performing both the male and female roles in *fin'amor* styled interactions between himself and Lancelot. I compare his role as besotted lover of Lancelot to that of Iseult and Tristan in the *Prose Tristan*. By showing how the language used to describe Iseult is nearly

identical to how it is used for Galehaut, I argue that Galehaut's *fin'amor* is modeled from feminine models, and places Galehaut in a gender-defying role as Lancelot's companion. Galehaut is the ultimate transgressor of courtly masculinity as highlighted by characters such as Yvain and Erec. In shaking up this courtly masculinity, Galehaut places himself in a position to challenge the foundation of Arthur's court. Thus, Galehaut must meet the fate of every other giant in Arthurian romance: he must die for the proper courtly masculinity to reassert himself. I put this argument in conjunction with the death as coded romantic love argument from the earlier chapter.

Finally, the conclusion, entitled "The Afterlives of Galehaut" explores the futurity of the relationship between Galehaut and Lancelot. I utilize Galehaut's representation in online spaces, particularly in fanfiction and social media spaces, to show how Galehaut has come back into the cultural imagination, especially among queer people. The futurity of Galehaut and how his story gets represented in modern works of fanfiction is vitally important in understanding how queer people seek to see themselves in medieval works. It is a longing to have a queer past, especially if it is a literary one. This chapter concludes my arguments by not gesturing to the past or Galehaut's contemporaries in chivalric romance, but rather toward the future and how the future of queer medieval studies can evolve.

This dissertation, from inception to conclusion, is important to me for a variety of reasons, but the primary one is that I long to give Galehaut a voice he has been denied for so long. His voice, as so many others who have their queerness called into question, remained a silent cry into the fathomless void of history. The erasure of his very story saw to that. For a long time, Galehaut was simply a name on a tombstone, a reminder of Lancelot's magnetic prowess to affect both men and women. Yet it is within the last two decades or so that Galehaut has seen a

resurgence in scholarly attention. As queer theory becomes more prominent in medieval studies, so too does the rediscovery of potential queer characters in medieval literature. While I am loathe to use the word "potential," to describe the sheer intensity of Galehaut's emotions towards Lancelot, I still must bow to the fact that there are several factors that hinder us in our quest to understand how queerness functions in a literary text.

The first is that we were not there when it was written. It does indeed feel incredibly simplistic to write that, but it is the truth. Our knowledge of medieval literature is informed by what is on the page and emboldened by what is not. Law codes and religious sermons against sodomy can fill in the *why* Galehaut and Lancelot not having sex on the page. Ruth Mazo Karras[13] and Carolyn Dinshaw[14] have certainly written on the complications of the concept of sodomy and what specific punishments anti-sodomy laws put in place for male-male relations. When it comes to the minds of the medieval reader, we as modern people were not there, and thus, it is difficult to know in full certainty what the audience would have thought about Galehaut and Lancelot. The physical text becomes a portal to navigate the murky waters of historical reactions. Scholars can look at what later retellings of Galehaut and Lancelot omitted for one: which is the entirety of Galehaut's story save for his name. Very rarely do we even get the mention that he "died for love of Lancelot." The only other time this appeared is in the *Prose Tristan*. Later renditions of the *Prose Lancelot* omit this line entirely.

This brings me to the other factor which impedes our queer understanding: the act of reading silence. While I discuss this more in the body of my dissertation, reading silence, or reading what is purposefully *not* mentioned in the text, is a powerful tool. However, it is possible

[13] Karras, Ruth Mazo. "The Regulation of Sodomy in the Latin East and West." *Speculum*, vol. 95, no. 4, 2020.
[14] Dinshaw, Carolyn. *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre-and Postmodern*, Duke UP, 1999.

to get carried away with one's own assumptions and lose a clinical approach to the text. In reading silence, I refer to analyzing the omission of the romantic relationship between Galehaut and Lancelot from other textual reproductions of *Prose Lancelot's* story. In the case of queerness and the silencing of same-gender attraction, omitting an entire relationship from a reproduction of a work shows how queerness inherent in that work was marginalized or forgotten about. When the authors purposefully omit something they find morally objectionable – here referring to Galehaut's love of Lancelot – then scholars can build a picture in which queer actions happened but are consistently removed from the narrative and thus, from the fabric of the cultural story.

When I speak of cultural stories, I speak of the stories that bind us in the eyes of a Western cultural experience. King Arthur and the stories of him and his knights – especially Lancelot – are engrained in the cultural fabric of Western popular culture. We can trace Arthurian literature's cultural impact from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Brittanae* (c. 1136) to Chretién's wildly popular *Yvain*[15] (c. 1180), to the *Prose Lancelot* and *Prose Tristan* (early 13th century), to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (late 14th century), to Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* (1485), to Tennyson's *Idylls of a King* (1859), to finally Tracy Deon's Black reimagining of the Arthur story in *Legendborn* (2020). This is by no means an exhaustive list of the continuation of Arthurian literature, but rather, it shows that Arthur literature has transcended its own cultural story to evolve and expand into relevancy in our twenty-first-century cultural framework. The story of Arthur changes over time, adapting to the cultural frameworks of each time it gets retold. For example, Tracy Deon's *Legendborn* centers the story of Arthurian around a Black college student who is the descendant of Arthur and gets suddenly thrust into a world of other

[15] The popularity of Yvain is attested to in Rella Kushelevsky's article, "Jews Reading Arthurian Romances from the Middle Ages: On the Reception of Chrétien de Troyes *Yvain, the Knight of the Lion*, based on Manuscript JTS Rab. 1164," where she states, "By the first half of the fourteenth century, dozens of translations and adaptations existed in a variety of languages" (394). Indeed, *Yvain* has translations in Middle English, Old Norwegian, Old Swedish, and Middle Welsh works.

descendants of legendary knights. The story itself is a celebration of Blackness and a main character, named Bree, who fights to overcome old systems of patriarchal white hierarchy of Western civilization. The story reflects the push against the very narrow view of what Western civilization is in the modern world. It is like other Arthurian stories; take for example Chrétien de Troyes's sharp-tongued critique of courtly society in *Yvain, Lancelot,* and *Erec et Enide,* only Deon is taking it a step farther than Chrétien ever could.

She is a Black woman challenging the white masculine narrative that Arthurian literature typically embodies. In the view of Westernized whiteness, her identity as Black woman is marginalized. In this marginalization, something I too have experienced as a biracial queer scholar in medieval studies, there is a power here to challenge the existing narratives, to change the very fabric of the cultural story. In writing out Galehaut's story from a queer marginalized perspective, I have found myself identifying with this son of a giantess more than I thought I would. I wrote this dissertation, not from a sense of clinical, cold remote detachment, but with the fire and passion of someone who has shouted their own story to the world. With this voice, I will shout Galehaut's story so that he will become more than just a name on a tombstone.

From the confines of the metaphysical queer theory gay bar, Galehaut will hear me shout his story. Maybe he gives Lancelot a small, embarrassed smile as he orders his first drink. There is a sense of belonging in the atmosphere, a sense of recognition even. I think Galehaut would order whiskey.

Chapter 1
Who Can be Worthy of This?: Homoromanticism through Literary Friendships

Towards the beginning of Galehaut's narrative within the anonymously authored *Prose Lancelot*, the narrator states the following when Galehaut agrees to surrender to Arthur to become Lancelot's companion:

> Et quint li boins cheualiers en uoit aler galahot & faire si grant mischief pour lui si quide bien & dist que nus si boins amis ne si veritable compaignon not il onques mais. Si en a si grant pitie que il en souspire del cuer aual. *pleure des iex de la teste sous le hiaume. & distentre ses dens. Biax sire diex qui porra ce deseruir (Sommer III: 246).
>
> When the Good Knight saw Galehaut go off to perform such a great sacrifice for him, he readily believed and said that he never had such a good friend or so true a companion. He was so moved that his sighs came from the bottom of his heart; tears ran from his eyes, and he said between clenched teeth: Blessed Lord God, who can be worthy [recompense] of this?[16] (Lacy II: 138).

The "Good Knight," of course, refers to Lancelot before Galehaut knows his name. When Lancelot asks of God, "qui porra ce deseruir," after witnessing Galehaut sacrifice his social standing for this man he has barely known more than a night, Lancelot shows a type of immediate devotion that is reminiscent of the way lovestruck heroes in chivalric romances often proclaim their love for their partners. Lancelot's language of being "worthy" enough for Galehaut's chivalric companionship, or his *compagnonnage* as Reginald Hyatte refers to it, is the

[16] Notes of translation: The Old French original text is supplied by the Sommer text, most notable, Vol. III of *Le Livre de Lancelot del lac* add. MS. 10293, Ff. IA t o129A. The English translation is largely used from Norris Lacy's Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation, Vol. II and myself.

central part of this passage. It codifies his friendship not just as a chivalric friendship but also as *fin'amor*.

Of the two knights, Hyatte writes, "The narrator recodes male friendship as *fine amor*: the chivalric *amis* typically behave towards one another in much the same manner as the romance's *fine amant* Lancelot and his ladylove" (90). The behavior that Hyatte discusses is done initially by both Lancelot and Galehaut, and includes, among others, swooning, acts of devotion, and acts of self-sacrifice. Of course, knights swooning over each other is not an uncommon act in chivalric romances, not even in *Lancelot*, as Gawain, Yvain, and others frequently swoon and faint over Lancelot and each other. As Hyatt points out, however, "the frequency and intensity of such scenes with Lancelot and Galehout in the *Prose Lancelot* indicate a depth of affections between the characters that goes beyond conventional representations of *compagnonnage*" (108). Their *compagnonnage*, heightened to a grand degree, separates Lancelot's relationships with the other men from his relationship to Galehaut. Hyatte's work focuses primarily on friendship, especially as it relates to Aristotle's *amiticia perfecta*.

My argument, while utilizing much of Hyatte's work, deviates in that I am explicitly concerned with the romantic implications of such a friendship, rather than the erotic or the ideal friendship. I see this in the intensity of the acts of knightly friendship that Hyatte and others have noticed. However, it is their swooning and devotion to one another that places them a step further than how Arthurian romance traditionally represents male-male friendship. Galehaut is Lancelot's truest friend and confidant, so much so that the bridge between friendship and lover, in every aspect of the chivalric romance ideal of both "friend" and "lover," gets crossed. Galehaut is both Lancelot's *amis* as well as his *amant*. The continuation of a form of male-male companionship bridges from homosocial friendship into something more, something deeper. It

crosses the spectrum of homosocial friendship into the romantic and situates Galehaut as a (sometimes unrequited) lover of Lancelot, who like many lovers in medieval romances, goes on to die from heartache over the one he loves. Thus, Galehaut and Lancelot, and the language used to describe their relationship, parallels other heterosexual *fin'amor* style romantic relationships.

The goal of this chapter is to discuss the construction of romantic attraction through male-male friendships, the language used to insinuate this queer relationship, and ultimately build what I have termed "homoromantic theory," which can be defined as a theory dealing primarily with the love and affection between two men without the physical act of sex present between them. The arguments present in this chapter build my overall framework that Galehaut's love and devotion for Lancelot have the same romantic affection that Lancelot's love for Guinevere has. It is romantic love masquerading under the guise of deep friendship, something we see in other warrior-friend bonds in medieval literature. Thus, it is my theory that within *Lancelot* there is an unbroken cycle between the homosocial, homoerotic, and homoromantic that takes place. *Lancelot* further complicates this theory by the removal of sex from a straightforward male-male interpretation of the *fin'amor* trope of chivalric romance.

As part of my framework on romantic friendship, I begin with Sedgwick's definition of the homosocial. She writes,

> 'Homosocial' is a word occasionally used in history and the social sciences, where it describes social bonds between persons of the same sex; it is a neologism, obviously formed by analogy with 'homosexual.' In fact, it is applied to such activities as 'male-bonding,' which may, as in our society, be characterized by intense homophobia, fear and hatred of homosexuality (2).

This basic definition of Sedgwick's interpretation of the homosocial shows that the homosocial is seen as actions regarding gender-aligned companionship. She goes on to argue that there is a continuum between homosexuality and the homosocial and that whether the bond between two men can be seen as erotic depends greatly on social factors that change with time. In the genre of heightened stakes and emotional beats that are chivalric romance, especially early French chivalric romance, there is a need for social bonds between men. These homosocial bonds create an atmosphere that codifies what it means to be part of an elite patriarchal group, such as the Knights of Camelot.

In a similar vein Rachel Moss argues, "In a patriarchal society like late medieval England, male solidarity or bonding is vital in order to maintain norms of gendered behavior and of social power" (103). While Moss's argument centers around late medieval English romances and uses Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* as one of her primary texts, her concept of the homosocial to solidify bonds of male power is like how I approach the homosocial as it relates to the *Prose Lancelot* and early French chivalric romances. Homosocial group actions, such as questing and adventuring together, cement the homosocial bonds between the men of Camelot. The structure of these homosocial bonds further solidifies masculine power, as seen in the arguments of Scott Kiesling and Alien Klein, and it is vital in understanding how the bonds between men get from a homosocial desire into one of homoromanticism or even homoeroticism.

In his work, Kiesling argues that groups of men use homosocial language to solidify their masculinity and provide a "powerful homosociality" (720) that gives them a sense of dominance over women and other men not in their homosocial circles. These bonds between certain, elite men link to the power that men hold in society. One of Kiesling's arguments, found in his essay, "Homosocial Desire in Men's Talk: Balancing and Re-creating Cultural Discourses of

Masculinity," focuses on the structure of fraternities as an example of the homosocial. Specifically, his argument on male fraternities and the construction of an elite social sphere draws the most interest for me. He writes,

> Homosocial desire is created partially by creating a status for fraternity members as somehow more masculine – a better example of the cultural discourses of masculinity – than are the nonmembers in whom the desire is created. The fraternity membership symbolizes power (720).

Membership into a group centered on masculine language and behavior which then serves as a method of differentiating between men who have power and men who do not have power is significant to the discussions of the homosocial and medieval romance, specifically, the way knighthood functions in these stories.

Similarly to Kiesling, Richard Zeikowitz argues,

> Male homosocial intimacy propels ideal chivalric conduct (knights perform commendable acts out of feelings of 'loyal affection" for their lord) and ideal chivalric conduct strengthens male homosocial intimacy (knights and lord love and honor one another more as a result of good deeds done) (24).

Thus, the fraternity of knighthood is a construction that allows for homosocial bonds to not only strengthen society but to keep men in positions of power by forming relationships with other men who both admire them and aspire to emulate them. The Knights of Camelot are no different from this construction; they are an elite brotherhood of warriors, second only to King Arthur in power and social standing. To get admittance into this group of men, who, in many different romances, treat the bonds between them as sacred, is of paramount importance. Once one joins a

homosocial order, one must then uphold that order and the bonds of homosociality to perform the right idea of masculine companionship or else be chastised (or worse, ostracized).

Take, for instance, the scene in Chrétien de Troyes's, *Yvain ou le Chevalier au Lion* in which Gawain and Kay berate Yvain for not going adventuring with them. In a rousing speech, Gawain states, "Commant? Seroiz vos or de çaus, Cre disoit mes sire Gauvains / qui por lor fames valent mains (Foerster 2484-2456) / "What?" Said Gawain. "There are men / who are not the men they were / once they're married" (Raffel 2484-2486). He further states that men who spend all their time with their wives and grow soft will lose the power and renown they accrued as adventuring knights. Thus, spending too much time away from homosocial bonds will limit a man's power, as his opposite-gendered partner will undoubtedly influence him. Of course, the author makes clear that Yvain needs both the bonds of his brothers-in-arms and the bond between him and his wife. Yvain proves this when he does not come home after a year and Laudine sends a *female* messenger into the masculine homosocial hall of Camelot and publicly shames Yvain and divorces him. At that moment, his power as a man is stripped from him in front of his fellow men. In doing so, Laudine usurps the power of a homosocial circle by casting out Yvain because he no longer meets the requirements to be in that group. In the end, both heterosexuality and homosociality reassert themselves after Yvain proves himself to Laudine by going on even more adventures and accruing even more renown for himself. At first, he does this alone, but later in the company of a lion he rescues. Yvain goes on his quests to prove himself to Laudine because he is no longer worthy of her love after he betrays her trust. As Gawain points out, "Amander doit de bele dame / qui l'a a amie ou a fame, / ne ne'est puis droiz, que ele laint / que ses pris et ses los remaint" (Foester2489-2492) / a beautiful lady / should make us better, as friend / or as a wife. No one should be loved / who is not worth it" (Raffel 2489-2492). This speech, which

foreshadows much of Yvain's story, shows that it is not the homosocial bonds that get Yvain into trouble, but his lack of honor in betraying his promise to his lover that causes his strife, which leads her to disrupt the entire paradigm of the male companionship. Aside from Yvain going mad and leaving Camelot for a time, the construction of fraternal bonds between the rest of the knights is not affected by this and in the end, after Yvain has proven himself worthy as both husband and knight, the heterosexual paradigm is upheld while at the same time adhering to the bonds of the homosocial as Yvain gains re-admittance to the Knights of Camelot. In *Yvain*, the homosocial gets offset by the adherence to a heteronormative courtly construction.

The privileged male bonds of the medieval homosocial are constructed to uphold men's power and patriarchal institutions, especially literary ones like Camelot. Moss, utilizing Kiesling's arguments, states,

> Within medieval romance, socio-economic position, martial prowess, and cultural interests bind men either into explicitly constructed homosocial organizations such as the Round Table, or into looser but still politically significant social groups (104).

The bond between Lancelot and Galehaut within *Lancelot* is signified by all three of the things Moss lists: they are of similar socioeconomic position after Galehaut all but gives up his throne for Lancelot, they are frequently touted as the best knights in the realm, and they are all culturally invested in the project of knighthood. However, the *Prose Lancelot* takes these bonds farther than mere homosociality. Galehaut especially transgresses the heterosexual paradigm of medieval masculinity and instead seeks to blur the lines between homosocial, homoerotic, and homoromantic.

The strict lines that we have crafted between platonic love and romantic love in the twenty-first-century conception of the terms did not exist for the author of *Lancelot*. The desire for companionship, especially in a case as intense as Galehaut's, transcends the already thin line between what is acceptable as knightly companions and what is normal for lovers. The homosocial bonds of knighthood, codified in its very construction, are then taken a step further by making Galehaut not just desire friendship, but Lancelot completely. The first instance of this happens when Galehaut witnesses Lancelot's prowess as a man on the battlefield for the first time.

In this scene, Galehaut still follows the prescribed idea of the homosocial in terms of Kiesling's argument for the desire for masculine groups, but also in Moss's analysis of seeking out a companion of similar martial prowess and masculine stature, as Lancelot's martial skill as a knight draws Galehaut to him initially. Galehaut, however, takes all this a step forward by adding elements of the romantic; he is completely overcome by Lancelot– so much so that he willingly does whatever the knight asks of him if he can retain the other man as a companion. The anonymous narrator of the story states,

> la nuit dormi li chevaliers moult dorment. & toute nuit se plaignoit en son dormant. & Galahos looit bien car il ne dormoit gaires aines pensa toute nuit a retiner le chevalier (Sommer III : 247) /
>
> The Knight [Lancelot] slept very soundly, but all night long he moaned in his sleep. Galehaut heard him clearly, for he scarcely slept at all, but spent the time thinking of a way to retain the knight (Lacy II: 136-137).

Here, Galehaut sleeps in the same room as Lancelot but is unable to take his rest because every thought he has is devoted to the sleeping knight[17]. Furthermore, Galehaut sends the rest of his soldiers out of the room so that it is just him and Lancelot sleeping side by side. The secrecy in which Galehaut places his newfound love of Lancelot (still unnamed at this point) falls into the secret lovers trope so common in *fin'amor*. It also mirrors Lancelot and Guinevere's initial love-at-first-sight meeting in Chrétien's work. There, Lancelot is also unnamed when he first meets his love interest. In this trope, there is sometimes a third party which keeps the lover's secrets; later in the *Prose Lancelot*, Galehaut becomes the secret keeper for Lancelot and Guinevere, which allows him to take part in Lancelot's sexuality, even if by proxy. In the scene quoted above, the audience becomes the secret keeper for Lancelot and Galehaut's intimate moment. As the audience, we are privy to Galehaut's intense devotion to Lancelot. This type of obsessive devotion for another man is unlike other knights' devotions to each other in *Lancelot*, and the emotional objective to possess Lancelot is a central theme to not only Galehaut's story but also his rival for Lancelot's affection, Guinevere. The two characters are in a constant orbit around Lancelot, so much so that their lives, and their deaths, are influenced by the Good Knight. Lancelot is a pivotal character for many, not just in *Lancelot* but the greater corpus of Arthurian literature, so much so that Jane Gilbert refers to him as "an impossible object of Arthurian desire" (71).

To further illustrate the obsession with having Lancelot, take the scene in which Arthur and Guinevere beg Lancelot to join the Knights of the Round Table in *Lancelot*. In this scene, there is a series of conflicting desires entangled in the need to possess Lancelot. For Arthur, it is

[17] This scene, happening in the beginning of Galehaut's and Lancelot's relationship, has proven controversial among scholars. Many scholars believe that Galehaut placed himself in Lancelot's bed after the other knight had fallen asleep, whereas Reginal Hyatte believes this is a misinterpretation of the French in the manuscript, saying instead, there are multiple beds in the tent and that Galehaut went to one closest to Lancelot. Either way, the emotional intensity of this seen can signify a queer affection that Galehaut has for Lancelot.

the desire to retain the greatest knight in all the realm in his knightly order, thus increasing his power and social standing among the Kings of Europe. For Guinevere, it is getting access to the man she loves and wants to continue an affair with. On the contrary side, there is Galehaut, who wishes to possess Lancelot himself as his greatest companion, so much so that he gives up conquering another kingdom, and thus takes his actions a step further than normal homosocial bonds and placing them more in line with Guinevere's desires. Yet, he sacrifices his position of power for the sake of having Lancelot's love. Galehaut does this willingly. He says to Lancelot, "demandes quanque vous voldres & vous plaira Car ie ne vos escondirai iamais. Plus vous ai ie ame que terriene honor" (Sommer III: 250). / "ask whatever you wish, and I'll never refuse you, for you are dearer to me than worldly honor" (Lacy II: 138). With this statement, he has fully submitted himself to Lancelot – a man of lesser social standing than him – in a way that says he is willing to diminish his honor for the sake of being with him. Honor for a knight in an Arthurian romance is a precious, near-spiritual thing[18].

This social sacrifice comes on the heels of stopping his campaign to conquer the kingdom of Logres and submitting himself to King Arthur (at Lancelot's behest). Galehaut's actions are not just ones of companionship but speak of something more romantic; a mirror to traditional modes of *fin'amor*. He does all this simply because the man he has fallen in love with asks him to. This love, as many courtly romances do, starts with love at first sight, and that love is so strong that Galehaut is willing to self-sacrifice his kingdom and his honor. He is utterly humbled before Lancelot in a way that is a stark reminder of how Tristan and Yvain become humbled before their lovers. On Galehaut's actions, Anna Klowsowksa writes, "The word and actions that

[18] Both Galehaut and Lancelot frequently talk about their honor and how it is a central part of their character. Lancelot especially laments over the fear of himself losing honor, or at Galehaut losing honor for willingly surrendering to Arthur at Lancelot's request. Zeikowitz also discusses the importance of honor in chivalric code.

represent the love of Galehaut for Lancelot would, in a heterosexual couple, bespeak passionate love. In the case of friendship between two men, they allow the text to flirt with homoeroticism" (143). Galehaut's friendship is the perfect disguise for romantic attraction. He uses friendship to chase after Lancelot in a way that a homosocial environment normalizes while maintaining that Lancelot is the person he loves most.

One of Galehaut's paramount problems in this narrative is that he cannot be the only one to possess Lancelot's love. Indeed, this conflict becomes romantic because Galehaut wants to be Lancelot's everything, and he knows he cannot be if he must share Lancelot with other people. Furthermore, Galehaut is duty-bound as a knight to preserve the heterosexual paradigm that is Camelot, while at the same time carving out a place for his love for Lancelot. When Guinevere and Arthur demand that Galehaut bring Lancelot (who is still unknown to them by name) before them, Lancelot is visibly upset for fear of being recognized. The two have the following exchange:

> & galahos li dist sire ne vous esmahies de rien. Mais dites moi outreement comment vous uoles que il soit. & bien sacies que il sera ensi comme vous uoldrois. Car ie voldroie miex ester corecies a demi le mond que a vos tout seul. & por la vostre amor ont il la moie. Or si me dies quil vous em plaist. / Sire fait le cheualiers ce que vois men loeres. Car ie sui en vostre garde des ore mais (Sommer III: 249)
>
> And Galehaut said to [Lancelot]: "My lord, do not be concerned, but tell me without more ado how you wish things to be, and be assured that it will be as you desire, for I would prefer to be at odds with half the world than with you alone. It is for your sake that they have my love. Now tell me what you wish.

> "My lord, said [Lancelot], "whatever you advise, for I am hence forth in your care" (Lacy II: 141).

This exchange has a twofold construction: one, Galehaut is professing his love and loyalty towards Lancelot in much the same way that Lancelot professes his love and loyalty for Guinevere in the *Prose Lancelot* and in other Arthurian romances – namely, Chretien's *Lancelot, le Chevalier de la Charrette* (line 1750). He does all this despite knowing that Lancelot asks about Guinevere, who, at this point has become Galehaut's rival for Lancelot's affections. Lancelot becomes the maiden that Galehaut swears to protect. Lancelot putting himself in Galehaut's keeping further signifies the allusion to the knight/lady bond so prominent in chivalric romance. Furthermore, Lancelot's statement above gives way to Galehaut's desire to possess him. For a moment, he is no longer an unobtainable object of desire, but a companion whose love Galehaut has completely.

However, this is just one moment, for Lancelot's true obsession is split between his desire for Galehaut's companionship and his longing for the love of Queen Guinevere. On the opposite, it is Galehaut who does not desire a female companion, even though he ends up taking a female lover. The focus of his entire being centers on Lancelot. His affair with Lady Malehaut is limited to a mention of sex and almost nothing else (Sommer III:411). There is no emotional swooning at the mention of her, nor is there any time in the prose in which Galehaut proclaims his love the same number of times that he does for Lancelot. This is purposefully so. If the narrator were to have Galehaut lusting over his lady the way that Lancelot does over Guinevere, then the relationship between Galehaut and Lancelot would not have the strong romantic underpinnings that make it such a central crux to the story of Lancelot.

In the desire to possess and keep Lancelot, Galehaut not only fulfills the role of Lancelot's friend but, as Gilbert argues, "Lancelot's passionate lover" (70) in terms of chivalric romance. The language of possession and utter devotion signifies a shift from the accepted models of male-male companionship and into the realm of companionship that is of a similar affection model to Lancelot and Guinevere. Of this, Hyatte writes, "The *Prose Lancelot* provides the title character with a complement to Queen Guinevere's love in the perfect, this-worldly devotion of Galehaut's *amistie/amor,* chivalric friendship or *compagnonnage* which shares many extreme affective characteristics with romance representations of erotic love" (90). Here, Hyatte, like myself, directly compares Galehaut's friendship with Guinevere's love. However, Hyatte's argument leaves out one of the fundamental parts of the relationship between Galehaut and Lancelot: for all his obsession, Galehaut's love for Lancelot is sexless. Whereas Lancelot's relationship with Guinevere is anything but. The question then becomes, how does this relate to the romantic sense of the relationship? Are the two relationships the same in terms of emotional contact when one is entirely sexless?

There are implied erotic underpinnings to how Galehaut desires Lancelot in compliment to the romantic ones. The focus on his body and how Lancelot uses his body in battle is the first instance that comes to mind. There is an inherent eroticism in the parallels between how knights use their bodies in combat and the way bodies act in sex, especially when seen through the gaze of appreciation by other men. In the first instance that Galehaut lays eyes upon Lancelot, coded in this next passage as "The Black Knight," we see the first instance of the erotic male gaze being turned on another man. The narrator writes:

> Quant Galahos vit ces meruielles que il faisoit si se meruiella comment le cors dun chevalier pooit ce faire. & dist a soi meismes que il ne vaudroit avoir conquis toutes les

terres qui sont le trosne par couent que. Si preudom fust mors par ses coupes (Sommer III: 242).

When Galehaut saw these wonders, he marveled at how one knight could accomplish this, and said to himself that he would not want to have conquered all the lands under the heavens, if such a splendid knight were to die through his fault (Lacy II: 134).

The wonders that Galehaut witnesses are all martial feats, including defending against Galehaut's entire army and killing his way through many other knights. The act of physical prowess sets Lancelot apart from other men, so much so that Galehaut notices him and immediately wants him. There is the intense desire to be around a man at the pinnacle of martial prowess – essentially, of martial manhood. A few lines later, Galehaut says to Lancelot, "chevaliers estes vous le mieudres qui soit & vous estes li hons el monde que ie miex vaudroie honorer. Si vous sui venus requerre en tous gueredons que vous vengies hui mais herbergier o moi" (Sommer II: 244) / "a knight you are, the best there is, and the man I would most wish to honor in all the world: I've come to ask you, as a favor, to come stay with me tonight" (Lacy II: 135). Note that Galehaut is not asking Lancelot to come as a prisoner of war or to barter a peace treaty, he wants to have Lancelot by his side at night. There is an immediate and potent need to be close to Lancelot and to have that homosocial bond with him. In Galehaut's mind, it would make him a richer man just to be in the company of this incredible knight.

In contrast, the other knights, specifically Gawain, notice that Lancelot goes with Galehaut and are so visibly distraught that Gawain "fainted three times in less time than it takes to go to a small stone's throw" (Lacy II 135-136) /"mesire Gauuain en a teil duel que il fois pasmes deure que len alast le iet dune menue piere" (Sommer III:245). Not only is Gawain upset but so is Guinevere who was "so furious she could not utter a word [with her mouth]" (Lacy

II:135) / “si tant erragie que ele ne puet mot dire de la bouche “(Sommer III: 245). Both characters desire Lancelot almost as much as Galehaut. For Gawain, it is entirely homosocial. There is little eroticism between the two aside from Gawain’s hero-worship of Lancelot. If he loses Lancelot to Galehaut then his status of friend of the best knight in the world is called into question. His position in the homosocial hierarchy of knights is called into question as well. It is adjacent to Lancelot and his skills that Gawain needs, despite Gawain being a good knight in his own regard. At the end of the day, he is not Lancelot. For Guinevere, her feelings mirror those of Galehaut. They both want Lancelot by their side at night.

The key difference between Galehaut and Guinevere, however, is that the text is explicit about what happens when Lancelot beds with Guinevere and is purposely vague as to what happens with Galehaut and Lancelot share a room and a bed – as they often did when traveling. This ambiguity is here to reinforce the heterosexual design of Camelot and to make the notions of homoeroticism clouded with uncertainty yet stronger in tone than the interactions between Lancelot and other knights. It is a precarious balancing act. The eroticism inherent in knights’ gazes for one another is never acted upon. Physically, Lancelot remains an unobtainable object of desire. Emotionally, however, Galehaut is the one knight who has him. Sex – while alluded to in Galehaut’s physical appreciation of Lancelot, is never actualized in the text.

In taking sex out of the equation for Lancelot and Galehaut, the sin of sodomy is further removed from the story. Mieszkowski discusses this in her reading of *Lancelot*: “Sodomy was an unspeakable sin from the 12th through the 15th centuries, but no reader of idealized representations of relationships like Lavain’s and Galehot’s would have been forced to think about sodomy” (48). Her argument focuses on the structural component of *Lancelot*, specifically, how the author crafts the romance without any mention or allusion to sodomy. Mieszkowski

argues that this is done because the relationship itself is idealized; it is something for other knights to aspire to. If the sin of sodomy was realized in the manuscript, then the relationship would no longer be idealized, but would be condemned. Thus, any allusion to sodomy, taken here to mean sexual intercourse between men, could not happen. The relationship remains in limbo between appropriate levels of friendship between men while maintaining an emotionally romantic feeling.

In constructing Galehaut's romantic love as friendship, I must first separate our current, 21st-century concepts of platonic friendship versus romantic friendship. As George Haggerty states, "Platonic friendship comes into clearest focus in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (120). Before then, friendship and platonic love were not synonymous. The lines between erotic love, platonic love, and romantic love were blurry at best. In our modern society, however, homosocial groupings have a largely platonic code. This is due to homophobia and the fear of being perceived as homosexual. In a qualitative study done in the late nineties regarding friendships between straight and gay men, Jammie Price found that "heterosexual men often desire more social distance from gay men" and that was evidenced by "[heterosexual men's] negative reactions to gays in the U.S. Military and the increasing number of hate crimes, predominantly committed by heterosexual men against gay men" (2). Here we see that in the late 20th century, tensions between two different sexual identities of males – homosexual and heterosexual – not only existed but were fully formed identities in the way they are now in the early 21st century.

The language of these identities, as I have noted previously, is a modern invention. Galehaut could not label himself homosexual or bisexual because those terms were not invented yet. In that same regard, however, he could not label himself as heterosexual either, for to have

the existence of the language of heterosexuality means that its opposite, the language of homosexuality must also exist. If neither language is constructed yet, then Galehaut's identity, and more importantly, the identity of his friendship with other knights, does not fall into our current construction of friendship. Thus, the parallels between the rise in platonic friendship as Haggerty sees it and the construction of the term homosexual in the late 19th century are not a coincidence. Indeed, Gretchen Mieszkowski, adapting the arguments of Bruce Wells, states, "It was only late in the 18th century that male bonding and male homosexuality began to be seen as opposed to each other rather than as 'different aspects of the same psychological and social phenomenon'" (270). This is not to say that men desiring to be in a relationship with other men exploded in the 18th and 19th centuries. Men loving men was not a new phenomenon: it was given a language. Rather, the construction of the term homosexuality and the implications of applying that term to an individual to highlight "unnatural desires" are not entirely removed from the medieval charges of sodomy.

The emergence of the term, "homosexuality," however, is a precarious construction that begins to change male-male friendships. As Kiesling discusses homosocial groupings like sports teams and fraternities in our modern society, he points out that there are homophobic underpinnings to many of those same-sex friend groupings. Price expands on this, stating that the homosexual identity "threatens men's power and privilege" (3). This is due to the idea that "the legitimacy of male power and privilege rests of the cultural belief in men's superior biology and psychology" (3). Homosexual men, because they have sex with other men and exist outside the prescribed heterosexual male power structure, are a threat to this. While this is contradictory with the homoeroticism sometimes present in those groupings, the homophobic language used to

solidify male-male platonic bonds is also used to differentiate from the new-found identity of the homosexual. I bring this up only to show that this idea was not present in Medieval Europe.

The rigid construction of the modern man's patriarchal desire shows the right kind of emotional connection with his male friend (as opposed to anything deemed "queer" or "gay") is not fully realized in the medieval world. The actions of Galehaut towards Lancelot, or even Gawain towards Lancelot would be codified (in the sense of identity) as homosexual actions today. For that reason alone, we must be vigilant in separating our modern ideas of platonic friendship from the world of medieval knighthood's homosocial construction. Some similarities and ideas overlap, but the world that Galehaut and Lancelot inhabited is not our own, and arguably, not even those of twelfth-century France. This is because chivalric romance is an idealized genre. The relationship that Galehaut has with Lancelot is one to be aspired to, not necessarily the one that was the norm. As Zeikowitz writes, chivalric texts had a "twofold agenda": "condemning *un*chivalric actions and promoting ideal chivalric behavior" (19). This behavior includes forging homosocial bonds between knights and promoting order to the realm, rather than wanton violence. Thus, the friendship between knights was a vital construction for chivalric romances. Friendship in medieval romance was complex and held a different meaning of friendship than what we would consider friendship to mean today. So, I must separate our concept of a platonic construction of friendship from medieval companionship.

In separating modern ideas of friendship as a platonic construction aside from romantic companionship in the medieval sense (and even then, things can get messy, especially in queer relationships), I am reminded of David Halperin's more famous arguments from *A Hundred Years of Homosexuality*. He states,

> In particular, I argue that the study of sexual life in antiquity reveals homosexuality, heterosexuality, and even sexuality itself to be relatively recent and highly culture-specific forms of erotic life—not the basic building-blocks of sexual identity for all human beings in all times and places, but peculiar and indeed exceptional ways of conceptualizing as well as experiencing sexual desire (9).

While Halperin discusses antiquity and not the Middle Ages, this quote is relevant to how I approach my theory of a spectrum of homoromantic into homoerotic (or vice versa) reading of medieval romance. As polemic as this quote is, and critics such as Camille Pagilia and Martha Nussbaum prove that with their radically different assessments of Halperin's book[19], Halperin's ideas are not too far off from my conception of what a homoromantic idealization could mean in a literary work. The main difference is that I am placing his idea into a conversation, or rather debate, with other theorists to construct a framework that will help me navigate the murky waters of medieval queer theory. Rather than stating the ideas are not "building-blocks of sexual identity" (9) like he is, I posit that the existence of a homoromantic tension between literary characters is a product of a specific medieval culture, alien to our own, in which the continuum of homosocial into the homoerotic that Sedgewick writes of is unbroken. The continuum can only be unbroken in a literary sense, not necessarily in a physical sense, at least, by the time *Lancelot* and even later romances were created.

[19] In "The Bondage and Freedom of Eros," Marsha Nussbaum describes John Winkler and David Halperin as "judicious and discriminating classical scholars whose mastery of the relevant types of evidence (texts philosophical, literary and historical, papyri containing magic spells and curses, vase paintings and much more) ranges well beyond that of Foucault" (69). Furthermore, her analysis of the arguments Halperin makes is largely positive and does offer some critique on "the Nietzschean question of the 'revaluation of values'" (70). She also states, in a rather positive light, that "Halperin is forced by logic of his cynicism to subject even his feminist writing to suspicious scrutiny" (70). In contrast, Camille Pagilia was quite critical of Halperin's work, calling it "tortured, bloated, meandering, pretentious, confused" (139). Furthermore, unlike Nussbaum or other scholars like Carolyn Dinshaw, she criticizes everything about Halperin's work, going so far as to call him "greatly outclassed" (140) and that he "lacks even a superficial undergraduate-level familiarity with the major schools of psychology" (139).

The relationship between Galehaut and Lancelot is a literary companionship not just because they are characters in a work of romance, but also because they exist in a heightened sense of what male-male companionship was supposed to look like. They are what other men – specifically, other knights – aspire to be. This sense of otherworldly greatness can only exist in a literary context. It would be nigh impossible to recreate. This is seen even more when we consider Galehaut and Lancelot's parentage. Otherworldly beings raised them: Galehaut, the "li fiex a la bele iaiande" (Sommer III:244) "son of a fair giantess" (Lacy III: 135), and Lancelot, who is raised by the Lady of the Lake. Magic and greatness inscribe their very beings. It would thus make sense that this would carry onto their love and affection for one another. The idea of this friendship is difficult for a language to grasp. Indeed, many relationships between knights are like this. The companionship described in medieval romances often uses language that mirrors heterosexual relationships. John Boswell writes on friendship and language:

> Most such feelings – although profound, urgent, and ubiquitous – are difficult to specify, not only because language is a frail medium for powerful and overwhelming emotion but also because the feelings themselves are often jumbled, shifting, and imprecise, to such an extent that many languages fail to make distinctions that English speakers consider essential: many ancient and modern tongues, for example, fail to distinguish in any neat way between "friend" and lover (4).

While he writes of ancient and modern tongues in general and not the Old French of the Prose *Lancelot*, there are parallels in what he is saying here. *Lancelot* does not fully distinguish between romantic love and friendship, and this is purposefully so. Friendship is a nebulous construction that does not have a straightforward meaning. Halperin argues that "Friendship is the anomalous relation: it exists outside the more thoroughly codified social networks formed by

kinship and sexual ties; it is "interstitial in the social structure" of most Western cultures" (75). In combining his ideas with Boswell, we can see that friendship, in both language and social construction, exists in a liminal spot. In this liminality between "friend and lover" (Boswell 4) there is room for the author of *Lancelot* to craft a narrative that is both an idealized form of male-male companionship and a relationship that flirts dangerously close to the homoerotic and the homoromantic, so much so that scholars are still in debate on whether to call the two knights "lovers" or "friends."[20]

This raises a few questions: if the relationship between the two men is meant to be idealized, what does that mean for actual knights? Were they too expected to form this kind of companionship with another knight? In seeking to answer these questions we must look at what other bonds between knights look like in medieval romance. Zeikowitz and Hyatte both argue that the need for chivalric romance was to give knights a type of code to live up to. It would make sense then that a good number of chivalric romances would have these kinds of relationships between knights that provide good examples of the real, physical knights of medieval Europe. The biggest contention to this argument, in terms of my own, is that Galehaut is a one-off character. His story is entirely related to the *Prose Lancelot* and any other mention of him is limited. His intense relationship with Lancelot is an invention of the *Prose Lancelot*. Other authors retelling Lancelot's story, such as Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, relegate Galehaut to a footnote or a line and transform him from Lancelot's "passionate lover" (Gilbert 72) to simply a rival. Galehaut's love of Lancelot is an invention of the *Prose Lancelot* which heightens the concept of chivalric male-male companionships.

[20] Scholars such as Reginald Hyatte refer to Galehaut and Lancelot as "friends" in his argument, whereas more recent scholarship from Jane Gilbert and Gretchen Mieszkowski refer to the pair as both friends and lovers.

To continue the example of Chretien's *Yvain* I used earlier in this chapter, let us take Yvain and his relationships with Kay and Gawain. In the first part of Chretien's poem, Yvain and Kay have a contentious relationship. Kay berates Yvain's cousin for losing a fight with the giant guarding a magical stone. Yvain, rising to defend his cousin, goes to slay the giant and avenge his cousin's honor, and thus sparks the rest of the narrative. Later, it is Gawain and Kay who manage to convince Yvain to go questing again – after a humorous defeat Kay suffers against Yvain. This rivalry that Kay has with Yvain matches Yvain's friendship with Gawain. Kay and Gawain represent the two sides of male friendship within knightly bonds: rivalry and companionship. Goran Stanivukovic, arguing about the economic transactions between homosocial bonded men (specifically knights), states that male-male interactions produce "stories of friendship imagined as different structures of male relationship" and that in these structures are "levels of intimacy and imagining relationships between the knight and the men which whom he is in contact as spectacles of desire that sometimes oscillate between violent rivalry and affective commitment" (145). While the interaction between Yvain, Gawain, and Kay is not economic, the oscillation between rivalry and homosocial affective commitment is still present. The friendship that is imagined between the three, and the ability to convince Yvain to leave his lover and go questing, highlights what is expected of members of a knightly brotherhood.

In chivalric romance, a knight's friendship with another knight is central to his narrative. While not every knight has the same level of companionship that Lancelot exhibits for Galehaut, they have strong homosocial relationships that help them navigate the chivalric world. These are relationships that tie them to each other as well as the courts they are bound to. Often, these homosocial bonds coincide with familial bonds, for example, take Gawain and Arthur as nephew

and uncle in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knigh*t, or even Gawain and Yvian as cousins in Chretien's *Yvian*. For these pairings, it is easy to see the connection between their companionship and their being kin to one another. Yet, in companions that do not have familial ties, such as Galehaut and Lancelot, or Gawain and Lancelot, the companionship becomes more complex: it falls strongly under the ambiguous nature that is the word "friendship."

Indeed, friendship is hard to nail down in definition and construction. As both Boswell and Dinshaw have pointed out, the unnamed aspects of friendship prove it hard to conceptualize what makes a lover and what makes a friend, or, if there even is a difference, especially if we remove the physical act of sex. The language of friendship borrows terminology from various other aspects of human emotion. This is doubly so in chivalric romance where the line between erotic love and romantic love and between romantic love and platonic love is so thin that is non-existent. Halperin writes "Once again, we find that friendship is parasitic in its conceptualization of kinship relations and on sexual relations. That is, it must borrow terminology and imagery from these other spheres of human relations to identify and define itself" (84). Using this framework to apply to knightly friendships, we see the language of chivalric friendship utilizes similar language from aspects of heterosexual coded romantic language, namely, *fin'amor*. We see this in the swooning and fainting other knights do for each other, or even in the way knights swear to each other. The bonding of one's words requires a level of trust that demands to be kept by the homosocial standard of knighthood.

The bonds of knightly friendship require the maintaining of a homosocial order. Furthermore, they need at least a minimum commitment to one's fellow knights. The knights are supposed to be faithful to one another and to show affection and courage. Take, for example, the scene in the *Prose Lancelot* in which Maleagant breaks the rules of knighthood and wounds

Lancelot out of jealousy of Galehaut's relationship with Lancelot. The author states, "mais melygant ne se pot tenir de Lancelot regarded pour la grant chierte queue Galeholt en fait si tel merueille et tel enuie que moult en fu ses cuers a malaise" (Sommer IV: 42) / "But Maleagant could not take his eyes off Lancelot because of the great affection that Galehaut showed him; he was jarred by it and made envious, and it set his heart on edge" (Lacy II:260). As a result of this envy, he runs Lancelot through with the tip of his lance. The text is clear that Maleagant breaks the rules of chivalry by doing so, yet it also makes clear that Galehaut and Lancelot are also forsaking the accepted rules of knightly brotherhood; they do not ride with the rest of the knights, but instead, "et puis quil lot commande il ni to nul contredit" (Sommer IV: 42) / "[Galehaut] and his companion often rode apart from the others" (Lacy II: 260). By riding apart from the others, Galehaut and Lancelot (specifically stylized as Galehaut's companion) physically place their friendship as different from their bond with the other knights. This is why Maleagant becomes jealous and seeks to wound Lancelot. He views their relationship as one that transgresses proper moral codes of conduct.

The character of Maleagant is, like many other Arthurian characters, recurring in various narratives. In Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, and Chretien's *Lancelot, le Chevalier de la charrette*, he appears as a villainous figure that kidnaps Guinevere or seeks to expose Lancelot's and Guinevere's affair. In doing so, Lancelot defeats him or he engages Lancelot in a dual or joust. Either way, it always ends in Maleagant's death at the hands of Lancelot. In the *Prose Lancelot,* it is not the affair between Lancelot and Guinevere that first gives him pause, it is the relationship between the two male knights that jars him and him to become envious. He does not have the companionship that Lancelot and Galehaut do.

It should be noted that the Malory episode was written a good two hundred years later (1485) than *Lancelot* while Chretien's version was a hundred or so years earlier (c. 1180). Thus, *Lancelot's* variation of Maleagant falls in the middle of the two. It is curious then, that the evolution of the Maleagant story for *Lancelot* centers around his jealousy of Lancelot and Galehaut, while paralleling some of Maleagant's initial jealousy toward Lancelot and Guinevere.

The parallels between the two love interests of Lancelot go a step further when Maleagant wounds Lancelot. The reaction that Galehaut has and the reaction that Guinevere has is identical. The text states, "quant Galeholt sot la nouele que Lancelot estoit blechies se se pasme de la grant dolour quil" (Sommer IV: 43-44) / "And when Galehaut heard the news, he fainted, since he was told that Lancelot had been struck right through the body" (Lacy II: 261) and a few lines later, "et la royne en avoit tel doel que a poi que le cuers ne li est partis dens la uentre si ne pot tenir quele ne cheist pasmee si quele se blecha au cheoir que elle fist dourement" (Sommer IIV: 44) / "and the queen was so despondent that her heart burst. At the window of the brattice where [Guinevere] had been watching, the queen fainted and fell" (Lacy II: 261). The author describes not Guinevere's anguish at Lancelot's injury, but Galehaut's. The author states, "et quant Galeholt fu revenues de pasmisions. Si fiert ses paumes ensamble et dit. Ha diex or viegne la mort qui tant ma este iunge" (Sommer IV:44)/ "And all along, Galehaut kept weeping and swooning, and whenever he came to, he would clap his palms together and say, "Ah, God! Send me the death to which I am doomed here!" (Lacy II: 261). In this scene, the author makes it clear that Galehaut is willing to die for Lancelot and further foreshadows that Galehaut cannot live without Lancelot in his life, a sentiment that Guinevere echoes elsewhere. On the parallel between the two, Hyatte writes, "knightly friendship, with its superior moral qualities of faithfulness, courage, and generosity and its great mutual affection, confidence, and solace,

complements male-female love as a giver of value to literary chivalry, and in the case of Lancelot, it demands no less right to the best knight's companionship than does Guinevere's love" (88). While Hyatte's concern is on the friendship aspect of literary chivalry and a direct comparison that it should be given the same attention as Guinevere's love, I posit taking this argument further. The author of *Lancelot* writes homoromantic love as *compagnonnage,* and it is akin to Guinevere's love because, in many ways, it is the same. It is romantic love written as a friendship and given the way the chivalric friendship behaves as a literary device; it is the perfect vehicle for homoromantic love between male knights to flourish.

Prescribing friendship as romantic love is wrought with literary and epistemological challenges. One such problem is the very concept of love. It is a phrase that has as many definitions as it does subsections. Bennett Helm describes love as "a concern for the beloved's identity for his sake that is analogous – but not a part of – your concern for your own identity" (213). While Helm writes of modern definitions of love, love as a method of concern for identity is something we see in medieval variations of lovers. Take, for example, the number of times that Galehaut and Lancelot are concerned over the station and the personhood of each other because of the devotion they pledge to each other. Of course, they are not the only examples of Helm's construction of "love." The medieval period alone has numerous treatises and examples of love that align with Helm's modern idea.

For example, Andreas Capellanus's *De Amore* (12th century) and Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* (2 c.e.), provide excellent examples of love treatises that help frame medieval definitions of love. While Ovid's work is not medieval by any stretch of the imagination, he was incredibly widespread throughout the Middle Ages. James G. Clark refers to him as a "tapestry of high politics, history, myth, social comedy and travelogue" (2). Clark points out that the medieval

people used Ovid as a gateway to the classical past and his influence is felt in many medieval literary works[21] (10). The *Ars Amatoria,* an instructional series of books about love advice, was one such work. It would remain popular in the Middle Ages and go on to inspire Andreas Capellanus's *De Amore*, as can be seen in the content and the three-book structure that both works share. The content of these love treatises is of paramount importance to this dissertation.

Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* provides the reader with a guide for how to woo and keep his partner. The first two books address men, with the last book specifically addressing women. Likewise, Andreas's *De Amore* address a male audience. The two works are explicit in their notion of love between a man and a woman. *De Amore* does not mention same-sex love. Despite this, the rules for love as outlined by Andreas are easily applied to the way Galehaut loves Lancelot. First, Andreas presents a definition of love: "Love is a certain inborn suffering derived from the sight of and excessive meditation upon the beauty of the opposite sex" (29). Note the phrase, "opposite sex." As stated, Andreas's work focuses on opposite-sex couples.

However, Galehaut displays love as an inborn suffering, and he consistently suffers for his love of Lancelot. Galehaut's love-suffering appears frequently in the need to possess and retain Lancelot as his, the sorrow after each time he believes Lancelot has died, and his emotional pain whenever Lancelot is in pain. Thus, Galehaut constantly exists in a state of love-suffering, which in turn presents him as a romantic protagonist for Lancelot's affections. He mirrors Lancelot's love-suffering for Guinevere. Lancelot frequently exclaims his sorrow at being away from Guinevere which provides a model to compare Galehaut's similar suffering

[21] Ovid's influence on medieval culture was far reaching. The scope of how much influence he had on the Middle Ages is a project in and of itself. For further reading on this topic, I recommend the works of James G. Grant, Rebecca Menmuir, Justin Haynes, and Frank T. Coulson.

whenever Lancelot is away from him. Galehaut's emotional affect is modeled off heterosexual love conventions as outlined by Andreas and put into practice by Lancelot and Guinevere.

Furthermore, *De Amore's* rules of love also provide a framework to analyze Galehaut's behavior. Rule thirty, "a true lover is constantly and without intermission possessed by the thought of his beloved" (186), is the rule that Galehaut follows with an enthusiastic fervor. After meeting Lancelot, Galehaut's thoughts are consumed by him. In this regard, Galehaut is a "true lover" according to *De Amore's* rules. Even in his death, Galehaut follows this. His last thoughts are of Lancelot. We see a similar rule in *De Amore*: "He whom the thought of love vexes eats and sleeps very little" (186). Indeed, the thought of Lancelot's death causes Galehaut to forgo food and drink, causing him to die from lovesickness.

However, the main difference between Galehaut's affections and those proscribed in *De Amore* lay within eroticism. Galehaut is not a sexual lover for Lancelot, thus, the concept of taking a lover as described in Book 1 of *De Amore* cannot be fully applied to Galehaut. While the rules of love outlined in Book II are useful for placing love in a medieval context for Galehaut, the sexualization of love remains a problem. The reason for this is sodomy and the homophobic construction of sodomy and anti-sodomy laws in the Middle Ages.

Sodomy here refers to sex between men, though the term sodomy itself is complex and is rife with numerous meanings. Furthermore, much work has been done to construct a meaning to a vague and at times, purposefully obscure, word. Scholars like Carolyn Dinshaw, John Boswell, David Halperin, and Michel Foucault have all written on sodomy and its myriads of medieval definitions (as well as those that exist beyond the Middle Ages). Ruth Mazo Karras argues similarly to my proposed definition of sodomy; she writes, "Often legal contexts do not use [sodomy] at all. When it does appear in a legal context, it most often means sex between two

men" (2). She further elaborates that the word 'sodomy' is also used in an ecclesiastical context. However, there are other, more frequently used terms to refer to sex acts between men. She writes, "To discuss same-sex relations as a sin in an ecclesiastical context, as in the enumeration of the various branches of lechery by late medieval moralists, writers most often used euphemisms: "sin against nature" or "unspeakable sin," the former of longer standing and the latter coming into use in the twelfth or thirteenth century" (6). It is the unspeakable nature of the sin of sodomy that I am most concerned with, as well as the definition of "unspeakable."

For something to be unspeakable, it must exist in a paradoxical, almost liminal, existence. For one, it is happening or something that has occurred. It is real and tangible. Yet, it cannot be named aloud, it must be spoken of in a roundabout way, or preferably, not spoken of at all. To be without a name, to be relegated to that kind of specified silence, is a way to deny its existence as a legitimate sexual act. However, there are words for male-male intimacy as stated above – sodomy being the primary one. This would mean that in one instance, this action is unnamed as the "unspeakable sin," yet in another, it is called "sodomy," and is thus given a name and likened to a grievous sin named after the condemnation of an entire city and its populace[22]. The action of male-male intimacy is placed in a nebulous field of unnamed existence. Carolyn Dinshaw raises further questions regarding this idea:

> Thus if we want to begin to specify the problems raised for queer history here, our first question is therefore not the obvious "How can we trace something that has been deemed

[22] I am, of course, referring to the biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah, which has been used (incorrectly) to justify homophobia and homophobic legal policies since the Middle Ages and into the current political climate of 2023. There is a discussion to be had of the stagnant ideology of homophobia and biblical misinterpretation that has permeated today's culture. Such a discussion, however, is not fully the scope of this chapter and I would instead point to the works of Kent Brintnall and Michael Carden for further reading.

> unspeakable?" but the subtler and more complex, "How can we evaluate the insistent claim that this sin is unspeakable? (5).

To answer the claim of the "unspeakable sin," I complicate the matter further by adding the concept of love – in an emotionally romantic sense – between two men into the unspeakable. For love between two men is not *uncommon* in medieval romance, so much so that calling it unspeakable would seemingly be false.

However, it is the full definition of such love, a very queer definition, which is unspeakable here. In chivalric romances, the love between men masquerades itself as friendship while flirting with the idea of something deeper, a more prominent emotional connection that transcends our current boundaries of friendship and seeks to set itself apart from that idea. It is a romantic affection in a highly idealized form. Thus, I have dubbed this phenomenon homoromantic for it is the idealization of two men's affection in a way that transcends our current conventional models of platonic friendship and reveals an emotional connection that links platonic and romantic ideals under the concept of male-male companions or *compagnonnage*. This method of companionship can be seen as an unbroken continuum of homoerotic, homosocial, and homoromantic, all culminating into a complex series of emotional cues that differ from our own in the 21st century. Thus, scholars must meet this method of companionship on its terms and first unravel the complexities of this proposed idea of companionship before linking it to our current understanding of sexuality.

The unspeakable nature of this argument comes into the very continuum of homosocial into homoromantic that I have described. The depth of the love among male-male friends is unutterable. It's a precarious balance. The friendship between men as seen in chivalric romance is constructed in an unbroken continuum. Likewise, Mieszkowksi argues, "Lancelot and Galehot

are points in that [Sedgewick's] continuum, which was understood as unbroken in the Middle Ages, and which includes men who care deeply about each other as well as men who love each other" (43). Sedgewick's continuum, encompassing mainly homosocial and homoerotic, left little room for the romantic nature of things. For the Middle Ages, I am not saying that men were not having sex with each other, as that would be a wildly false claim. Instead, I state that within the literary genre that is romance, male-male sex could not be seen on the page. The author does not depict Lancelot and Galehaut having sex, thus, the physical act of intimacy is not present. Instead, the author makes use of emotional affect to signify a romantic relationship between the two men to avoid the concept of sodomy being applied to two of the greatest knights in the *Prose Lancelot*. The language of intense romantic affection coded into friendship suffices for the reader to draw the parallels between Galehaut's love and Guinevere's love. The difference between heteroromantic and homoromantic love in a chivalric sense is that one is outwardly praised as an example of *fin'amor* while the other is ignored.

The reason for this is that same-gender friendships are not as memorable as heterosexual lovers are. In medieval romance, noble friendships do not draw the same passionate readership noble lovers do, even though Galehaut and Lancelot are emotionally lovers in all but the word. However, the debate about them being lovers is still called into contention. On this, Mieszkowski writes,

> The usual 20th-century response to Lancelot's love of Galehot is to object that since one of the greatest lovers of medieval literature is presented as loving another man so passionately, then passionate expressions of love between men must not have homoerotic meaning in early 13th century romances; Lancelot and Galehot both are simply using the language of male friendship of this time" (42).

While I agree with much of her article[23], I argue for and against this quote. I agree that the response to Lancelot and Galehaut has largely been using the language of male friendship at the time, and while scholars such as herself point out that friendship and eroticism are not entirely different, I posit that friendship and romantic love are also not different, especially in the medieval era. Lancelot and Galehaut *are* using the language of male friendship at the time. The difference here is that male friendship also includes coded romantic love. By coded romantic love, I explicitly discuss how Galehaut and Lancelot's actions mirror those of traditionally heterosexual couples like Lancelot and Guinevere or even Tristan and Isolde, whose parallels with the two men will be discussed in the next chapter. The importance of coded romantic love in my dissertation works to show how the language between two male companions can be read in a queer context. Furthermore, I hope that this builds new frameworks for which we can discuss male-male relationships in the Middle Ages within a queer context.

While I am certainly not the first critic to offer critical, queer readings of the *Prose Lancelot*, nor will I be the last, I offer a view in which I construct a *romantic* reading of the texts, rather than an erotic one. The importance of taking sex out of the equation for the *Prose Lancelot* is to show that sex is not needed to discuss queerness in a medieval work, especially when sex between men is not present. Furthermore, it is to showcase the validity of emotional queerness, of looking at how friendships work in a continuum as Sedgwick would suggest. This is not to say that sex is not important or will never be discussed in this dissertation, far from it, but it is not happening on the page, and I must make clear that difference. It is the same difference that separates the kisses given to Gawain in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* from the love and devotion between Lancelot and Galehaut in the *Prose Lancelot*. Both romances can be analyzed

[23] Mieszkowski, Gretchen. "The Prose "Lancelot" Galehot, Malory's Lavain, and the Queering of Late Medieval Literature." *Arthuriana,* vol. 5, no.1, 1995.

through queer lenses, while *Sir Gawain* falls neatly into the erotic analysis, the *Prose Lancelot* needs another form of examination to understand the relationship between Lancelot and Galehaut. Thus, my theory of homoromanticism comes into play. By separating sex from the narrative of the two men, scholars can piece together the language of devotion that is akin to heterosexual romantic pairings. We can then build a framework to analyze why the language is so similar yet unnamed and is coded as romantic love yet never given the time to flourish the way other romantic pairings do.

The bulk of my dissertation will be devoted to understanding how homoromantic language in male-male friendships shows a *fin'amor*-styled love for Lancelot and Galehaut, and how that language is nearly identical to those of heterosexual couples, such as Lancelot and Guinevere. In this chapter, I built my initial theoretical framework and established a basis for my theoretical argument. The following chapter will deal with a close reading of death in the *Prose Lancelot* and other chivalric works to signify romantic marriage between the two chivalric friends. Furthermore, I construct coded romantic language through the actions of questing and death among male-male companions as both have intricate ties to how knights' relationships develop. The subsequent chapters deal with what is left out of other retellings of the *Prose Lancelot*, namely Sir Thomas Mallory's purposeful omission of the Lancelot-Galehaut story in his *Le Morte Darthur*, and why that silence is important to understand shifting ideas of male-male companionships in a historical and literary framework. I then conclude the dissertation with a discussion on the Prose *Lancelot* and the future of queer medieval studies.

Chapter 2
Bury Your Gays: Coded Romantic Love as Death, Friendship, and Queer Catharsis

In the *Prose Lancelot*, one of the most poignant scenes that signifies Galehaut's relationship with Lancelot comes when Arthur seeks to retain Lancelot as a knight of his household. Galehaut, visibly distraught by this, says to Arthur, "iou ne sa[u]roie viure sans lui. Si me tolries ma vie (Sommer III: 427). // I couldn't live without him; you would take my life from me" (Lacy II: 237). Here, Galehaut lays his heart bare in front of the king he surrendered to earlier in the narrative; a king that was no match for him, as Galehaut was set to defeat Arthur's army. It was for the love of Lancelot that Galehaut conceded the fight. In this scene, Galehaut publicly confesses his love for Lancelot. He then further begs Arthur to retain him along with Lancelot and reminds Arthur that the only reason he has Galehaut's respect and devotion is because of Lancelot. He says,

> Retennes moi auecc lui. Se ie onques fis chose qui vous pleust. Et bein le deuces vous por moi faire. Quar bien sachies que toute lamor que iai a vous. Ai iou par lui. (Sommer III: 429).
>
> Retain me with him, if ever I did anything that pleased you; you must do this for me and for him, for I must tell you that all the love I bear you come to you because of him (Lacy II: 238).

Arthur agrees to this request. Galehaut and Lancelot unite under Arthur's banner, much to Galehaut's happiness and unhappiness: happiness that he is now with Lancelot, unhappiness that he has lowered himself to another king. The importance of this scene is the line quoted earlier in this paragraph, that Galehaut could not live without Lancelot. Galehaut will say this many times over throughout the course of the *Prose Lancelot*, and it is only furthered by Galehaut's

insistence on always being near Lancelot and being heartbroken to the point of fatalistic mournfulness when he is not. On this idea, Karen Sullivan points out that, "Lancelot is never separated from [Galehaut] for long, nor does he die before him" (178). Galehaut's unwillingness to separate from Lancelot foreshadows his death through heartbreak at the end of the narrative. Galehaut's death, brought about because he mistakenly believed that Lancelot was dead, will go on to trigger intense grief and mourning from Lancelot who then builds a tomb to house both their bodies in death. The result of this is a sort of marriage in death. While they could not be fully together in life, they could be in death.

In the previous chapter, I built my framework on homoromantic affection in chivalric literature. Part of that framework includes analyzing friendship as a method to seek out queerness in the *Prose Lancelot*. In this chapter, I provide several close readings of various aspects of friendship and death, particularly how friendship becomes coded romantic love. I discuss how death brings together lovers both before and after they die, and how it solidifies the bonds of love between two male friends. Finally, I argue that the coded-romantic language in death scenes and the trauma of death within *Lancelot* function as a queer catharsis for both the reader and the characters.

First, I would like to put forward the idea that the concept and actuality of death within a narrative are vital to a coded romantic love between friends. It is through death that the characters must grapple with the unexpected loss of their partner, a person who has become a lifeline to them. In chivalric romance, the friendship between two men, as opposed to one man and the entire host of knights or one man and one woman, has many different layered interpretations of friendship and companionship. One such interpretation that I posit in this dissertation is the idea of romantic affection that signifies emotional love. Death realizes this

affection. They can be together in death in much the same way that a man and woman can be together in a Christian concept of marriage. Their souls are bound to one another in the afterlife. Romantic love exists here, in this state of unbeing, as coded through death. In death, moral censure no longer governs the couple. They can realize their love. On the concept of death and friendship, David Halperin writes:

> Death is the climax of the friendship, the occasion of the most extreme expressions of tenderness on the part of the two friends, and it weds them forever (in the memory of the survivor, at least). Indeed, it is not too much to say that death is to friendship what marriage is to romance (79).

Here, Halperin argues that marriage and death are the same for heterosexual and same-sex couples respectively. If taking Halperin's framework on death and friendship into consideration, then in the *Prose Lancelot*, the friendship between Galehaut and Lancelot, and the subsequent deaths they experience, are reminiscent of a friendship that is more in line with those of ancient lover-friends (as Halperin points out), such as Achilles and Patroclus or Gilgamesh and Enkidu (79).

The friendship Galehaut and Lancelot exhibit is the descendant of these ancient forms of male-male friendships. The devotion between the two and the death that both separates them and unites them is an analogous way in which Achilles and Patroclus exhibit their love and their narrative within Homer's *Iliad*. This is not to claim that the *Iliad* directly inspired the *Prose Lancelot*, as that would require more guesswork than proper literary history. However, I argue that the structure in which the friendship narrative plays out both in its romantic and erotic aspects speaks to a larger, cultural idea regarding male-male literary friendships. It highlights how the continuum between homoromantic, erotic, and homosocial is unbroken here. The best

way to show the unbrokenness of this continuum is to show it through death, whether through accidental or in this case, purposeful means.

Much like Patroclus' death spurs Achilles into action, Galehaut's death galvanizes Lancelot and spurs the rest of Lancelot's narrative forward. By removing Galehaut from the narrative, Lancelot is thus free to romance Guinevere without the love triangle being present, even though he is ready to end his own life at Galehaut's loss, a scene discussed more thoroughly later in this chapter. What is important now, however, is that death can be the catalyst needed to realize a companionship. Furthermore, it is a necessary, traumatic moment the central character experiences that develops his identity. Of course, the question then must be asked is it even prudent to the project of queer medieval studies to focus on the death of a queer (even theorized as queer) character to promote a heterosexual love story. Do we, as queer theorists, want Galehaut to be yet another queer character that falls tragically to the bury your gays trope? As modern as that trope is – and it is indeed a trope coined by internet users to describe a systematic project of media to kill off queer (or even queer-coded) characters in the works they inhabit– it is still a relevant conversation[24]. Death and queerness have historically gone hand in hand.

To find historical literary queerness is to queer death itself. Often in tales of heroic men, as observed by Halperin (78), one of the friends in a pair of two intimate men will die and galvanize the other to fulfill his quest – whatever that may be. The living man feels sorrow and remorse that he gets to live while his friend – whom he frequently lauds as better than him –

[24] The "Bury Your Gays" trope is discussed more thoroughly in the works of Ansley Birchmore and Heather Hensmen Kettery ("Exploring Boundaries of the Parasocial Contact Hypothesis: An Experimental Analysis of the Effects of the 'Bury Your Gays" media trope on Homophobic and Sexist Attitude), and Elizabeth Bridges (A Genealogy of Queerbaiting: Legal Codes, Production Codes, "Bury Your Gays" and the "100 Mess"). While both authors' work discusses queer coding and the "Bury Your Gays" trope, they are well into the modern and current media of today's age, and not even remotely discussing the medieval. However, it is the explanation of where the trope originated – in works in the 1800s – that gives me pause to consider how this idea could be retroactively applied, with careful hands of course, to vestiges of medieval queerness.

remains deceased. The primary example of this is the scene in which Lancelot mourns his own life and his unworthiness before Galehaut's grave, a grave marked with the words: "qui por l'amor de Lancelot morut" (Sommer IV: 276) / who died for love of Lancelot" (Lacy vol. III 59). His sorrow is reflexive upon the self, rather than directed outwards towards Galehaut's body. His is the Narcissus that bridges the drive for death.

In contrast, the scenes leading up to Galehaut's ultimate death and removal from the narrative entirely (a concept that is a different kind of death) focuses on Lancelot. For Galehaut, death is queer for it allows him to mourn Lancelot (whom, at this point, he had falsely believed dead) in a way a woman mourns her [male] knight. Galehaut can experience the act of love and erotic feelings in a way deemed only appropriate for heterosexuals. This, of course, culminates in his death in which he dies longingly looking at Lancelot's broken shield, a symbol of Lancelot's body that he no longer has access to. In this scene, Galehaut mistakenly believes that Lancelot has died, and his body is gone.

The act of dying becomes something intimate and paradoxically both severs and strengthens the bond between the two men in life. For Galehaut, his gaze never leaves the shield and thus the queer link between the two men is present even if Galehaut's body wastes away. The queer reading of this phenomenon shows that because they cannot be together in life, whether through some legal, moral, or societal taboo, they can still be together in death. Lancelot echoes this, who seeks to reunite their souls by killing himself. This act has a crazed sense of euphoria, for Lancelot can absolve himself of the inherent sin of being alive while Galehaut is not. Leo Bersani[25], utilizing Freud's analysis of drive and sexuality, discusses the link between ecstatic

[25] Bersani, Leo. "Is the Rectum a Grave." *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism*, vol. 43, 1987, pp. 197-222. While Bersani's article focuses on the perception of gay AIDS victims and gay men in general in the 1980's, his

expression and sexuality, and writes: "The sexual emerges as the *jouissance* of exploded limits, as the ecstatic suffering into which the human organism momentarily plunges when it is "pressed" beyond a certain threshold of endurance" (217). The "certain threshold of endurance," in this case is death. The queer bond remains unsevered in death and is part of the drive to reach that state. By dying, the bonds between two men can be realized on a societal, ecstatic level. Take, for example, Galehaut's death and the inscription on his tomb declaring his love for Lancelot.

I use the death drive, here taken in the Freudian sense, as a model for how Galehaut behaves in the wake of his friend-lover's death. While Galehaut's mirror of the friendship death is not the sole model for queer readings of chivalric romance, Galehaut's death drive after the loss of his Eros (Lancelot in this case) fits a Freudian analysis. The goal of this argument is to present a building theory for the rest of this chapter. In terms of a Freudian analysis of Galehaut's death drive, I present Galehaut as a man suffering from the loss of the object of his Eros. The object in question here is Lancelot, and more specifically, Lancelot's body and soul as the knight with exceptional physical prowess and courage, which attracted Galehaut to Lancelot at the beginning of their narrative.

Furthermore, Lancelot as an object lends itself to a certain kind of politicization in both life and death. Of sexual politicization, Bersani argues, "a sexual desire for men can't be merely a kind of neutral attraction to a Platonic Idea of the male body; the object of that desire necessarily includes a socially determined and socially pervasive definition of what it means to be a man" (208-209). Lancelot and Galehaut's attraction to each other is a cycle of political terms: from knights to friends to companions.

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discussion of Freud is critical to my understanding of the death drive and the Freudian construction of pleasure and sexuality.

As explored in the previous chapter, it bears repetition that these two knights exist within a masculinity-dominated social paradigm that has strict rules both politically and socially. Knights, especially knights constructed within a chivalric romance, adhere to a social code dominated by the masculine expression of their time. Thus, the politics of Galehaut's and Lancelot's existence are indistinguishable from their character. This gets further complicated by the fact that Lancelot is not buried with Guinevere; instead, he is buried with a male companion, in a tomb Lancelot had built specifically for them. The very act of Galehaut loving Lancelot to death – his death rather than Lancelot's – constructs a "pervasive definition of manhood" in which a queer figure subverts the image of the traditional male knight. Galehaut is doubly subversive because he is a model of knighthood. Lancelot repeatedly says this over Galehaut's grave. Whereas Lancelot is Galehaut's object of desire throughout the narrative, Galehaut – and more specifically, his grave – is the object of Lancelot's desire at the end of Galehaut's narrative. Lancelot longs to be in the grave with Galehaut and unite with the object of his desire, if only so he can extinguish the pain of not being worthy to live on after his companion.

Lancelot displaces his desire from his friend's body to his friend's grave, just as Galehaut's desire was displaced from Lancelot's non-existent body to his cracked shield. Bersani argues that "displacement is endemic to sexuality" (221). This statement comes from Bersani's "Is the Rectum a Grave?" which focuses on his reaction to Freud as well as loss and the sexual and provides a strong framework to continue my discussion on queering death in the *Prose Lancelot*. By queering death, I speak of both the act and wish of dying, as well as death as a metaphysical queer place. While Bersani discusses gay men in the 1980s, his ideas, especially those he built from Freud's, remain pertinent to my argument. The displacement of desire from the body to an object that represents the body is indeed endemic throughout the *Prose Lancelot*.

The author displaces the desire from a male's body because the desire is *for* a male body. This queer desire challenges the notion of heterosexual romance. Thus, the author must displace desire in the object that represents not just Galehaut and Lancelot's bodies, but their *dead* bodies. The grave and the cracked shield become a phantom to both haunt and arouse the two men. Bersani further states that "sexual desire initiates, indeed can be recognized by, an agitated fantasmatic activity in which original (but, from the start, unlocatable) objects of desire get lost in the images they generate" (221). The images generated for Lancelot and Galehaut are the image of their dead friend/lover. Bersani first discusses the potential for subversion (and perversion in the eyes of heterosexuals) of male and female sexuality and of the images of masochism in the gay community, drawing on images of leather queens in the gay social scenes of the 1980s and 70s[26] before combining these ideas with his discussion of Freud's *Three Essays*. His words above, however, illustrate the concept of the objects of queer desire and how they become phantasmic and displaced and allow the queer subject to lose themselves in their very own images. The idea of the queer subject getting lost in the objects of desire they generate further illustrates how the object of their desires is often unattainable, especially when placed within the context of chivalric romance.

In the previous chapter, I discussed Lancelot as an "unattainable object" as Jane Gilbert describes it. Here, I take this a step further and discuss Freud's concept of Narcissism as well as Thanatos (death drive) and Eros (life drive). Alexander Kennedy[27] points out that "Narcissus is

[26] "The very real potential for subversive confusion in the joining of female sexuality (I'll return to this in a moment) and the signifies of machismo is dissipated once the heterosexual recognizes in the gay-macho style is a *yearning* towards machismo, a yearning that, very conveniently for the heterosexual makes of the leather queen's forbidding armor and warlike manners a *per*version rather than a *sub*version of real maleness" (Bersani 207-208).

[27] Kennedy, Alexander. "Identifying the Death of Gender – The Ghost of Masochism in the Queer Subject." *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 48, no.2, 2004, pp. 61-81. Kennedy's work is an expansive discussion on both Lacan and Freud and while it goes well beyond the scope of what I am arguing for my dissertation, his discussions on

the bridge between Eros and Thanatos" (65). He builds this theory by structuring how Freud builds melancholy into Narcissus and Thanatos. He tells us that "The melancholic (depressive) who has lost his/her object acts as if the loss is the ego's, which expresses itself as self-accusations, guilt, etc" (65). If we build this onto Galehaut and Lancelot, then Lancelot's scenes when he learns of Galehaut's death fit this well. Lancelot takes the loss of his closest friend as a loss of himself and spirals into self-guilt and suicidal aspirations, thus letting his death instinct overpower his Eros. He loses all sense of himself and his desire to live and plays Narcissus by taking Galehaut's grief and turning it upon himself. Lancelot's reaction to Galehaut's death is that the death of Galehaut shatters his (Lancelot's) own self. It is the queer subject losing his object of desire and turning that loss into a shattering of self that is so strong that he seeks to regain that sense of self by joining his friend in death. On this phenomenon, Bersani writes, "It is possible to think of the sexual as, precisely between a hyperbolic sense of self and a loss of all consciousness of self" (218). In this framework, Lancelot's loss of self at the mere sight of his friend's grave while simultaneously taking Galehaut's death into himself is the perfect mark of sexuality. He takes the deceased Galehaut's desire for him and transfers it onto himself as he weeps and threatens suicide over Galehaut's grave. The desire to possess Lancelot becomes Lancelot's suicidal desire. Lancelot's hyperbolic sense of himself – something that is extremely evident throughout most of the *Prose Lancelot* – is only furthered by that brief loss of himself and his mind as he tears out his hair and beats his brow. In Galehaut dying for Lancelot, Lancelot feels that there is no honor left for himself because he is a "baser" knight. Thus, he briefly loses his identity which is important to his honor as both a man and a knight.

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homosexuality as it relates to both the death drive and the Narcissism is fascinating and has larger implications for the queer media and queer literary studies.

From the first time Lancelot met Galehaut to the very end when he dies, Lancelot's identity as a person is wrapped up in what others think of him: primarily, to be worthy of the sacrifices Galehaut has made for him and to be worthy of the bodily love that Guinevere gives him. I use the term bodily because Lancelot's relationship with her is physical, whereas his relationship with Galehaut is spiritual and exists after they both die. Death, and the seeking to reach that state where they can be together, is a prominent part of the queerness of this text. Lancelot's Freudian death drive after the loss of one of his objects of Eros (Galehaut in this case) supports a queer reading of his character, for the same drive to end his life here is present elsewhere when he feels rejected by Guinevere or cannot see her (Sommer III: 260). Lancelot's drive towards death is such that when he goes to kill himself, there is a sense of relief in his actions, a moment of brief anguished euphoria, ultimately stopped by the Lady of the Lake, in which Lancelot's anguish is met by a moment of pleasure that he will soon join his beloved companion.

The paradoxical creation of pleasure through the intensity of death is central to reading the death drive through Lancelot. Bersani writes, "that sexual pleasure occurs whenever a certain threshold of intensity is reached when the organization of the self is momentarily disturbed by sensations or affective processes somehow "beyond" those connected with psychic organization" (217). Death is the disturbance of the self here and the response to it tips Lancelot over the emotional threshold of intensity. It is the same for Galehaut. Their sexual pleasure does not come in the sense of physical arousal on the page, but rather an emotional arousal and completion that the author displaces onto the objects that represent the bodies of each other. The feeling of completion from this emotional arousal comes in the form of seeking death so that they may join the other. In this sense, Lancelot and Galehaut fit well into Bersani and Freud's idea of sexuality.

Of Freud's relation to death drive and pleasure, Robert Rowland Smith argues, "It's only upon the silencing of the wish's beseeching, petitioning voice that the pleasure may be heard" (4). The wish in the *Prose Lancelot* is Lancelot's wish for death. The act of death and the feeling of pleasure are in some respects the same here. Reality divides the two. Smith places reality in between Thanatos and Eros in Freudian analysis. He argues, "If death is sometimes the 'same' as pleasure, it would offer opposition to pleasure wilier than reality – where reality as a local, if necessary, interruption to pleasure's goals" (6). Indeed, the Lady of the Lake stopped Lancelot's suicide and rejoining with Galehaut by asserting herself and bringing Lancelot back to the reality of the quest he is on. The Lady of the Lake, in this case, is the Freudian reality interrupting the death drive and the pleasure principle. For queer identities in literature, death works as a constructed liminal place for which the queer subject can unite with his beloved in a way he could not in life. Furthermore, this idea is strictly confined to the realms of literature, which allows a greater freedom of queer communal expression through death.

Death as both place and effect is a vital part of the close reading of Galehaut's death scene in the later section of this chapter. Death is also important for analyzing Galehaut as a queer subject. The construction of death as a place for queerness to conclude in a literary work is important for a few reasons: the first is that it is a place where societal rules do not necessarily apply anymore, and second, there is no longer the threat of death in conjunction with those rules. If one is already dead, then one need not fear the executioner's axe for any crimes related to queerness, thinking primarily, of course, about sodomy. For example, Ruth Mazo Karras describes religious law codes put forth (as a guideline) by a *conventus publicus et curia generalis* in Nablus in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1120: "If any adult is proven to have defiled themself willingly with sodomitical depravity, both the active and the passive partner shall be

burned" (Karras). This law code tells us that not only was homosexual activity frowned upon by religious laws, but furthermore that it was punishable by death. Of course, this is not the same for every single country and place in the Middle Ages, but rather, an example that speaks to the general attitude towards sodomy and homoerotic behaviors by the Christian church. Thus, the conclusion that can be drawn from this example in conjunction with the theory I posit is the need to escape this sort of oppression. While it would not be prudent to put modern ideas of sexuality onto premodern people, it is important to recognize that men did not just start falling in love with each other in the 1800s and that the fear of being prosecuted for homosexual activity is also not new and has descendants in modern homophobia. Take, for example, Bersani's statement regarding the fear of gay male sexuality in the 80s: "The presumed original desire to kill gays may itself be understandable only in terms of the fantasy for which it is offered as an explanation: homosexuals are killers" (210). Here, speaking about the AIDs crisis and America's truly horrific reaction towards gay men during and after it, Bersani relates the gay male in the public gaze to a murderer. Gay men as the killer, specifically their sexuality as the killer, has its reflections in the sodomy laws Karras discusses.

Both Karras and Bersani highlight the role of the bottom or receiving partner in gay intercourse as the one who is the most dangerous in the eyes of the religious public. According to Bersani, the receiving partner is at the greatest risk of social stigmatization and death. He writes that for the reactionary public, "Women and gay men spread their legs with an unquenchable appetite for destruction" (211). As Karras has also pointed out, it is the link between receptive gay intercourse and women that draws the biggest ire. By taking on the receiving role, the queer man transgresses accepted gender roles. In a society dictated by patriarchal normativity like the one present in chivalric literature, to take on the role of the woman and be on the receiving end

of intercourse is to court death because the queer subject is not performing the correct masculine attributes a man is supposed to have. The destruction that Bersani speaks of is physical, yet, for Lancelot and Galehaut, or indeed any queer reading of chivalric literature, it is a spiritual destruction, one that, if left unchecked, can spread, and cause moral and social destruction. This is the primary reason that the knights do not engage in intercourse on the page yet displace their desire for each other through death. The construction of literary queerness and death is two-sided: the fear of being killed for gay sex and the seeking death as a refuge of queerness away from the societal fear of homosexual intercourse.

The fear of death by the way one has sex, or one loves, is seen in literary works where queerness is often ascribed. While I speak about a medieval audience, it is vital to understand that scholars can use this theory for any queer subject in literature. The main construction of my theory is that death works as a haven for the queer subject so much so that the drive to reach that state – particularly when death removes the object of their queer affection – overpowers their will to live. Thus, we see the return of the Freudian death drive, only this death drive is here to further the queer subject to a place where he can be safely united with his beloved, whether that death is a physical death or a social death.

By a social death (and indeed queer death in general), I draw heavily on the ideas put forth in Marietta Radomska's, Tara Mehrabi and Nina Lykke's article, "Queer Death Studies: Death, Dying, and Mourning from a Queerfeminist Perspective."[28] On the construction of queer death studies, Radomska et al. write, "Queer Death Studies pays attention to these necropowers,

[28] Radomska, Marietta, et al. "Queer Death Studies: Death, Dying, and Mourning from a Queer feminist Perspective," *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 35, no. 104, 2020, pp. 81-100. I will be using Marietta Radomaska as the primary source author for citations and quotes regarding this article. Furthermore, I would like to point out that this article deals heavily in queer necropolitics and necropower, both of which have been influential in building my own theory to discuss queer historical literature. Yet, it is vital to understand that those terms are heavily routed in decolonization and the description of political bodies and who gets to be considered a person in death.

and to their effects in terms of systematically and structurally positioning certain bodies as left to die (in the sense of social death as well as physical, material death)" (85). Radomska et al. constructs victims of societal death as those whose queerness socially ostracizes them, thus resulting in the community stripped from them. Radomska et al. focus on the people left to die and how often society strips their personhood and humanity from them in many regards (86-87). They are, in every sense of the word, dead to the world at large. If we apply this to the *Prose Lancelot,* we see Galehaut suffer this type of death, not just in the text itself, but in the politics of recreating and redistributing his story.

Arthurian literature is a genre that builds upon itself. It self-cannibalizes its stories and then gives birth to those same stories with a diverse cultural flare each time. However, the story of Galehaut and his enthusiastic love for Lancelot do not get reproduced decades and centuries later. Instead, they are forgotten. Galehaut and his unrelenting passion for Lancelot are left to die a societal and literary death. To deny someone a story is to deny their personhood. While yes, we are discussing literary characters who are not physically real, it is important to understand the politics in denying something an existence. The denial of a story is also the denial of Galehaut as human literary figure – which as a half-giant means that he is only half-human, something that plays well within how the author presents Galehaut to a medieval audience[29]. Of the categorization of the Human, Noreen Giffney writes, "The category only exists, in other words, because it delineates between those people who are deemed to be Human and those who are considered unworthy of such a title and treated accordingly" (56). Galehaut's construction as a half-human, half-giant man who, by his admission, loves Lancelot more than any other man, makes him unworthy of treatment as a human by later authors of Arthurian literature. There is

[29] Chapter 3 of this dissertation discusses Galehaut as a half-giant in more depth.

something in the way that Galehaut loves Lancelot – a very queer something – that prevents Galehaut from being recognized by other authors. Galehaut's death as a social and literary one is a death that happens off-page. It does not get the same tombstone that the author gives him in text, but rather, gets exhumed by modern queer theorists to give voice to his story once more.

Galehaut being a primarily pre-modern figure means that as scholars, we can only speculate on his queerness. While I have outlined how queerness and death can be used to observe Galehaut's reaction to Lancelot's perceived death and his death consequently, I believe it would be prudent to show how this theory can be positioned in a modern work with our current conception of queer identities. This is to help construct an evolution of ways that an audience can view death as queerness, with Galehaut and Lancelot being the premodern example, and a work of medievalism being the modern example.

I choose to discuss medievalism in the next few paragraphs because medievalism links back to the medieval on an ancestral level as the medieval world is medievalism's main source of inspiration. This makes it the perfect place to situate an explanation of the evolution of my theory. Furthermore, by utilizing a modern work, the shift in queer identity as a social force becomes apparent while at the same time having much of the death as queer haven theory remain the same. Thus, I show the evolution of the theory while retroactively using it to illustrate the queerness inherent in Galehaut's narrative. The queerness inherent in Galehaut and Lancelot's story is covert in only that the identity of homosexuality was not codified in the cultural language of the time. By comparing it to a work of medievalism in which queer identities are codified and actively discussed, we can see how the queer language in death can be applied to the medieval.

The work of medievalism I discuss, Bioware's *Dragon Age* video game franchise, is modeled after the Middle Ages while maintaining the politics and social identities of the twenty-

first century. Medievalism works as a form of digital nostalgia theater from which the queer audience can craft a sense of historical identity. This is because there is something inherently queer in the way certain medieval imagery comes to us within our 21st-century minds. While it may be a recognition that flirts on the edge of conscious cultural thought, the subtle queerness of two men utterly devoted to each other through countless trials resonates with a modern queer audience. The heartbreak one man feels when losing his beloved friend is a powerful homoerotic lineage tracing back to Achilles and Patroclus. The queer community at large[30], I should point out, have claimed both men as ancestral figures. It is my theory then that reading medieval stories about intense male friendships can trigger a sense of queer recognition in a queer audience. This is then contrasted with the need to create a queer history, which the work of medievalism can do. Thus, if we move the discussion of queer identity in death to a more modern setting and utilize queer works of medievalism as an example, we see this theory become more pronounced in practice as queer identities become more codified in public.

Take, for example, the construction of mages and the mage rebellion in the critically acclaimed *Dragon Age* video game series. The series is set in a fantasy world called Thedas which takes inspiration from several European medieval cultures, including English, French, Norse, and Celtic. One of the central conflicts is between magic users known as mages, and the Templar Order (inspired by the image of the Christian knight and the Order of the Knights Templar). The mages are a clear representation of those that society has Othered for their identity. They are locked away in a tower, given second-class citizenship, forced away from their

[30] In the last two decades, the word "Achillean" has been adopted to mean any man who is attracted to men, encompassing gay, pansexual, and bisexual sexualities. I have seen the term presented on sites like *Twitter*, *Reddit*, and *Tumblr* as an opposite for "Sapphic," a term for women who are attracted to women. It is difficult to say when the term "Achillean" became in popular use, as the original meaning of the word, from the Webster dictionary is like Achilles (as in strength, moody, wrathful). To fully grasp the history of use in a queer context would require in depth qualitative and investigative work.

families, and put through strict day-to-day governance overseen by the Templars. Furthermore, many of the mage characters the player can recruit or interact with fall onto the queer spectrum or are people of color, or sometimes both. While heavy-handed when comparing magic and the Other, the comparison is useful to exemplify my theoretical approach to death and queerness.

In the second installment of the series, *Dragon Age II*, the character Anders represents the violent force of rebellion against those who imprison the mages. His entire character arc culminates in him using magic to blow up the Chantry – the game models the organization that oppresses the mages directly after the Catholic Church. Ander's actions coupled with a direct Christian-inspired organization led to numerous articles and backlash pieces on the internet regarding the characterization of Anders and bisexual people in games in general. Indeed, Steven Holmes writes in "Playing Past the Straight Male Gamer," that "The loci of concern for *Dragon Age II* involved Anders, a human male party member" (128), and that Anders and other bisexual love interests would present their own "controversies" (128). The controversies in question regard identity and whether Anders is a good representation for blowing up the Chantry and causing mass panic, as well as triggering an entire mage uprising.

There is something to be said about the need for "good" versus "bad" representation and how Anders, a man written to be a tragic figure desperately trying to find a way to free his people from their oppressors, gets written to be both villain and savior and the reaction of gamers, both gay and straight to such a character. Peter Kelly discusses this further in his chapter, "Approaching the Digital Courting Process in *Dragon Age II,*" where he maps out the romance and controversies surrounding *Dragon Age II'*s bisexual characters. He sees a conflict in how straight characters feel about a bisexual man openly coming onto them (50). For some straight players, the thought of a man wanting to have sex with their character (if they were playing the

male player character) triggered in them a sense of homophobic fear of being the object of desire for another man. In a culture like ours that has defined lines between heterosexual and homosexual, this confrontation with homosexual desire challenges the scripted sense of masculinity they expected. Yet for the queer player (or really any open-minded player), this confrontation of same-sex desire was not anything out of the ordinary, but rather, reaffirms a sense of lost history for them. For a moment they can look at a medieval world and see their queerness reflected in them. Yet Anders is not the perfect representation because he does not just discuss how to make things better for an oppressed people. Instead, he utilizes violence to attempt to liberate the people who are like him. By blowing up the fantasy Catholic church, he removes any sense of compromise.

In the eyes of heterosexual, dogmatic ideology, Anders and violent queer characters like him represent a problem, which only gets furthered by the realization that Anders is the queer death drive incarnate. He is a bisexual man whose entire being is dedicated to erasing his oppressors, even at the expense of his own life – for he knows that he can never go back to the way things were after his final actions. Indeed, the player character can choose to kill Anders for his actions. This scene is doubly impactful if the player character (who can be male or female) romances Anders. Yet it is not the ending that concerns me for *Dragon Age II*. Instead, I want to bring attention to the quest the game gives the player upon meeting Anders for the first time.

When the player character meets Anders, he uses magic to perform healing services for those who cannot afford it. It is an altruistic first meeting. To advance the quest, the player character must perform a service for Anders, who tells the player character to meet him in the Chantry (fantasy Catholic Church) so that they can rescue an old friend from the church's clutches. Once inside the Chantry, the player character, and their party – now including Anders –

see Anders's friend, Karl. The game makes it clear that something is immediately wrong. Karl has been made tranquil, which means the Chantry has performed a ritual to erase all identity from Karl's being by destroying his very spirit in a physical and metaphysical sense; he is now an emotionless husk of his former self. The construction of tranquility as a method of punishment to deny a mage's very person is a direct comparison to conversion therapy experienced by modern queer people. Anders can undo tranquility only for a moment by calling forth a spirit of Justice. The allusion is clear: Justice, even warped as it is in *Dragon Age II*, can burn away the taint of the Chantry's religious punishment; Justice as a spiritual force can be the vindicator for the oppressed and give them back a voice. In that moment's clarity, Karl reverts to his old self, and says to Anders, "I can feel it slipping away, please Anders, before it's all gone again" (*Dragon Age II*). In this moment, he begs Anders to take his life so that he can remain himself in death, rather than be spiritless and emotionless in life. Anders can then kill or let the player character kill Karl to fulfill his wish. Later, back at Anders's clinic, the player learns that Anders and Karl were lovers for a time, to which a male player character can engage in flirtatious dialogue about also being into men. The game allows the player character to engage in a nostalgia theater of imagined queerness in the Middle Ages.

The game also provides a modern example of my theoretical approach to death as a queer place of sanctuary. Karl's death, while tragic, adds a sense of cathartic relief for the queer mages in the game. For Anders (and a mage player character) there is a dialogue option that states that death is preferable to being tranquil. Here the game states that it is better to die than to have your identity ripped from you. Karl suffers through two different deaths: a spiritual one and a physical one, with the physical one being the chosen form of death.

The larger question is how this relates to the *Prose Lancelot* when one is a modern work in a newer media form and the other is a work dating back to the thirteenth century. The answer is that a work of medievalism like the *Dragon Age* franchise utilizes ideas and imagery from the Middle Ages while maintaining the queer politics of the twenty-first century. It is thus an evolutionary point for my theoretical approach regarding death and queerness as applied to a medieval text. The construction of death as a place in *Dragon Age* works on a more defined scale because of the construction of a modern queer identity. The *Prose Lancelot* does not define its queerness because it misses that queer identity. Through the act of death, however, scholars can retroactively apply queerness with caveats regarding the time discussed. The literary construction of the death of Galehaut is the distant ancestor of the death of Karl and Anders.

Furthermore, the Chantry/The Church is the place that denies Karl his personhood. The way the Chantry punishes those it deems too different and dangerous to society is reminiscent of the way sodomy laws worked in Galehaut's time. The series refers to making Karl tranquil as magical castration, and it is that parallel that recalls the anti-sodomy laws as described by Karras earlier in the chapter. The Chantry, like the Christian Church and the anti-sodomy laws, designs laws to punish anything deemed harmful to a moral Christian (re: the faith of the Maker in Dragon Age) Society. Karl and Galehaut must have a triple death: physical, literary, and spiritual. Thus, it is important too to acknowledge the various kinds of deaths that Galehaut endures. Galehaut as queer subject dies a physical death, but he also dies a social and literary one as well. To analyze the social and literary deaths, we must examine the death of Galehaut as recorded on the page in the *Prose Lancelot*.

Before the physical death of Galehaut, the narrator creates a tension of impending tragedy between Lancelot and Galehaut. The narrator makes the reader aware of the specter of death

before the actual event happens. As the audience, we know that Galehaut's fate is to die before Lancelot – it is to leave Lancelot. The text thus far has been less than subtle with its continual mentions of Galehaut swooning and fainting at the thought of Lancelot in peril. The first time Galehaut says he would die without Lancelot is within the first few days of Galehaut meeting the knight. Later in the narrative, in a confession scene between Elias, a minister figure Galehaut sent for to help interpret his nightmares, and Galehaut, the minister speaks prophecy at Galehaut. Elias informs Galehaut that his lovesickness for Lancelot will lead to his death. This causes Lancelot to become distraught. The author states:

> A dont regarde Galehot lancelot et il se lieue maintenant et sen ist hors de la capele si dolans quil ne set de lui nul confort si sen entre chambre & puis si ferme luis apres lui et fist illeuques moult grant duel. Car ore sospechonne il bien gue Galehot natent a morir se par lui non (Sommer IV: 25)
>
> [At a glance from Galehaut] Lancelot rose at once and went out of the chapel, so anguished and pained that he did not know where to reach for comfort. He flung himself into a small room, closing the door behind him, and there gave vent to his immense grief, for he was quite sure that Galehaut expected his death to come through him (Lacey III: 252).

The grief that Lancelot feels here is the fear that Galehaut will die because of him, which, tragically turns out to be true.

The way Lancelot reacts to Galehaut's foreseen demise is important to his role in the companionship. Instead of giving his grief language that is the same language of grief from a heterosexual couple – and they are, indeed, remarkably similar – the language of Lancelot's grief

is his own. Jane Gilbert argues for a similar approach to reading the love between two men. She states that setting aside the homosexual-heterosexual divide allows scholars "to compare patterns of love and desire and opens up the possibility of rethinking these other than as either variants on heterosexual norms or as wholly asexual" (92). Using this framework, we can examine Lancelot's grief as not queer by way of heterosexual opposition but rather, queer in the way that friendship in chivalric romance was its microcosm of complex social and emotional cues. In looking at how Lancelot dramatically leaves the room and collapses to "vent his immense grief," we can see a few various aspects of companionship at play. The first is the fear of being without one's companion. Lancelot would be alone in the world. He would not have his confidant, the man he has come to love above all other men, a sentiment shared by Galehaut.

Furthermore, if the prophecy about lovesickness is correct, then Lancelot knows it would be his fault that his love dies. This, of course, brings me to the next aspect of this companionship grief display: the mirrored grief. Lancelot mirrors Galehaut's grief at the thought of him dying. Galehaut is not afraid of his death, but rather, he does not wish to leave Lancelot. He especially does not want Lancelot to blame himself for that death. He wishes for Lancelot to stay so they can face this prophecy together, but Lancelot is so overcome with emotion that he cannot. Elias says of this, "car iou sais bien que vous lames de si grand amour quil ne porroit pas legierement auoir plus grant amour entre compaignons loaius (Sommer IV: 25) // I know that you love him with all the love that can exist between two true companions and would have wanted him to share in this discussion" (Lacy III: 253). As his companion, Galehaut expects Lancelot to behave like one and to be with him at this moment.

Yet, Galehaut is alone to deal with the knowledge of his impending death while Lancelot leaves to deal with the potential repercussions of causing Galehaut's death. It is important to note

the foreshadowing here because Lancelot's choice to leave Galehaut's castle is what causes the other knight's death later: Lancelot leaves because he is distraught and leaves behind a bloody bed due to a nosebleed, and Galehaut dies as a result, believing that his companion has committed suicide. Despite being divided at the times of their respective deaths, they are joined together in the grave. The grief displayed in the scene quoted in the above few paragraphs is important: it highlights that while their grief mirrors each other, Galehaut's focus is on Lancelot – whereas Lancelot's is on himself. This is how their relationship has worked thus far. No matter how much Galehaut loves Lancelot, the other knight can only return a portion of his love because his heart is split between loving two people: Galehaut and Guinevere. Mieszkowski writes that "[Galehot] loves Lancelot with an exclusive, absolute, lover's love that shoulders aside all wordly considerations in deference to that love," yet, despite all this, "the only love in the story that matches Galehot's for Lancelot is Lancelot's for Guinevere" (34). Whereas she argues that Lancelot only returns Galehaut's love as a comrade-in-arms, and indeed Gilbert argues something similar, stating that while Lancelot is Galehaut's "unobtainable subject," (95), he is not Lancelot's. I disagree on both accounts.

Lancelot directs his grief internally, yet it is because the author divides Lancelot's narrative between his time with Guinevere and his time with Galehaut, he intertwines his internal grief with them. His allegiance to both often tears at him, so much that he loses himself in grief and madness a few times. Lancelot would not be who he is – the greatest knight in all the land – without Galehaut and Guinevere there to inspire him. Indeed, there are multiple occasions where Lancelot frequently wonders at all the great sacrifices that Galehaut has made for him and vows to be worthy of them, something that Mieszkowski also notes (27). Lancelot's entire narrative focuses on Galehaut, Guinevere, and the Grail. His two love interests push his sense of self

forward. Both fulfill the role of the companion – though one has explicit sex involved. I would further point out that yes, Lancelot loves Galehaut as a companion-in-arms, and that is precisely the point. As a companion, Lancelot's love melds together different ideas of love in a way, utterly foreign to our own, which makes Galehaut the romantic and erotic rival for Lancelot's affections. As a knight and a prince, their relationship mirrors a knight-lord bond, which is already rife with homosocial undertones. The knight-lord bond is a hierarchal system in which the knight submits himself and fully obeys his lord, and in return, the lord bestows upon the knight gifts. It is a form of intense male-male companionship that Lancelot and Galehaut mimic. Thus, Lancelot's love for Galehaut combines the idea of *compagnonnage*, *fin'amor*, and homoeroticism.

Elias's translation of Galehaut's dreams further illustrate this. Elias tells Galehaut:

> Li grans dragons morroit et iou sai de voir que ce estes vous et la royne la femme au roy artu est li serpens qui aime le cheualier et amera tant que nulle dame porroit plus cheualier amer. Et si saiches se vous ames le cheualier de tele amor et di se grande que vostres cuers nel porra souffrir (Sommer IV: 28)
>
> I know for a truth that you are the dragon, and the serpent who takes the knight away from you is my lady the queen, who loves or will love him as much as a lady can love a knight. But you know, don't you, that you love the knight with such love that your heart cannot long endure that change (suffer) (Lacy III: 254)[31].

[31] The English translation supplied by Oskar Sommer in his edition of the Old French text of the *Lancelot en Prose* is thus: "I know that you are the dragon, Queen Guinevere is the serpent who loves your companion. If you love him too much, it may be your undoing" (IV: 28). While I think this translation captures the emotional tone of what is being said, I prefer Lacy's translation in that it captures the direct translations rather than a summarized variation. The key difference is the "may be your undoing" vs "that you love the knight with such love that your heart cannot long endure that change." The word "souffrir" being "suffer," I have chosen that Lacy's translation captures that more accurately.

Here, Elias confirms what Galehaut fears the most: that Guinevere will take Lancelot away from him and that in the end, his heart will give out because he cannot be with him. Elias recognizes that Galehaut is Guinevere's rival for Lancelot's love. The comparison between Galehaut and Guinevere is strong. They both deeply love and desire Lancelot to the point they cannot bear the thought of losing him to the other. Unlike Guinevere, however, Galehaut's desire is for a fellow knight and thus chivalric companionship must hide the desire. Gilbert writes, "Chivalric companionship is indistinguishable henceforth from the courtly love relation in its rhetoric and its psychic economy." (101). Gilbert's analysis is a good one; the love triangle between the three shows the indistinguishable relationship between chivalric companions and *fin'amor* relationships.

What is interesting about the construction of the love triangle, especially as it relates to Elias's prophecy and Galehaut's dream, is the role the animals play concerning Galehaut and Guinevere. Galehaut is a dragon, a powerful symbol of masculinity and drive. It is the creature born of pagan origins that knights face in battle, who kidnap maidens and ruin cities. The defeat of the dragon symbolizes a knight defeating Satan's forces. Yet, in a very paradoxical fashion, it is also the symbol of Uther Pendragon, inherited by his son, Arthur. Galehaut here is the dragon, and as such, connected in a more positive way to Arthur himself.

On the other hand, Guinevere is the serpent, who in thirteenth-century France would have been associated with the Garden of Eden and most importantly, Eve. The analogy here is that Guinevere is the serpent in the Garden that will tempt Eve (Lancelot) and thus get him expelled from the Garden. Galehaut's symbol of the dragon is also a precarious one as both the snake and the dragon seem to hint at ruin for Lancelot. Guinevere being the serpent, however, is very telling as to how Galehaut views her in his psyche. To him, she is the ultimate rival for

Lancelot's affections. Here, the author codes Galehaut as the other lover of Lancelot who is in eternal competition with Guinevere, whom he codes in a negative light. Furthermore, the author casts the love of Guinevere and Lancelot as sinful and represented by the symbol of temptation.

After he hears these symbols, Galehaut fears Lancelot's death and knows he will not survive it. Indeed, Galehaut gestures to this when he says, "ne apres sa mort ne querroie vne seule heure uiure. Car il ne me demouroit riens en cest qui au mien plaisir fust Et par ce ne quier (Sommer IV: 28) // After his death I don't think I could love, because I would have nothing left in this world that could bring me any pleasure" (Lacy III: 254). Once more, we see death linked to love. Without Lancelot, there would be nothing left for Galehaut to live for. The intensity of his love causes him to seek death as the only alternative. Even Galehaut's lover, the Lady of Malehaut does not get the same treatment that Galehaut gives Lancelot. He does not say that if she dies, he will also die. This contrasts dramatically with Lancelot who does mention that he will die if separated from Guinevere for too long. Galehaut does mirror Lancelot's declarations for Guinevere, but for Lancelot and not the Lady of Malehaut. By doing this, he places himself as a suitor for Lancleot's affections, rather than being a proper suitor for the Lady of Malehaut. He disrupts the accepted paradigm of male/female relations to substitute male/male/female intrigue. Thus, the triangle of Galehaut to Lancelot to Guinevere forms with Guinevere understanding that he is her romantic rival. Yet, the sex act between the Lady of Malehaut and Galehaut reaffirms, in some sense, an accepted heterosexual paradigm while allowing the audience to see the romantic underpinnings of Galehaut's words for Lancelot.

Regarding Lancelot and Galehaut's male-female relationships, Hyatte writes, "Galehout encourages the affair between Lancelot and Guienvere, and Guienvere encourages the liaison between Galehout and the Lady of Malehaut" (104). This is true, Galehaut does function as a

wingman for Lancelot. He does so because he knows that lovesickness will destroy Lancelot if he does not obtain Guinevere, and Guinevere, knowing how enraptured Galehaut is by Lancelot, makes a political move to encourage his pairing with Galehaut and the Lady of Malehaut. For a brief night, the two now heterosexual couples have a tryst. Guinevere successfully removes Galehaut from Lancelot's side, if only for a moment. On this Hyatte further writes, "On the other hand, the problem of Galehout's attraction to Lancelot is not resolved by narrative displacement of male-to-male affection to female figures" (104). Indeed, the author never expands upon Galehaut's brief affair with the Lady of Malehaut, and while he does have sex with her, it is never more than a physical act. His heart and his entire being is Lancelot. Galehaut's Eros is Lancelot. While Hyatte points out, "Galehout strives not so much for Lancelot's love as his companionship" (104), I disagree because I do not believe companionship and love are different things here. It is the opposite. Galehaut's love and companionship with Lancelot are the same. His feelings are an intrinsic sense of self that Galehaut has cast upon Lancelot. The companionship functions as coded romantic love here, for Galehaut does not treat the Lady of Malehaut as a lover, but rather, treats Lancelot as his lover. Not once does he say he would die for the nameless Lady of Malehaut. Yet his love for his companion is so great that he is willing to, and indeed does, die for him.

It is the specific series of events that leads to Galehaut's death that are the subject of the next set of close readings. These events that led up to Galehaut's death I have coined the three deaths of Galehaut and Lancelot. These deaths are the following: the first time Galehaut believes Lancelot is dead after Morgan had taken him, the second the time Galehaut believes Lancelot died and then succumbs to heartsickness himself, and the third death is when Lancelot finds Galehaut's tomb and threatens to commit suicide over it. These three deaths construct the final

play in Galehaut and Lancelot's physical love story before they spiritually consummate their relationship in death by getting entombed together. The three deaths are a constructed coded language in which Galehaut can fully ascribe his romantic intentions to Lancelot in a way that is acceptable in a chivalric romantic setting. In the instant of Galehaut's death, he follows in the tradition of ancient lover-companions such as Enkidu and Gilgamesh, Achilles and Patroclus, and David and Jonathan, all as noted by Halperin in *100 Years of Homosexuality*. By using Halperin's framework of lover-friends to apply to Galehaut and Lancelot, and specifically, their deaths, I place Galehaut and Lancelot into a literary tradition of companions who highlight their love in death.

The first scene in the "three deaths" that I would like to discuss is the scene, or rather scenes, in which Galehaut finds Lancelot's shield and believes he is dead. To set the stage for this death, we must first summarize the events that led up to it. To begin, Morgan kidnaps many knights in Camelot as part of a revenge scheme against Guinevere. Lancelot manages to rescue the knights, but he gets caught by Morgan. Lancelot convinces Morgan to let him go on a quest to find Gawain on the promise that he will return to her when called back. The important part is that he swears on his honor as a knight. Lancelot's honor as a knight is vital to his entire being. He has no choice but to oblige when she recalls him. This leads to a series of miscommunications, one of which causes Lancelot to tell Gawain to speak to Galehaut and Arthur about his plight and that he cannot attend them that night, which has Galehaut doubt his companionship with Lancelot. Witness his reactions to the Gawain's message:

> Ensint blasme li rois mon seignor Gauvain, tos les autres est Galehout dolens et esbahis et bien a soi meismes, esprové que Lancelos ne l'amoit mie, quant il a autrui dist son

> conseil et sans son seu s'en ala: et de la vint la grans ire don't la noire dolors le prist al ceur qui onques puis ne le laissa. Mes ci ne'n fet pus a parler. (Micha II: 347)
>
> In such terms the king rebuked Sir Gawain, but of all the people there the most downcast and bewildered was Lancelot. He felt, he said to himself, that Lancelot did not love him, for he had disclosed his plan to someone else and gone off unbeknownst to him, Galehaut. And from that arose the bitter disappointment that gripped his heart with pain which would never fade. But this is not the place to speak of it (Lacy II: 323).

Here, Galehaut exhibits heartbreak. He feels that Lancelot has broken his promise as a companion.

For Galehaut, this tears at him in the same way that Guinevere feels when the lady of Morgan comes to court and denounces Lancelot as debasing himself with another woman. Guinevere cries,

> sire or ma bien vostre compains traie & honnie quar il est hors du il est mors. Car cest anel ne quidaisse iou mie que nus le peust auoir pour nulle riens. mais bien le sachies & vous & autres que sil est vis que iamais mes cuers ne lamera. Et sil est mors iou le comparrai moult chierement (Sommer IV:143)
>
> If he is alive; he'll pay for his disloyalty, never having my love anymore; and if he is dead, I'll pay for it much more than he, everyone everywhere knowing about it!" (Lacy II: 325).

The reactions are remarkably similar. Galehaut's and Guinevere's frustration is because Lancelot has disclosed something to another party: for Galehaut it is the disclosing of his plans to Gawain, and for Guinevere, it is Lancelot losing the ring she gave him to Morgan. The key difference is

the direction of their anger. Guinevere outright threatens Lancelot whereas Galehaut directs his anger internally. The external versus internal relationship with love is a common theme in the triangle between Guinevere, Lancelot, and Galehaut. It is two separate ways that the loves of Lancelot act upon the *fin'amor* between them all that further shows how Guinevere's love presents as a bodily, almost sinful love whereas Galehaut's love falls into a purer type of *fin'amor.* This is because Guinevere's love is based on adultery whereas Galehaut's is based on chivalric companionship. Gilbert writes, "With the figure of Galehot the text superimposes the courtly erotic relation onto the model chivalric relation of compaignie or privileged friendship" (95). Gilbert's idea of superposition works primarily because Galehaut exhibits the same courtly erotic models that Guinevere does, the key difference, however, is when that courtly model gets superimposed onto the chivalric *compaignie* model it loses the inherent eroticism of sex and instead gains two key aspects: romantic affection and the death of the companion.

At one point, Galehaut finds Lancelot again in the throes of madness. While the other knights warn against being near him, Galehaut responds that he would much rather be close to Lancelot and let his companion kill him than bear the agony of being without him in life. Sullivan writes of this scene, "If he cannot be bound to Lancelot in his presence, he would like to be bound to him in his absence, through the intimacy of a death his companion has brought about" (178). Indeed, Galehaut's love is so that the mere thought of being without Lancelot is enough to cause him to seek death. By letting Lancelot kill him, he would have a sense of intimacy that borders on the erotic. Certainly, a man penetrated by his companion's sword in a gesture to not be without him holds a sense of eroticism. The eroticism inherent in that one image is stark enough to lay bare the passion that Galehaut feels towards Lancelot. For one more, he is willing to commit sacrifices just for Lancelot's sake. This image of a knight impaled on the

sword of his companion comes up once more at the end of Galehaut's story in the *Prose Lancelot.*

Thus, we get to the first "death," set after Lancelot's kidnapping and Morgan's Lady attempts to discredit Lancelot's character. The scene begins with the Lady telling Galehaut he will never find Lancelot again, which causes Galehaut to faint from anguish and heartbreak (325). This action is important not only because it signifies the romantic coded grief that Galehaut feels, but furthermore, as Gaunt points out, "Galehaut faints *before* Guinevere" (198). The author constructs Galehaut as the first person to feel despair at Lancelot's death, thus placing Galehaut's grief as more important than Guinevere's. This initial display of losing his sense of self would only compound in the following moment (after Morgan's Lady uses this to escape back to her mistress) when Galehaut sees a group of knights honoring Lancelot's broken shield and assumes – wrongfully – that Lancelot has died. This is after he fights and kills them for the shield of his beloved.

Lancelot's shield is the substitute for Lancelot's body. As Lancelot is Galehaut's unattainable desire, the shield can be the one thing of Lancelot that Galehaut can claim. It is, again, a chivalric superimposition of the *fin'amor* dynamic. Lancelot's shield functions as a token of love and a physical representation of an absent body. It is in this superimposition that chivalric actions code romantic love. His desire to obtain the shield of his companion – a very symbol of the other man's knighthood – is coded instead as Galehaut's need to possess Lancelot's body. The coded romantic language then switches from the possession of a shield as a body to the possession of a shield as a corpse. After the (false) realization that Lancelot has died, Galehaut gives the audience a display of his grief:

> Mes Galehaut s'en vet dolens et anguoissos de la mort Lancelot; si fet si grant duel com il puet fere greignor et a ce a son pensé atorné que lui ne porroit il mie vivre et voldra mettre le cors en totes les peines qu'ill porra soffrir, mes que ce ne soit a dampnement de s'ame (Micha III: 366).
>
> Galehaut went away anguished and grieving over the death of Lancelot. Rapt in the deepest mourning, he realized that he could not live on after him and resolved to lay his body open to all the risks it could bear, barring, however, anything that would damn his soul (Lacy II: 327).

The important emphasis of this grief is that Galehaut wants to die but will not commit suicide because that action would damn his soul. If his soul is damned, he cannot be with Lancelot in death. The text is clear that while Galehaut will not actively seek suicide, he will, however, not do anything that would increase his likelihood of living, which includes not caring whether he lives or dies in mortal combat. At this point, however, he is adamant about not claiming his own life.

As the narrative progresses, Galehaut stumbles upon a monastery where an ex-knight turned Monk would help heal his wound (Sommer IV: 145). The wound here is both the physical wound from his battle over Lancelot's shield and an emotional wound at the loss of his companion. The monk acknowledges the loss of Galehaut's companion and attempts to heal him, though this has negligible effect (Sommer IV: 145). This image of the monk healing the love-maddened knight recalls scenes in which a figure of holy power heals the knight who has gone mad from either love or grief. Take, for example, the Grail-maiden healing Lancelot, or Yvain and the noblewoman who cures him so that he can win back the hand of Laudine (lines 6696-

6708). Galehaut follows a tradition of knightly conduct that revolves around grief and lovesickness.

In this next scene, however, he succumbs to his lovesickness and grief. After Lancelot and Galehaut briefly reunite and Galehaut is overjoyed to find his companion alive, circumstances separate them once again. At some point, after he encounters Yvain and Gawain, Lancelot rides off to parts unknown, only to decide "mais s'il cuidast qu'il s'en iroit a Galehout qui tos les biens li avoit fet" (Micha IV: 387)// "to go to Galehaut, who had always been so good to him, and he started on his way to Sorelois" (Lacy II: 332). Here, we finally see Lancelot recognize the bond the two share. He purposefully leaves his other two knightly companions, and instead, goes to the one he holds above all the others. Once he gets to Sorelois, he finds that Galehaut is no longer there. Lancelot becomes stressed. The narrator further states, "Car il ne sauoit a coi conforter de ce qui au cuer li greuoit Et toutes les ioies que on li faisoit li desplaisoient" (Sommer IV. 154) // "Lancelot was deeply disturbed by that that he almost took leave of his senses since he did not know whom to turn to for comfort" (Lacy II: 332). It is important to note that the castle at Sorelois is not empty – there are plenty of people there who welcome Lancelot, but for Lancelot, they are not the right people. He seeks the companionship of Galehaut and Galehaut alone. Here, Lancelot acknowledges their bond. For he knows that it could ease the troubles in his heart, as it has often done within the narrative.

Seeing that Galehaut is not at Sorelois, Lancelot feels so much anguish that blood begins to pour from his nostrils. The author does not expand beyond this, save for stating that there was a copious amount of blood (Micha III: 387). Without a word to anyone, he leaves. The next morning, Lancelot's chambers are empty save for sheets stained from Lancelot's nosebleed. The scene is described: "Et quant l'en trav al matin le sanc, si cuida l'en qu'il se fust ocis: si fu si

grans li diels com il pot plus" (Micha III: 388) // "When the blood was found the next morning, he was thought to have been killed, and the mourning for him was endless" (Lacy II: 332). The amount of blood that Lancelot bled out was enough for the servants to believe that Lancelot had died. Thus, the blood becomes a symbol of Lancelot's body, which again, is absent from his death scene. The men in the castle immediately report this to Galehaut, who is inconsolable with grief. No ministers can heal him. This is because there is nothing of Lancelot to hold onto at this point. The blood on the sheet is not tangible enough to represent the body. Lancelot does not leave behind his shield (for Galehaut already has it in his possession), only bloody sheets. There is not a physical body to mourn. There is only an emptiness of loss in Galehaut's heart. The author describes Galehaut's grief:

> Atant s'en Galehout en Sorelois, mais quant il öi la comment Lancelos s'en estoit partis et del sanc qui fu trovés en son lit, si cuida bien qu'il fust mors et que il meismes se fust ocis. Des lors en avant n'i ot riens del conforter, mais neporquant il s'en confortast durement, s'il ne cuidast que il fust mors ; mes ce le faistoit desesperer qu'il ne deignoit mengier ne boivre. Mais tant de confort com il avoit si estoit li escus Lancelot qu'il avoit tot adés devant ses iex. (Micha III : 388).
>
> Then Galehaut went back to Sorelois, but when he heard how Lancelot had disappeared and heard about the blood in his room, he was sure that he was dead and had even killed himself. From that time on, there was no comfort for Galehaut, who could surely have found some comfort had he not been convinced that Lancelot was dead; but this thought made him lose all hope, so that he spurned all food and drink. Whatever comfort he had came from Lancelot's shield, which he kept at all times before his eyes (Lacy II: 332).

Once again, Galehaut substitutes Lancelot's shield for Lancelot's person. In the longing gaze and the refusal to eat or drink, Galehaut exhibits the same lovesickness that other knights do in their heterosexual counterparts. The coding of romantic love into this death of Lancelot is such that the text makes clear Galehaut's many impassioned promises to Lancelot: He cannot bear to be in a world without him. Priests and ministers come to Galehaut and force him to eat so that his soul will not be damned. While they manage to save his soul, they cannot save his body and Galehaut succumbs to his lovesickness and the festering wound he obtained fighting for Lancelot's shield. David King points out that while the text gives two reasons for Galehaut's death, the first being the wound, the narrator also implies that Galehaut dies from love sickness (158). As with the quote above, Galehaut's focus on Lancelot's shield as he wastes away is vital to the coding of romantic love within the death of the companion. Galehaut uses Lancelot's shield as a substitute because Lancelot is not there physically. Galehaut desperately longs for his companion but to Galehaut, Lancelot is dead, and the only way he can join his companion is through death.

In the third death of Galehaut and Lancelot, Lancelot, after traveling for a time, comes upon a tomb guarded by two knights. When he asks who the tomb is for, they reply that it is a tomb for the most noble of knights. Lancelot then inspects the tomb and sees the following phrase etched into: "Chi gist Galehout li fiz a la Jaiande, li sires des Lointaignes Iles, qui por l'amor de Lancelot morut (Sommer IV: 276)// Here Lies Galehaut, the son of the Giantess, Who died for love of Lancelot" (Lacy III: 59)[32]. Lancelot's grief is immediate and immense. He screams and cries. He throws himself upon the ground in a physical representation of pain for the loss of a loved one. His grief reads as follows:

[32] Vol. III of the translated edition of the non-cyclic Prose *Lancelot* by Norris Lacy begins with this scene. The entirety of the Galehaut narrative is held within vol. II of the translated edition.

> Lors fiert lun poing so lautre et esgratine son visage si il quil en fait le sanc sailler. Si se prent par ses cheueus et se fiert del poing grans cops en mi le vis . et pleure si durement que il ni a celui qui nen ait pitie. Si laidenge & audist leure que il onques fu nes quant si preudoms est mors pour lui (Sommer IV: 277).
>
> And then he beat his fists together and scratched his face until the blood streamed from all over; he pulled his hair and beat his brow and chest with great blows and cried so loudly that not a soul did not feel compassion for him. He cursed himself and the hour he was born, crying, "Oh, God! What shame, what loss of the most valiant knight in the world, who died of love for the basest and most wicked knight there ever was! (Lacy III: 59)

He inflicts physical pain on himself to mirror the emotional pain on the inside. Moreover, he blames himself for the loss of his companion. His grief here further mirrors the grief that Galehaut felt when he believed Lancelot was dead. Furthermore, he takes the death of Galehaut and takes the blame onto himself. In one breath, he praises Galehaut as the "most valiant knight" and curses himself as the "basest and most wicked knight" (59). His focus is on the line, "qui por l'amor de Lancelot morut" (59). For now, he knows, that Galehaut died for him, *because* of him. In this way, he has killed the one friend whom he went to for compassion and love. On the word love, "l'amor" used here, the text is purposefully vague about what *kind* of love it is. Furthermore, it is a play on the troubadour styling to rhyme "amor" with "mort": love and death. The word itself does not distinguish between the love of a friend and the love of a romantic partner, and that is a deliberate construction on the author's part. Simon Gaunt writes on this, "secondly, that the same word in Old French can designate both love and friendship should not

occlude the fact that in the *Prose Lancelot* there is *deliberate* ambiguity in relation to Galehaut's feelings for Lancelot" (192). By leaving it ambiguous, the author writes friendship as romantic.

In death, Galehaut has succumbed to a fatal form of *amor*, like many romantic heroes in chivalric romance. Yet he leaves his *amor* in a liminal place of multiple affective constructions. Lancelot furthers the ambiguity there because Galehaut has been a companion and the *amor* that killed Galehaut came about from him. Galehaut is *his* Galehaut, for that is what "qui por l'amor de Lancelot morut" signifies. To Lancelot, he has killed his closest companions, and in experiencing this death of his beloved companion, Lancelot believes there is only one course of action left to him.

In a scene fueled by desperation and grief, Lancelot picks up his sword – which had also been Galehaut's sword, and prepares to impale himself upon it, his reasoning being, "Lors dist que trop seroit maluais sil ne moroit aussi por lui" (Sommer IV: 277) // "he would be too wicked if he did not in turn die for Galehaut" (Lacy III: 59). Before he can complete the action, his mother, the Lady of the Lake, intervenes and stops him. She tells him that he can be buried with Galehaut in death. Here, we see the same imagery as mentioned previously: a companion willing to die by his companion's sword. As opposed to Galehaut, who claimed that the best death would be by his sworn companion, Lancelot wants to die for Galehaut's honor by taking his own life. His words here indicate that he feels as if he has failed Galehaut, and that a man labeled as the most noble of knights has died for someone who is not worthy. Indeed, this theme of Lancelot feeling as if he is not worthy enough for Galehaut's frequent sacrifices is a common one. In this instance, Lancelot believes that the only way he can make up for Galehaut's death is to join him. Through his grief, however, he does not realize that the act of committing suicide would damn

his soul. If not for the Lady of the Lake's intervention that breaks through Lancelot's grief-madness, he would have undoubtedly killed himself and thus been damned.

Lancelot promises his mother he will live and have a tomb built for himself and Galehaut. Galehaut's death spurs Lancelot onward, and without the older knight to comfort him, Lancelot instead turns to Guinevere, the other figure in the love triangle. After Galehaut's removal from the narrative, Guinevere has no strong rival for Lancelot's attention. Of course, numerous more ladies seek Lancelot's love, but rarely does he pay them as much mind as he does Guinevere or Galehaut, save for one with whom he begets his son, Galahad. Without Galehaut there, Lancelot still has an entire lifetime of adventures. This fits well within Halperin's idea of the homoerotic friend/companion. Halperin writes, "The subordinate friend is thus the expendable friend, the one whose death paves the way for the principal friend's further adventures" (78-79). Lancelot and Galehaut fall into a familiar trope that many male-male warrior companions fall into. While Galehaut was of a higher rank than the two, Galehaut did not see himself that way. He frequently put himself lower than Lancelot, whom he respected above all others. Like Achilles and Patroclus, Galehaut and Lancelot are buried together in the end.

After his adventures, and years later, after the battles with Arthur and Mordred, Lancelot, now a hermit and dying, requests a burial with his companion. Sullivan writes, "In the end, it is only in death that Galehaut is united with Lancelot as exclusively and as permanently as he had always wished" (179). Here, the culmination of a romantic coded friendship comes to fruition. In death, they are joined and united. It is in the grave that they have a semblance of marriage in the way that heterosexual companions do. Placing Lancelot with Galehaut as opposed to Guinevere is a significant action. Gaunt argues that "it is no accident that at the end of the vast prose cycle, it is with Galehaut that Lancelot is buried, and not Guinevere" (193). This action on the author's

part signifies a sense of acceptance of Galehaut's feelings and an acknowledgement of how Galehaut felt for Lancelot.

Furthermore, Lancelot's burial with Galehaut shows the value the author places on their relationship over Lancelot's and Guinevere's. It is important to note, however, that the non-cyclic *Prose Lancelot* is not the only version to feature the tomb of Lancelot and Galehaut. The *Prose Tristan* discusses their shared grave as well. The other stories, rare as they are, that feature Galehaut, do not have him sharing a grave with Lancelot. The culmination of their companionship through the death of their relationship is seen very rarely, and to be frank, so is Galehaut, as he only appears in a few other works, and even then, his relationship to Lancelot is diminished or absent.

Thus, the author of the *Prose Lancelot* gave time and attention to how Galehaut feels for Lancelot if only to draw him into a literary tradition of friendship-lovers, including the utilization of tropes such as the death of the friend. Furthermore, the author creates a martyr out of Galehaut and plays into the idea that Galehaut martyrs himself for love. By becoming a martyr, he can further Lancelot's story from the grave, while taking his problematic love for Lancelot out of the equation so that Lancelot can return solidly into the realm of a heteronormative romance. Galehaut's martyrdom comes in a twofold way: first, he welcomes death as a means of salvation – salvation from a life without Lancelot. Second, in his martyrdom, he is honored and revered, so much so that knights watch over his tomb. Of this, Gaunt argues, "A lover welcoming death – like a religious martyr – is a common motif in courtly love literature even when the word *martire* is not used" (8). It is the same for Lancelot and Galehaut. While the author never uses the word *martire* to describe Galehaut the motif is still present. There is a sense of hagiographical imagery associated with Galehaut. Indeed, Reid Fuller Hardaway remarks, "As genres, the medieval

hagiography and the romance appear to have influenced each other" (107). I am not arguing that Galehaut gets martyred and then canonized the way a saint would, but rather, like Haradway's comparison of Iseult in Béroul's *Tristan*, romance and hagiography have interlapping thematic constructions. However, he does become the reason Lancelot lives on after his initial discovery of Galehaut's tomb. As stated above, his first reaction is to die to absolve his own perceived wickedness, but then, he decides to live on, not just for himself but for Galehaut's memory as well, to live up to Galehaut dying as the "most valiant knight" (59). Lancelot receives Galehaut's passion for him through his death. In this scene, Lancelot finally understands the depth of Galehaut's devotion and grieves it.

Like Iseult, Galehaut is a figure of romantic passion and devotion that borderline religious intensity. His death does not temper this – instead, it only ignites it further. Hardaway writes, "In the romance genre, for example, a lover's promised death does not signify celibate devotion, but it retains an intense passion that often sounds very close to spirituality" (108). The spiritual nature of Galehaut's death starts with his intensity in making Lancelot's broken shield an object of iconography. There is a religious zeal in the way that Galehaut never lets it out of his sight, not even when he dies from heartbreak. The shield becomes akin to the Cross. It is Galehaut's devotion and salvation. He seeks salvation through it because he believes that dying is the only way he can be with Lancelot. He seeks death because the object of his love is gone and thus, he does not have the will to live on. The shield serves as a promise and a focal point of such zealous devotion. His refusal to eat, and his willingness to succumb to his wounds all become religious prostrations at the altar of Lancelot's shield. In performing his grief in such a way, he becomes an almost religious figure. Similarly, he passes his devotion to Lancelot in a galvanizing effect. Galehaut martyring himself because of Lancelot and the knights labeling him

as the most valiant knight causes Lancelot to go through inner turmoil that causes him to question his worth both physically and spiritually.

Thus, Lancelot attempts to die in a way that would absolve Galehaut of dying for someone less worthy than himself. The irony is that in taking his own life, Lancelot would not be fulfilling martyrdom, but instead, would be damning his soul. Here we have two quite different constructions of the death drive present: the self-destruction of oneself to prove his love for the other man, and the other man attempting to take his life to absolve his friend/lover of the death he believed should not have happened. To quote Alexander Kennedy of Freud's description of the death drive: "Freud tells us that by not sleeping or eating, the melancholic overcomes the life instinct (Eros), exposing the death instinct" (65). Galehaut's death instinct overcomes his entire self and the drive for Eros dies along with his false perception of Lancelot's death. It is further important to point out that the death instinct is so powerful that Galehaut cannot hear talk of Lancelot living. In his mind, his companion is already dead. Thus, the intense love and loss of his companion fuels Galehaut's death drive and takes the construction of the chivalric *compagnonnage* a step further in its intensity. Gaunt, like Hyatte, defines *compagnonnage* as "the term used for example to describe the relations of famous pairs of friends and companions in arms such as Roland and Oliver or Lancelot and Guavain" (198). Gaunt likewise argues that Galehaut's love for Lancelot transcends this idea. However, I take his argument a step further by adding that it is the death drive that solidifies this difference in *compagnonnage* and the homoromantic. It is Galehaut's willingness to martyr himself for the love of Lancelot to become a symbol of that love that separates Galehaut's love from Lancelot's other companions, such as Gawain. Lancelot is the symbol of Galehaut's desire for life, a fact made abundantly clear every time Galehaut declares that he cannot live without Lancelot. Galehaut's desire to possess

Lancelot links closely with his will to live. Thus, without Lancelot's presence, Galehaut's Eros fades and an overpowering death instinct replaces it. Galehaut's romantic devotion to Lancelot fuels his life from the moment he lays on eyes on the other man.

To further illustrate this, other works have remarked on Galehaut's intense devotion to Lancelot. Take for example one of the only other works to delve into Galehaut's passions (albeit very briefly), the *Prose Tristan*, when the narrator remarks:

> Chil Galehaus fu sires et princes de roiaumes. Cil ama tant Lanselot com nus porroit amer autre, et en la fin morut cil Galehaut pour lui. Mais nous lairons cest conte et retournerons a nostre matere.
>
> This Galeholt was lord and prince of 28 realms. He loved Lancelot greatly, like no man could love another, and in the end this Galeholt died for him. But we will leave that story and return to our material (365)[33].

It is the phrase, "Cil ama tant Lanselot com nus porroit amer autre/ He loved Lancelot greatly, like no man could love another" that is particularly important. Here, the author of *Prose Tristan* mirrors the language used in the *Prose Lancelot* to describe Galehaut's tomb, only, they specify that Galehaut loved him like no other man could love another. There is an inherent queerness in this statement. The tomb of a man is the only place that can physically explore queerness – the men cannot explore queerness in life for the consequences of such an action. It would erase the line between homoromantic and *compagnonage* leaving no doubt that Galehaut loves Lancelot in the same way that Tristan loves Isuelt, or Lancelot loves Guinevere – with a possessive, obsessive love that is mythic.

[33] This quote and translation come curtesy of Sylvia Huot and her article, "Love, Race, and Gender in Medieval Romance: Lancelot and the Son of the Giantess." This article offers a fantastic discussion on gender, giants, and the other and is discussed thoroughly in the next chapter.

Indeed, Sylvia Huot writes, "The characterization of this love as utterly inimitable—a love such as no man could have for another—gives it a mythic quality" (385). The mythic quality in question is queerness as realized by death. The author of the *Prose Tristan* reads a certain romantic nature in the way that the *Prose Lancelot* crafts Galehaut's relationship to Lancelot. The specific phrasing of "Mais nous lairons cest conte et retournerons a nostre matere." / "we will leave that story and turn to other matters" signals a sharp turn from a queer understanding of love between the two men – an improper form of love in 13th century France. It also mirrors a similar phrase in the description of Galehaut's death in *Lancelot*. Yet, the author of *Lancelot* does not shy away from telling of Galehaut's impassioned companionship with Lancelot, even when most retellings of the story omit most of Galehaut's romance. Thus, Galehaut dies not only a physical death but a literary one, his romance glossed over as little more than a footnote. There is a poetic tragedy here and linked to a modern queer subconscious that allows Galehaut's story to resonate with modern queer readers of the *Prose Lancelot*.

The realities of queer existence of the time, as well as the invention of a Galehaut as a *fin'amor* rival for Lancelot's affections structure the conscious undertaking of queerness through death. First, the laws against homosexual practices, including sodomy[34], provide a homophobic background from which the author of the *Prose Lancelot* is careful not to link any sexual practice between the two knights. Second, and the most paradoxical, the author takes pains to build Galehaut as a romantic rival for Lancelot's affections opposite Guinevere. However, the culmination of that rivalry is that Guinevere gets Lancelot in life, but Galehaut gets him death. In

[34] Scholars such as Ruth Mazo Karras, Carolyn Dinshaw, Michel Foucault, and David Halperin have all discussed sodomy and anti-sodomy laws in their various works. I recommend readers to them for a more in-depth analysis of sodomy in the Middle Ages.

the end, Lancelot's eternity is with Galehaut.

Chapter 3
In the Footsteps of Giants: Queerness, Giants, and the Other

Upon Galehaut's first introduction to the reader, the author describes him as "li fiex a la bele iaiande" (Sommer III:244) / "the son of the beautiful giantess" (Lacy III:153). While this comment is a descriptor and mentioned again only in such terms as to describe his parentage, it is a loaded phrase for chivalric romance, *especially* Arthurian romance, which is rife with conflicts between knights and giants. Thus, labeling Galehaut's parentage as half-giant is thick with the consequences of that word. The very word "jaiant[35]"/"giant" in a chivalric text evokes imagery of larger-than-life men who commit violent acts against knights and their loved ones. Indeed, these giants are men in the sense that medieval authors describe them with human adjectives, have human features, and function in the same way that human society functions. Yet, there is something different about them that marks them as decidedly human yet less human than the knights who fight them. Sylvia Huot points out that "Medieval texts typically refer to giants as 'homme' and giantesses as 'dame' or 'pucelle,' and there is no question that they are fundamentally human beings – however degraded or marginalized this humanity may at times be" (1). It is the marginalization of the giant that is the concern of this chapter and how it functions in relation to Galehaut as a half-giant. Furthermore, this chapter links together the marginalization and fear of gay men with the medieval construction of the Othered giant, as well as discusses how gender and race theory play critical roles in the construction of the giant as queer identity through a modern reflective lens.

First, I will define the term "modern reflective lens." It is important that I, and indeed any scholar engaging in queer theory with pre-modern works, remain cognizant of the queer

[35] The old French word for giant appears as jaiant, giant, and iaiant depending on the translators and transcriber.

structures and queer theory work that allows me to build my current theories and apply them to medieval texts. Within the past two chapters, I utilize queer theory – both as it applies to modern gay men, and to queer theorists working directly with medieval sources – to build my arguments regarding Lancelot and Galehaut. I utilize this modern queer reflective lens to illustrate that while Lancelot and Galehaut did not have the language of queerness that we currently have, they did have feelings and erotic tensions written into their very existence. In doing this, I am aware of the current push against such queer readings, as noticed and discussed more thoroughly by Erik Wade in "Skeletons in the Closet: Scholarly Erasure of Queer and Trans Themes in Early Medieval English Texts." Wades argues that "The rise of historicism has led to increased denial of premodern queer and trans themes" (283). This rings true, as medieval studies has a difficult relationship with queer studies. Of course, scholars like David Clark, Carolyn Dinshaw, and Erik Wade have provided ample queer theory towards medieval studies in recent memory, yet that does not change the fact that queer theory and medieval studies are historically reluctant dance partners. Wade points out that the earlier scholars such as Nora Chadwick, who once infamously commented that the "crude" same-sex language used in early medieval Irish penitential was not an actual indicator of actual practices because Irish monks were "simple and clear" of mind (Wade 289), came at same-sex attractions in medieval literature through a lens clouded by the homophobic biases of the time. Of course, this is not to say that all early medieval scholars held these viewpoints, as Reginald Hyatte (1994) and John Boswell (1980-1994)[36] are examples of early scholars who sought to push the boundaries of what gender and sexuality theory in medieval studies could do. Despite this, however, Wade points out that queer theory in medieval studies was stagnant and rife with reluctant and biased ideology.

[36] dates in parenthesis are from popular queer theory works

It is my goal then to approach the characterizations of Lancelot and Galehaut through a queer lens constructed with modern approaches to queer theory and current understandings of historical sexuality and gender expression. Through a reflective discursive lens, we can see more homoromantic and homoerotic constructions living in tandem with medieval homosocial literary frameworks like the Knights of Camelot. The modern reflective lens is thus the action of looking towards the medieval armed with the queer theory and queer constructions of the present.

It Is through this mix of modern and medieval that I approach Galehaut and his construction as a half-giant. In chivalric romance, being a giant or half-giant is as much linked to one's identity as the label of man or woman, or even knight or lady. It is an identity signifier that requires action and performance to constitute one being a giant. To note, the performance is both willingly performed and is inevitable in its reckoning: to be a giant is to have giant blood, and that blood, whether one wills it to or not, will make itself known through the giants' actions. At least, that is the prevailing lesson in many chivalric romances that deal with giants. Thus, giant blood is a signifier of racialized personhood, or paradoxically, a lack of personhood that still signifies a form of fantasized racial identity. Huot writes, "Giants, no more a cultural fantasy than the shifting stereotypes of race, class, and gender embodied by Arthurian knights and ladies, are one of the means by which medieval Europeans imagined the limits of personhood" (3). As Huot argues, the giant constitutes a personhood in the medieval European imagination.

Furthermore, it is a constructed identity that is rooted in sexual and racialized violence of the other – both perpetrated by the other and perpetrated against the other. The key difference between the two is that violence perpetrated against the giant is (most of the time) acceptable and even encouraged as a knightly practice, whereas the violence done by the giant is akin to monstrous atrocities and must be meted out with equal amounts of violence on the knight's part.

Thus, the knight and the giant exist in a never-ending dance of constructed violence laced with erotic tensions or even sexual violence. Huot writes on this:

> At the same time, savage giants and other racial fantasies – from the sodomite Welshmen and the Irish with their proclivity for bestiality, as described by Gerald of Wales, to demonic Saracen warriors and the monstrous races – counter this with a model of intractable otherness and depravity that fully justifies conquest, subjugation, and extermination (8).

Even in this quote, one can see the violent sexual overtures in the terms "sodomite" and "bestiality," both of which gesture to sexual practices deemed dangerous by a Christian audience. Huot furthers this by positioning these terms with the "demonic" Saracens, linking both race, ethnicity, and sexuality into a discourse triangle that describes what the French and English thought about giants[37]. Huot's arguments, coming from her book *Outsiders: The Humanity and Inhumanity of Giants in Medieval French Prose Romance,* describe the giant as an outsider and discuss the construction of the outsider as a racial descriptor in chivalric romance with a focus on Arthurian romance. Her work will be a pivotal critical piece for this chapter. The quote above is especially vital to the discussion of the giant as a racialized Other.

Arthurian romance is rich with tales of giants like the Other, so much so that they become figures that knights must subjugate and conquer because they exist to devour and destroy the knightly order. Jeffrey Cohen writes that giants "resemble the personified sin of Gluttony; with their gross, ingestive corporeality, they threaten to devour any identity produced through a disciplined regime" (205). The Arthurian courtly knight is an example of a "disciplined regime,"

[37] Huot's argument is focused in large part on French Chivalric Romances, but I believe that some of what she argues can be applied to English romances as well, despite the large cultural differences between the two.

as he exists through the disciplined nature of courtly masculinity in chivalric romance. The giant disrupts that and often does it through violence to body and spirit. He breaks the body of its strength and subjugates the spirit of courtly masculinity within the knight, thus subverting the accepted structure of *proper* courtly masculinity. The knight must destroy the giant if the giant's gluttonous sins are to be expelled from civilization's court.

Take, for example, the giant in Chrétien de Troye's *Yvain ou le Chevalier au Lion/Yvain, The Knight of the Lion*. The giant, named Harpin, is a figure who exists as a creature that disrupts the paradigm of knightly masculinity and insults it. Thus, the giant is a point in Yvain's character progression as Yvain's knighthood demands that he defeat the giant. Masculinity and who gets to construct it is vital to the reading of *Yvain*. The courtly French ideology forms the masculinity present in *Yvain*. While yes, there are moments when Chrétien critiques French aristocracy, his construction of the masculine pulls from those same ideas and is inherent in the struggles between Yvain and Harpin as two examples of masculine ideals: one chivalric in honor, and the other with atrocious violence. Raskolnikov points out that "[romances] reflect prevailing attitudes of their times, with inflections and quirks drawn from a given author's "commonsense" understanding and their own history" (182). It becomes clear that Chrétien's construction of the masculine in *Yvain* combines his understanding of gender norms of twelfth-century France and his critiques of the courtly system.

Chrétien wrestles this in terms of Yvain conquering the various creatures he fights: the giant and the dwarf. Thus, the giant Harpin is every bit the antithesis of Yvain. Chrétien describes Yvian as such, calling him "buene avanture" (3973[38]) / "a good adventurer" (305) and the giant gets spoken of with nothing but contempt and labeled by the local, victimized king as a "fel

[38] The numbers cited for *Yvain* correspond with the line numbers in *Yvain, le Chevalier au Lion* as transcribed by Wendelin Foerster.

jaianz" (3856) / "vicious giant" (303). Harpin's first physical appearance gives further credence to his role as the vicious, violent giant. Chrétien describes him as having "a son col un pel tenoit / Grant et quarré, agu devant / don't il les botoit mout sovant" (4092-4094) / "a huge, square stake with a pointed end hung from his neck, which he used often to jab [the knights]" (305). Chrétien describes the giant's companion, being "come boz anflez" (4103) / "puffed up like a toad" and "n'onques ne les finoit de batre / d'une corgiee a quatre neuz" (4106-4107) / "never stopped beating [the knights] with a four-knot whip" (305). Together, the pair make up a monstrous duo comprised of beings outside the Christian realm and thus Yvain must eradicate him as a part of his quest to redeem himself as a knight. This is important because the giant's very existence "challenges the masculine identity of a knightly individual"[39] (Oven 51).

Yvain must prove his masculinity as the proper masculinity – that of noble and chivalric origin, rather than rustic, pagan origin like that of the giant or the dwarf. Michael Oven points out that "Yvain's ability to successfully confront and subsequently vanquish the giant Harpin, meanwhile, will be revealed as possible because the giant falls outside of Christian society, rendering him a valid target for aggressive, violent, and cathartic retribution" (60). Yvain being the hallmark Christian knight that he is, remains the sword of cathartic retribution for Arthurian legend. Like Lancelot and Tristan, he is a model of romantic knighthood and like the first two, his masculine chivalric virtues are constantly alluded to. Indeed, Oven writes of this: "Yvain's battle with the giant Harpin then collects the anxieties created by these frustrated desires and releases them in a cathartic martial showdown that affirms the superiority of the courtly masculine over the rustic masculine" (46). The courtly masculine here is that of the aristocracy

[39] Oven, Michael. "Masculine Identity and The Rustics of Romance in Chrétien's *Erec* and *Yvain*," *Viator*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2016, pp. 45-66

and the rustic are those of lower social strata. Chivalric romance is no stranger to playing on the fears of the aristocracy regarding those of lower social classes moving up the social ladder.

This gets even more complicated with the construction of knighthood. While Judith Kellog makes the point that in Chrétien's work, "underlying levels actually prepare nobility to accept some of the fundamental changes in their attitudes towards society and themselves which they most openly and consciously resist" (quoted in Oven 45), there are moments in which the knightly order resists those changes and seeks to keep the status quo of courtly masculinity being the apex of masculine gender expression and the rustic masculine being associated with the violent giant. Yet, as we see with Galehaut, "Courtly or knightly masculinity in the Middle Ages was a fragile intersection of the categories of gender and social station" (Oven 45), and in this gender category, complicating the entire matter is, of course, the giant.

Thus, Harpin being a giant is the reason that Yvain must defeat him. Harpin's actions are linked to the fact that he is a giant and disrupts the courtly masculine structure of the king's court. First, he takes and humiliates the king's sons by stripping them, treating them like animals, and beating them (4095-4100). The king of the region is powerless to help. Oven writes that "Harpin takes what he wants on account of his enormous strength, while the lord can do nothing but lament, weep, and await help from God" (52). The giant not only embarrasses the king but undermines his authority as well. He demasculinizes the king and brings the king's very authority into question. By forcing the king to weep and seek help from an outsider, Yvain in this case, the giant performs his duty as a disrupter of the chivalric masculine structure. This only gets furthered when the giant announces that he plans to take the daughter of the king, not to advance his social standing or because he wants her as a wife; instead, it is so he can have his men commit sexual assault on her (4115-4120). If the king does not give the daughter to him, he

will make the king watch as he beats and kills his sons. There is no other reason given beyond that.

Chrétien implies that this is the way the giant is. The giant is not redeemable. The knight must eradicate him if proper society is to function again and if justice is to prevail over the nonhuman. The text is clear that it must be Yvain who does it as both the king and his sons are incapable of doing it (4118). Only Yvain can restore the courtly paradigm. Yvain must restore authority to the aristocracy by defeating the threat that seeks to undermine it.

The giant plays an integral part of chivalric romance reinforcing the ideas of a proper masculine gendered performance. The knight is supposed to be the chivalric hero, courteous and courtly, a beacon of *fin'amor*. Indeed, when Harpin exclaims that he wants to make the daughter "a jaelise" (4117) / "a whore" (306), her father almost goes mad with anger and grief. Yvain, titled as "sire" (4135) / "lord" (306) serves as an important construction of a vertical hierarchy. It is the framework between naming Yvain "sire" and simply referring to Harpin as "giant" that signifies the difference between who exhibits the masculine concept of knightly worthiness and who does not. The author opposes the two descriptors to signify the vast difference between the two. Having Yvain be the "sire" is straight forward, and in most similar Arthurian romances when the knight faces off against a giant, he is the worthy one. In this example, we can see that Yvain and the Halperin represent a continuous struggle between the knights of Camelot and their enemies. Chrétien uses Yvain's struggles and triumphs to illustrate a strong example of what a knight represents in his struggles against the outsider. In this case, the outsider is a giant. Yvain, as well as knights like Tristan and Gawain, signify the fight for the approved, courtly kind of masculinity to be the dominant one. That masculinity is supposed to be free of the influence of

the other, inferior masculinity. This is in large part what makes Galehaut a complex figure in ways that Yvain and others are not.

In the case of Galehaut, there is a double construction of him being a conquering giant and the worthiest knight in all the Christian land (as Lancelot dubs him over Galehaut's grave). Of course, this does not exclude an Otherness from Galehaut, but rather reinforces him as both an Other to the knights and an Other towards the giants. He is always apart from the other knights of Camelot, with others frequently acknowledging how much closer he is to Lancelot than the rest of them. In the case of being an Other to the knights, Galehaut takes Lancelot away from the knights in a physical act of separation. In the case of the giants, he is Othered because he does not associate himself with the giants. Indeed, in the Old French *Prose Tristan*, he even excuses Tristan's murder of his human father and the subsequent death of his giant mother and offers his friendship to Tristan in a less intense way than he did with Lancelot, but with still the same underpinnings of desire. He is a paradox of Othered giant violence and accepted courtly masculine conduct. Often, this makes him a larger-than-life figure. Galehaut's near inhumanness is apparent from the moment the audience first meets Galehaut.

When the author introduces Galehaut in the *Prose Lancelot*, he is set to conquer Arthur's lands. Galehaut stops because he becomes so enamored by Lancelot's battlefield prowess and the masculine virtues the knight is extolling. Upon meeting Lancelot, he says to him,

> Sire fait il ie sui galahos li feix a la bele iaiande. Sire de tous ces gens deuers qui vous aues hui desfendu le roialme de logres que ie auoie moult bien empris a conquerre & conquis leusse se vostre cors ne fust (Sommer III.244).

> I am Galehaut, son of the Fair Giantess, lord of all these troops against whom you have today defended the kingdom of Logres, which I had made a good start at conquering, and I would have conquered it, had it not been for you (Lacy II: 135).

Immediately we know two key facts about Galehaut: that he is a half-giant and would have conquered all of Logres as he had other kingdoms. The audience, having an idea about what the word "giant"/ "iaiand" would entail in the context of romance, would be wary of Galehaut, as he is a figure with a violent bloodline. Furthermore, the author presents him as an imposing character, with Galehaut later described as "plus grans demi pie que chevaliers de la mayson Roy artu" (Sommer IV.96) / "half a foot taler than any of King Arthur's Knights" (Lacy II: 286). It is then the work of the first scenes between Lancelot and Galehaut that help to transform Galehaut from a conqueror-giant to a smitten hero. Galehaut only being a half-giant, rather than a full giant and everything that entails eases this transition.

The presumed humanity of Galehaut's father upholds Galehaut's status as king (however vile the *Prose Tristan* portrays that humanity). Due to his half-human status, he blends within Arthur's court for a time. Huot points out that "The mixed-blood lineage that results from marriage between human and giant, however, is more ambiguous" (96). It is the ambiguity that allows Galehaut to be a member of Arthur's Court, but only after he bends the knee to Arthur and, most importantly, after he submits to Lancelot, a knight of lower status. This act alone casts a romantic light on Galehaut: he is willing to submit himself to someone he loves so that person can be happy. It corrects the initial wariness associated with Galehaut's giant heritage and replaces it with a romantic hue to view the tragedy-fated character. Thus, the author casts Galehaut as a romantic hero and, in the future, will be lauded as one of the best knights to have ever lived. Even so, there are moments, like when Galehaut's pure strength enables him to

brutally kill scores of attackers by himself, in which Galehaut as half-giant bleeds through the romanticization of his character. This is purposefully so. The author reminds the audience that Galehaut is not just a human knight of Camelot, but a *redeemed* half-giant whose subjugation of himself to Arthur is an act of defiance against his giant heritage. After all, "Giants may be men, but not men who are worthy of populating the new Trojan kingdom or its Christian successor" (Huot 15). The Trojan kingdom as Huot argues, is Britain, and in a purely Arthurian context, Camelot.

Thus, it would be prudent to interrogate how Galehaut performs both knighthood and gianthood, as these two radically opposed forces come together to construct Galehaut. First, I discuss Galehaut's performance as a half-giant and what that means not only for himself but for his acceptance into Arthur's court. I have written about the first instance, Galehaut's introduction in the text as a half-giant lord conquering British lands. His namesake, "le sire des Isles Lointaines/the Lord of the Strange Isles" signifies that he is not of England[40] or Camelot. While the *Prose Lancelot* does not discuss his parentage beyond that of being the son of a lord and a giantess, its contemporary work, the *Prose Tristan* features Galehaut and expands on his parentage, stating that he is the son of an Irish lord, thus making the "le Isles Loitaines," the distant shores of Ireland. This construction places a racial identity onto Galehaut, which sets him further apart from the English knights.

In the *Prose Tristan,* Galehaut travels back to Ireland to avenge his father after Tristan kills the lord for being a tyrant. Like what happens with Lancelot, Tristan's prowess as a man and a knight overcomes Galehaut and he readily forgives Tristan. He goes as far as to suggest they travel together, which Tristan refuses as he and Iseult are bound for Cornwell. This is a mirror of

[40] While the *Prose Lancelot* is an Old French romance, the story it largely set in England and Wales.

the Lancelot/Galehaut/Guinevere love triangle with a key difference: there are no similar feelings or swooning that Galehaut performs for Lancelot. Tristan's perceived prowess and graciousness leaves Galehaut awe-struck. He is overcome by the magnanimity of a good Christian knight and thus cannot kill him. Huot states that "for the giants the extermination of the humans would be a Pyrrhic victory, leaving them bereft of these ideal specimens of masculinity that they cannot but desire" (382)[41]. She argues that if Galehaut were to kill Tristan, he would not have this ideal masculine figure to desire, rendering him without an object of desire and thus without a purpose in the story. Granted, he would still have Lancelot, as the *Prose Tristan* does mention Galehaut's love for Lancelot. Huot does not confine her point to Galehaut in that statement but to the larger construction of giants and half-giants.

By making Galehaut Irish, however, the *Prose Tristan's* author alludes to the conquests of parts of Ireland by the English, creating a racialized persona for Galehaut, which, becomes more apparent in his actions when the author introduces him in the *Prose Lancelot*. The *Prose Tristan*'s story of Galehaut is situated during events relayed by the *Prose Lancelot.* The two texts parallel each other. Keith Busby argues that the author of the *Prose Tristan* took central characters and stories from the *Prose Lancelot* and "made modifications to each segment as a means of adjusting them to the new, much wider, context of the Arthurian world" (390). Thus, Galehaut being Irish is a bridge between the two *Prose* narratives. If we consider this, then Galehaut as an Irish giant conquering English lands is a commentary on the fear of the Celts by French and English writers. Busby further argues that Ireland is frequently "at the fringes" of the Arthurian world (390). The Irish are thus racialized as a fringe civilization, and Galehaut's

[41] This quote stems from her article "Love, Race, and Gender in Medieval Romance: Lancelot and the Son of the Giantess" found in vol. 37 of *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*. This article is largely based on a similar chapter in her book, *The Humanity and Inhumanity of Giants in Medieval French Prose Romance*. I cite it separately because the article has a few additions than the chapter does and provides a larger focus on the Prose *Tristan* Galehaut episode.

kingdom is doubly so because it descended from giants and ruled by a half-giant (390)[42]. Galehaut is no longer just a conquering lord but a racialized Celt who is set on conquering *English* lands and thus must be stopped.

To expand on this, I gesture to Amelia Rutledge's article, "Romans, Celts, and 'Others': Residual Colonial Models and Race in Contemporary Arthurian Novels" where she argues that "questions of race and ethnicity are inescapably intertwined with the forces of colonialism in the medieval period" (41). While Rutledge focuses on modern Arthurian novels, her work is recent and puts perspective on the works of Geraldine Heng and John Ganim to craft a framework for how racial colonialism worked in the medieval period, particularly between the Celts and the English. Both Heng and Ganim draw on ideas of the colonization of the Celts by English forces. Huot places the racialization of Irishmen along with other races in conjunction with giants and how others view them. According to her, the Irish as Giant is a model of Otherness that allows for the knight in chivalric romance to exterminate it without facing consequences for his actions.

Geraldine Heng utilizes the ideas of Otherness and writes, "English depictions of Celtic barbarity and subhumanness that were standard ideological tropes in England's self-justification for its enterprise of occupying its neighbors" (37). Heng's argument centers not just on Ireland but the "Celtic fringe" (37), a term she says is "ironized by medievalists" (37), which includes the boundaries of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland in relation to England. Heng further writes of the colonial attitudes towards the Irish: "Layer upon layer of negative judgements is nested in such a way as to discover a vast civilized gulf between Ireland and England on a vertical axis of

[42] Busby's book *French in Medieval Ireland, Ireland in Medieval French: The Paradox of Two Worlds* discusses Ireland in relation to the medieval minds of the French and vice versa. The chapter I pull most from, "*Familia Hibernica*: The Importance of Being Irish," places chivalric French romance in a Celtic context. While the focus is largely on Tristan, Busby does make a point to examine how Celtic origins of Arthurian romance play into the larger narrative of the Arthurian canon.

evolutionary development" (38). Heng argues that the English used the differences in Irish Christianity and culture as a way of justifying their colonization of Ireland. The idea of the Irish as "barbaric" and not as civilized as England or France is a construct that creates a convenient Other from which to place colonial and racialized differences. Heng cites the use of this kind of logic as a "pronouncedly racial logic" and that furthermore points to a "racial logic of the evolutionary kind" (38-39), meaning that it seeks to promise the colonized people a "civilizational maturity" (39), while forever keeping that idea out of reach.

The concept of the giant then, if placed into a framework with Huot's ideas of giants being reminiscent of both Celts and Saracens in the Medieval French imagination, is a racialized one. Giants are a race in the same way the Irish are. Both are seen as uncivilized people whom the project of medieval imperialism can be crafted on to give them a sense of civility if or outright exterminate their culture altogether. Thus, there is something almost genocidal in the approach of the French and English to the Celts/Saracens and their mythological identifier in the giant. The medieval romance approach to destroy and disfigure the barbaric giant is a literary reflex to justify the colonization and oppression of other people.

If we apply a racialized Irish and giant identity to Galehaut then the need to exterminate him becomes alarmingly apparent because he is a colonized subject that has reached the courtly idea of civilization. He is a knight of King Arthur's court and a lord in his own right. Yet, the extermination does not happen – at least, it does not occur in the way that knights exterminate other giants in Arthurian texts. Instead, he humbles himself before a human knight, and not just any human knight, but a knight central to the very construction of Arthur's court: Lancelot. By humbling himself and submitting to Lancelot's masculine prowess, Lancelot absolves Galehaut of his violent, conquering nature. In this scene, Galehaut says to Lancelot: "et encore vous pri ie

por dieu que vous herbergies annuit moi, par couent que ie fache a deuise quanke vous moseres requerre" (Sommer III.244) / "Again I beg you, for God's sake, to stay with me tonight, on condition that I'll do whatever you ask of me" (Lacy Vol. II 135). Galehaut knows what Lancelot will ask of him, which is to surrender to Arthur, and Galehaut readily accepts this fate. By doing this, Galehaut secures the safety of himself from destruction at the hands of Arthurian knights. This is because Galehaut has now obtained Lancelot as his close companion and the object of his desire. Lancelot's *compagnonnange* saves Galehaut from the consequences of trying (and almost succeeding) in conquering Arthur's kingdom.

As Huot points out, "It is the very magnitude of his chivalric splendor and prowess – his human-giant hybridity – that makes Galehot a threat unlike that of any ordinary knight or giant" (199). Galehaut is a figure of such immense prowess that the only recourse for his attempt at conquering England would have been death by Arthur or one of his knights. However, this is precisely why Lancelot's *compagnonnage* is important because the context of *compagnonnage* works to provide a knight with a companion that is his partner in every aspect of that word. Anne Callahan writes, "In the Christian world, the medieval institution of *compagnonnage* (classical male friendship) intimately bonded two knights in a symbolic fusion of souls" (25). The fusion of Lancelot's and Galehaut's souls, symbolically, would protect Galehaut from the knightly drive to eradicate giants.

Thus, the dashing knight rescues the half-giant, something that feels familiar enough to recall the well-recognized trope of a lady or a maiden that needs to be rescued. For example, Yvain rescuing the lady from the pyre, or even Guinevere's rescue by Lancelot in *le Chevalier de la Charrette*. Now adding giants, both male and female, in this construction, we could use the tale of "Culwhich and Olwen" from the *Mabinogian* as a prominent example, as Culwhich

"rescues" and marries the giantess Olwen after beating and killing her giant father who refuses to let anyone marry her (245). If taking these examples on the male-knight and damsel-in-distress trope as a framework, Galehaut then transforms from a dangerous, racialized Irish giant who needs into a fair lady who becomes the close confidant of a knight. The play on gender construction is apparent here and is an integral part of Galehaut performing as a giant and a knight. All of which works to complicate Galehaut as the Other.

I should note that I do not mean that Galehaut becomes a lady[43] physically. Instead, Galehaut exhibits traits of how knights treat ladies in romance while maintaining his nobility and masculine chivalric status towards other knights. He becomes a figure whose gender is complicated by how the text observes the Other. Thus, the author allows Galehaut a degree of sexual difference that other knights do not have. For example, Galehaut can hold sway over Lancelot unlike Gawain and Loinel can. A fact they comment (and sometimes lament) over, with Gawain going as far as saying he wishes to be a woman to have an affair with Lancelot (Micha III 569). While said in jest, it does not carry the same kind of gravitas as Galehaut's frequent declarations of love. He also states that Galehaut is jealous of Lancelot as he would be a young lady whom he has (Micha III: 568), alluding to the inherent homoeroticism in Galehaut's treatment of Lancelot[44]. The audience understands Gawain's jest and can see the underlying homoerotic tensions in it. However, there is no declaration of love. The author reserves declarations of love for Galehaut and Guinevere, and in turn, Lancelot's towards them. Galehaut says to Lancelot in an impassioned speech:

[43] I use the term lady rather than woman here because Galehaut is playing the part of a lady in Arthurian literature, meaning a woman of a higher social status. Using the word "woman" does not fully capture the construction of the lady-knight construction being discussed.
[44] This comment comes when he fears that Galehaut will take Lancelot away from Arthur, a mirror to when Galehaut is afraid Arthur will take Lancelot away from him.

> Mais aussi mait diex que iou onques ne fis chose pour vous, que iou ne tiengne a honor et a gaaing. Et iou ne voldroie mie avoir toutes lez terres de cest monde en ma baille par couuent que iou perdisse vostre compaigne , et la uostre amor. (Sommer IV.18)
>
> But there is nothing that I would undo, for as God as my witness, I have never done anything for you that I don't consider an honor and a gain, and I would give up all the lands under heaven rather than lose your companionship and your love. Indeed, if I can count on your commitment, I can easily overcome any woes; but if I lose you, I can only die" (Lacy II.249).

Here, Galehaut states that he does not consider his subjugation to Lancelot as a dishonor. Instead, he views it as the height of his honor for he shows his love and affection to the man he cares for above all others. The drive to turn self-depreciation into a hallmark of one's honor further highlights the obsessive drive he has for Lancelot as his unattainable object.

While scholars such as Sylvia Huot use this, along with Galehaut taking Lancelot to safety away from the fighting, as a method to show that Galehaut exhibits "violence, obsessive" giant characteristics, I argue against that, primarily because it is no less violent or obsessive as Guinevere wanting to keep Lancelot for herself (take for example the scene in which Guinevere threatens Lancelot after Morgan shows up with his ring[45]), or Lancelot pining and bemoaning being separated from her. Huot's critique has more than its share of racialized homophobic bias in it, especially when compared to Morgan, who purposefully kidnaps men and forces them to live for her with the explicit intent to harm. While Huot does point out that Galehaut does this out of love, she still argues that it is an obsession. She claims, "Though Galehot's behavior is

[45] Discussed more in chapter 2, I bring up this episode again because it highlights that Guinevere is in fact more aggressive towards Lancelot than Galehaut. Her anger towards Lancelot for seemingly confiding and giving his ring to another woman highlights that her desire to keep her for himself. Sommer IV.143

motivated by love, there is nonetheless something decidedly threatening about this son of a giantess" (202). While her argument on obsession does raise valid concerns, Galehaut, however, performs his part as the love-sick partner of Lancelot as dictated by *fin'amor*'s rules. Galehaut's continued focus on Lancelot fits with Andreas Capellanus's *De Amore*, especially the rule: "A true lover is constantly and without intermission possessed by the thought of his beloved" (186). Galehaut does not do anything that is outside the realm of what a lover is supposed to do or feel. It is because he is racialized as a *male* giant in love with a *male* knight that this complicated sexual and gender performance seems both transgressive and a part of the romance structure. This is why Huot seems to deem Galehaut "threatening." It only adds to the paradoxical construction that is Galehaut. Furthermore, detailing Galehaut as threatening, calls to mind the arguments about queer perception as monstrous and what it means to be human that like Leo Bersani and Noreen Giffney[46] utilize. Galehaut's perception in the 21st century still suffers from a giant problem.

This is exactly the point: the fact that he is half-giant tinges Galehaut's very identity and thus, Huot deems his romantic overtures obsessive and threatening. The scene in which Huot finds Galehaut threatening comes when Galehaut takes Lancelot back to Sorelois to keep him from harm. Lancelot is heartsick over Guinevere and is unhappy that Galehaut keeps him away from the action that is consistently happening in the story. Galehaut's motives for keeping Lancelot at Sorelois is that he cannot bear to see the other man hurt, something he mentions often. At the same time, Galehaut is heartsick over Lancelot being heartsick. The triangle

[46] While I used Bersani's "Is the Rectum a Grave" in Chapter 2, his ideas, especially as they pertain to the monstrous and how the public view gay men's sexuality is important to the construction of Galehaut at the hands of Huot. Noreen Giffney's article, "Queer Apocal(o)ptic/ism: The Death Drive and the Human" will be used later in the dissertation, but it I found it prudent to bring up now to illustrate some examples of who is doing work and have done work on monstrous queer identities and the idea of being human.

between Guinevere, Lancelot, and Galehaut is hyper-apparent in this scene, despite Guinevere being physically absent.

The specter of Guinevere's and Lancelot's love lingers in front of Galehaut, taunting him. He has given everything to Lancelot without reciprocation, and thus it pains him that he must share Lancelot with another. Indeed, the narrator states, "Mais nule dolor ne s'apareille a ce queue Galehout sueffre, kar il avoit mis en l'amor Lancelot tot ce queue home I pooit metre, ceur et cors, et tote honor, qui miles valt" (Micha I:II 3) / "But no sorrow could match Galehaut's, for he had put into his love for Lancelot everything a man could put: heart and body, and most precious of all, his honor" (Lacy III: 241). This is the difference between Galehaut and other giants. There is a part of Galehaut that desires Lancelot completely, and in a generous reading of Huot's argument on the threatening nature of Galehaut I concede that there may, in fact, be something threatening about it.

However, in focusing on the passage above, Galehaut desires Lancelot to the point where he does not strip Lancelot of his masculinity the way other giants would (see, for example, Harpin). Rather, it is the complete opposite: Galehaut strips himself of the courtly masculinity so that he can give it to Lancelot. In doing so, Galehaut submits himself before a man of lower social status. Oven argues that "Among knights, a claim to possess a form of superior masculine identity would typically be interpreted within the framework of vertical honor" (47). Vertical honor is the honor of respect in the social chain of command. Galehaut subjugates his honor to Lancelot, both in the above passage and when he first meets Lancelot, and thus cedes to Lancelot the superior masculinity. He puts Lancelot above him, which Lancelot considers to be a great sacrifice on Galehaut's behalf. Galehaut disrupts the masculine context of the narrative. He un-genders himself as a courtly man by surrendering his honor to another man, Lancelot, and serves

him in a way starkly reminiscent of *fin'amor*, which is less transgressive than if he had done so for a woman, specifically, his proposed lover, the Lady of Malehaut. Knights often placed themselves in the service of the lady. The act of doing this for another knight, especially one that is lower on the hierarchal scale than he, would be transgressive.

The Lady of Malehaut is important to point out because of her lack of appearance in the narrative, even though she is supposed to be Galehaut's lover. She is present right before Lancelot meets Galehaut for the first time. After she officially becomes Galehaut's lover, the author removes her from the narrative. Indeed, their only love scene comes when Lancelot and Guinevere pair off to sleep with each other (Sommer III.401). After that, the author does not mention her by name again. Galehaut pays her extraordinarily little attention, and every love confession he utters is for Lancelot and Lancelot alone. The Lady of Malehaut is, for lack of a better term, Galehaut's beard. This modern phrase, meaning a woman a gay man dates to cover up for the fact that he is into men, is appropriate, in a tongue-in-cheek way, for how she functions for the audience of the story.

By placing the Lady of Malehaut as Galehaut's lover, the author of the *Prose Lancelot* has a type of plausible deniability as to Galehaut's intense love for Lancelot. The author can point to the Lady of Malehaut as a proper heterosexual lover while maintaining the homoromantic nature of Galehaut and Lancelot's *compagnonnage*. As Callahan states on *compagnonnage*, "a man cannot love a woman and still maintain his power and honor as a knight, although in order to maintain his knightly status, he must be capable of *Fin'Amors*" (50). By having the Lady of Malehaut as Galehaut's beard, the author of the *Prose Lancelot* allows Galehaut to exhibit his *fin'amors* towards both the Lady of Malehaut *and* Lancelot while giving Galehaut the excuse of proper *compagnonnage* in his male-male relationship. Galehaut places

his *fin'armor* onto Lancelot as an unattainable object of desire which reinforces the paradoxical relationship with gender that manages to place both men in the position of lover and beloved – active and passive. Callahan argues that "The power that a woman has to be a desiring subject is an arbitrary power given to her by a man who, according to the code of chivalry, becomes her slave for the purposes of the erotic relationship" (45). While Galehaut conforms to the masculine role of being a servant of Lancelot's desire, it is important to note that this is done to another man, not a noblewoman. Thus, the author de-genders Galehaut's actions in a way that disrupts the traditional gender constructions of the *fin'amor* relationship.

Galehaut's un-gendering raises a few questions about how gender is constructed in these romances. The primary is a commentary on whether medieval authors construct gender as harshly as scholars in the early twentieth century imagined gender to be. The answer to this question is a resounding no, as modern scholars, such as Erik Wade and Masha Raskolnikov, have pointed out. Raskolnikov states, "Medieval thought does assume that there's such a thing as a 'woman' and a 'man,' but before the emergence and institutionalization of concepts like 'the normal,' distinctions between the two fail to map onto the gender binary as we experience it today" (178). Of course, as Raskolnikov argues, the normal was not a binary distinction until the 1800s. Gender and gender performance of the medieval differed wildly from as it does now – especially when we consider that the Middle Ages lasted for centuries and to nail down any kind of specified gender normal as a widespread accepted normal across Europe would be folly. As such, scholars must keep the un-gendering of Galehaut to the confines of the *Prose Lancelot* itself, and what it means to be a gender outlier within a French Arthurian romance.

Galehaut's gender is a paradox that goes unquestioned by the knights at large. They readily accept his intense love of Lancelot, and at times, comment on it – Gawain being the one

who makes most of these comments. The text does not treat this with aversion, save for the instance of jealousy at the hands of Maleagant when he sees how close Lancelot and Galehaut are to each other.[47] That episode makes clear that Maleagant is in the wrong. In this world of chivalric romance the bonds between men, as homoerotic and homoromantic as they may be, are just part of the construction of male friends – they are as close as a "gender norm" as we are likely to get in this fiction. Of course, we must ask, are these romances engaging with the gender constructions at the time and fantasizing about them as romances often do with other subjects? Oven writes, "Medieval romances and masculine identities were deeply engaged with responding to and shaping social reality" (66). Thus, according to Oven, it would be an affirmative conclusion to the question above. However, if we take into consideration that the genre of Arthurian romance was one of intensity and fantasy, then we can approach this question in a more nuanced way. Galehaut is both lover and beloved, an object of Lancelot's torn affection and the one who objectifies Lancelot. I would not go as far as to call Galehaut a third gender, as that has more to do with a specific trans theory that I am not applying to Galehaut. Thus, I do not make the argument that Galehaut is transgender in the way scholars have argued for transness in the cases of the very real Eleanor Rykner or the fictionalized Silence of *Roman de Silence*. Instead, I focus on Galehaut as underpinning the complexities of gender expression in chivalric romance and deconstructing gender expression for himself.

Galehaut's gender as deconstructed knightly masculinity is apparent in the way that he places his affection on another man beyond what *compagnonnage* deems appropriate. For example, when Galehaut is impressed and taken by Lancelot's prowess on the battlefield and subsequently makes him his companion, which is still very much in line with the inherent

[47] This episode is discussed more in depth in Chapter 1.

homoeroticism in *compagnonnage* and the focus on Lancelot's masculine values and skills in war. Geraldine Heng argues that "Knightly passion, between men, registers itself as an erotic *of* and *in* the killing fields of romance" (178). Thus, this kind of eroticism is expected to be at play here. However, Galehaut transgresses that by taking Lancelot *away* from the killing fields and to the safety of his castle. By taking Lancelot away from a place where homoerotics would be acceptable, Galehaut disrupts the carefully placed homoerotic system in favor of his castle, where he is in control. This is all done out of intense love, for Galehaut does not stop his love confessions when they are no longer hot-blooded from battle. If anything, his confessions become more frequent and intense. This is where Galehaut begins to promise Lancelot that if Lancelot were to die, he would follow suit. For example, Galehaut tells Lancelot: "Car soies certains que iou ai en vous mise toute lamor que hom porroit en autre mettre, ne ia diex ne me laist j .ior vivre apres vous" (Sommer IV.7) / "Moreover, I have framed my love in such a way that if you died I would pray God to let me not live another day" (Lacy II.244). This promise of being unable to live without him is a mirror to many lovelorn protagonists who whither without their opposite-gendered counterparts.

Take, for example, the way Iseult thinks about Tristan in the *Prose Tristan*. Despite being married to King Mark, Iseult claims that she loves Tristan with all her heart and would die without him (Curtis 96). The language used here parallels Galehaut's frequent confessions to Lancelot. It is curious then that he mimics Iseult's language rather than Tristan's. In the *Prose Tristan*, Iseult is engaged in a dangerous love triangle between herself, King Mark, and Tristan. While married to King Mark, her heart belongs only to Tristan. As such, she is willing to do whatever it takes to keep their love a secret, which includes sending her lady-in-waiting to sleep with King Mark instead of her and then trying to have her killed when she becomes a liability

(291). While Galehaut does not go quite as far as to order a servant's death, he does facilitate Lancelot to enact similarly violent actions. Furthermore, Tristan and Iseult's love is a product of a love potion, thus it is a false love. Magic does not bring about Galehaut's confessions towards Lancelot. His confessions are born out of a natural love. Thus, authors of both *Prose* romances position Galehaut and Lancelot as the truer representations of *fin'amor*.

The strongest instance of Galehaut facilitating Lancelot's violence comes in the false-Guinevere episode of the *Prose Lancelot*. In this episode, a lookalike replaces Queen Guinevere and manages to seduce Arthur and take her place. Lancelot and Galehaut, however, know the truth. After Arthur casts the original Guinevere aside, Lancelot, aided by Galehaut, defends his queen. In the culmination of the episode, Lancelot fights three knights and brutally kills two of them. In this scene, Galehaut acts as both counsel and lover to Lancelot.

First, Galehaut sets up a dual of sorts with Arthur's knights, in "si comme les customes del royaume" (Sommer IV.61) / "accordance with the customs [of the kingdom]" (Lacy II: 270). Here, Galehaut makes sure that the battle between Arthur's knights and Lancelot falls within the correct chivalric rules and thus, will not impede any man's standing or honor. Indeed, before Lancelot can rush off to fight, Galehaut says to him "il dist queue ses cuers ne lamera iamas sil se combat as" (Sommer IV. 61) / "that he would never love [Lancelot] anymore if he did battle on any terms but [Galehaut's]" (Lacy II:270). Galehaut's entire identity up until this point has been the knight who loves Lancelot above all others. For him to say this means that he fears losing Lancelot because Lancelot would whither away if he lost what was most precious to him: his honor.

Similarly to Iseult, Galehaut is willing to influence a king to keep the man he loves safe. Lancelot seems to agree with Galehaut as he says, "mais gardes y bien mon'nour" (Sommer

IV.61)/ “just let me not lose my honor” (Lacy II:270)[48]. In doing this, Galehaut chooses courtly nobility over his giant blood. He chooses to preserve the honor of the chivalric and not use the violence of the giant. This exchange, from Galehaut threatening Lancelot to Lancelot acquiescing and begging Galehaut to help him keep his honor, is an intimate scene between the two men. It is important to note that this homoerotic intimacy comes at the beginning of a battle, which brings back to mind Heng’s argument from earlier. The eroticism is taking place on (well, technically right before) the killing field.

Galehaut’s next action heightens the intimacy between the two men. In a scene that speaks to the elevated level of affection between the two men, the narrator writes:

> Et quant il fu armés, si li çaint Galehout s’espee et li prie que por amor de lui le port ; et il dist que si fera il, kar il amoit Galehout son seignor trop duremont[49] (Micha I.VIII :135).
>
> Once Lancelot was armored, Galehaut buckled his own sword on him and asked him to wear it out of love for him; and Lancelot said he would, as he loved his lord Galehaut with all his heart” (Lacy III.271).

This marks one of the first times Lancelot has acknowledged his love for Galehaut. While it could be argued that Lancelot’s love for Galehaut is more the traditional sort of love a knight has for his fellow knight, which is still rife with homosocial undercurrents, it should also be noted that Lancelot does not say this for any other knights nor does he wear another man’s blade

[48] While Norris Lacy translates this line as “let me not lose my honor,” I would supply the additional translation of “guard well my honor,” which, depending on the reader, may add a further sense of intimacy towards the scene

[49] Note on translation: in Sommer’s edition of the original French text, Gawain is used instead of Galehaut. This leads me to speculate on whether Galehaut is a character created from Gawain’s friendship with Lancelot in older French tales

because of love. The act of wearing another man's sword is homoerotic, to say the least, but it speaks to an intimacy between the two, a trust and a bond.

Galehaut giving Lancelot a piece of him before a type of ritualized combat recalls the construction of the Lady's favor, a practice in chivalric tournaments that facilitates a category of *fin'amor*. Nigel Sault writes, "In the fourteenth century one of the most striking witnesses to female inspiration was the wearing of ladies' tokens by rival combatants" (271). While Saul is writing about events a good two hundred years after the writing of the *Prose Lancelot,* the act of a woman giving a man her favor is still relevant to the gender construction of Galehaut here. Chrétien de Troyes provides an example of this in *Erec and Enide*, in which the tournament scene is described: "La ot tante vermoille ansaigne et tante guinple et tante manche … qui par amors furent donees!" (2087[50]) / "there were so many scarlet banners, kerchiefs, and sleeves... bestowed as tokens of love" (27). The *Prose Lancelot* took ideas and plot points from many of Chrétien's romances, especially the *Lancelot* romance. I cite *Erec et Enide* because it comes half a century earlier than the *Prose Lancelot*. Thus, the conception of a woman giving a knight a token of love before a tournament of ritualized combat is already in the literature. In this exchange, Galehaut gives more of himself to Lancelot, and Lancelot receives the gift, willingly because of how much he loves Galehaut.

The narrator takes the companionship between the two men out of the realm of purely homosocial and into the realm of a homoromantic *fin'amor* that directly mirrors Lancelot and Guinevere's. The caveat is that Galehaut still performs some type of masculinity by giving his love a weapon to fight with. Of course, there is an episode in Chrétien's *Lancelot* in which the sister of Maleagant gives Lancelot an axe to free himself from his bind. Lancelot does not use the

[50] Line numbers for the Old French version of *Erec et Enide* comes from the 2022 publication transcribed by Benédicte Milland-Bove and Vanessa Obry.

axe for combat but instead, uses his own sword to fight. In both romances Guinevere does not give Lancelot a token of her favor, yet in the *Prose Lancelot* Galehaut does. Lancelot not only accepts it but fights and kills with it. Later, this would be the same sword that Lancelot tries to kill himself with after learning of Galehaut's death (Sommer IV.277). When Galehaut gives Lancelot his sword, he briefly restructures Arthur's court. He disrupts the very action of love and favors as they are supposed to happen. By arming Lancelot with his sword and scabbard, Galehaut gives Lancelot a tool to prove his masculine worth to impress and rescue Guinevere, and simultaneously acknowledges his love for Lancelot. Huot writes of this kind of restructuring, "Galehot's attempt to restructure the Arthurian world and rewrite the romance of Lancelot runs aground on Lancelot's absolute identification as lover of Guinevere" (206). This is true, for in the following scenes, Lancelot and Guinevere come back together under Arthur's court after Guinevere and Arthur reconcile. Yet, for a time, in those small seconds before battle, Galehaut is Lancelot's and Lancelot is Galehaut's.

In their 2009 article on gender in chivalric romance, Joann Charbonneau and Désirée Cromwall[51] write "Thus, because the heroes operate outside the heavily scripted roles that medieval society demanded, the genre opens up a space for transgression or at least for renegotiating power and redefining identity" (97). While Galehaut is not the central hero of the *Prose Lancelot*, he does feature as a large part of the narrative. As such, the author gives Galehaut a nebulous role in the construction of identity. Of course, Charbonneau and Cromwall write about popular English romance, however, I believe that their construction of the mobility of identity does work for the *Prose Lancelot*. As Galehaut plays the part of the lady giving her

[51]Charbonneau, Joanne and Désirée Cromwell. "Gender and Identity in the Popular Romance." *A Companion to Popular Medieval Romance*. Edited by Raluca L. Radulesca, DS Brewer, 2009, pp. 96-110.

favor to a male knight, the author also gives him a racialized construction. He is a giant performing this courtly role and thus, redefines his identity of giant to that of his father's human noble blood. Even in doing this, however, the echoes of his giant heritage are there. Huot argues, "Encounters with giants serve to enhance a knight's heroic masculinity" (106). Galehaut performs his giant identity in a courtly way and utilizes his own strength yet makes sure he engages with the rules of nobility. This is entirely due to the love he has for Lancelot. If he is to love the knight to completion, the text must reconstruct Galehaut a way that is courtly, rather than the rustic violence of the giant.

Despite this reconstruction, Galehaut's lands are still outside of Camelot and lay in ruins, signifying a type of wildness associated with the "Lord of Strange Isles." Lisa Leblanc states that giants are monsters that "haunt the barren lands outside society" (24). The giant is thus an outsider and a dangerous one at that. To add a bit more nuance to Leblanc's article, I draw on Huot's argument: "Giants in romance are also on a borderline, but one defined more generally by the distinction between the refinements of courtly chivalric culture and the uncivilized hinterlands that lie outside it" (86). The implicit threat of the giant then is that it further represents these borders are transient. A giant can – and frequently does – enter Camelot or any courtly chivalric place and disrupt its carefully constructed identity. Galehaut then represents such a force, yet he is even more dangerous because he passes for a knight. He can take Lancelot, the greatest knight in all the land, away from Arthur's court. In the cultural consciousness of giants versus knights, this is a transgressive act because it disrupts the courtly order of Arthur's court in a way that Arthur cannot argue against.

Galehaut does not kidnap Lancelot. Instead, he accompanies his beloved companion under the guise of *compagnonnage* to his [Galehaut's] castle at Sorelois. In other French

Arthurian stories, in particular, the *Gurion le Courtois*, Sorelois is a place that is under the sway of a giant and later, that giant's sons. Thus, there is a tradition in which Sorelois relates to giants. The author of the *Prose Lancelot* placing Galehaut's castle in Sorelois may be a way to signal to the reader Galehaut's legacy of gianthood by connecting his bloodline with a place[52] in a text that is contemporary to *Lancelot*.

Sorelois as a place connected with giants and the courtly is important. The castle is in ruins when Galehaut and Lancelot arrive in Sorelois for the first time. The ruination of the castle serves as a foreshadowing of Galehaut's ultimate demise, but also serves as a reminder of the "giants on the border" motif. Here, the giant dwells in the ruins. Galehaut laments his castle's destruction while Lancelot attempts to console him. Then, in a shift of tone, Galehaut explains to Lancelot:

> Comment biaus amis. Quides vous dont que iou soie esbahis por mon chastel sil est fondus. Sil vausist tant que iou le peusse contrepeser a tous les castiaus qui sont el monde nen fuisse iou plus esbahis com iou sui ore. Si vous aprendrai ytant de la connissance de mon cuer. Que onques nul homs ne me vit trespenser por perte qui mauenist por terre ne por auoir. Ne onques ne fis ioie ne feste de chose qui iou gaaingnaisse. For vne fois et ce fu de uostre compaigne. Et neporquant moult mesmaie que mes cuers me deuise grans mauls a auenir (Sommer IV.7).
>
> Really, my dear friend! Do you think I am crushed if my castle falls? Even if it were as much has the other castles in the world put together, I would not be more upset than I am

[52] The *Gurion le Courtois* focuses on Arthur's farther, Uther Pendragon and his defeat of the giant Brun and later, his sons. Brun and his sons controlled many points of interest, including Sorelois, a passage to Ireland, and North Whales. Huot places the text as dating between 1235 and 1240 which would make the text a contemporary to the *Prose Lancelot*.

> now. Let me teach you this about my heart: no one has ever seen me crushed or daunted by any loss of land or goods I may have suffered. Nor have I ever rejoiced or leveled in any gain, save one: your companionship. What troubles my heart is the doom it forebodes (Lacy II: 243).

Here, Galehaut denounces his castle in comparison to his love for Lancelot. He states that no loss of lands would affect him the same as losing Lancelot. In stating this, he does two actions: he proves his love to Lancelot by lowering his status, and he constructs himself away from Sorelois, a place used by giants in Arthurian tradition. The narrator destroys the remnants of Galehaut's far away castle so that he must return to Arthur's court.

A subtle denial of the giant as pagan laces Galehaut's denial of the castle. However, the narrator does not make an explicit connection with Sorelois as a pagan place the way they do with other places, such as Morgan's valley and her title as "dieusse" / "goddess" (Micah I.XXII:275) / (Lacy II.304). My argument regarding the pagan origins of Galehaut comes from the characterization of giants in Western European romances both before and contemporary with the *Prose Lancelot*. While both Huot and Oven do not always argue that the chivalric and the rustic is a manifestation of a Christian versus pagan mentality, as that argument is less nuanced and a broad generalization of a complex topic, there is room to discuss *certain* types of giants as being part of the rustic pagan, which is a statement that their respective criticisms would seem to agree with. I further argue that the knight in this pairing is *always* Christian even if the giant is not always a pagan force. For example, Yvain, Tristan, and Lancelot are explicitly Christian, and that is a big part of where they get their knightly virtues. The giant Harpin, by comparison, is not Christian and Chrétien does not consider him such as his actions are directly against the Christian knight's actions. In addition to this, he lives on the margins of civilization, a place that

Is inherently part of the pagan rustic. Oven writes "[Harpin] is a dweller of the wild, non-Christian parts of the world" (63). The giant as a dweller of the wild is vital not only when Yvain must defeat the giant, but important to Yvain as a Christian knight claiming the pagan lands for the forces of Christendom.

Thus, there is a cultural consciousness of giants as living separate or behaving separately in Arthurian literature – if not all chivalric literature. The danger of the rustic pagan becomes an increased anxiety for the aristocratic Christian. Galehaut complicates this because he is not pagan as he is expressly Christian. He calls to God and follows the same Christian language inherent in other knights. Yet, the very power of his bloodline is still there – he is still a giant. His half-gianthood becomes gradually erased and loses its subjectivity. Huot asks "Is the giant an authentic subject? Can the giant speak?" (18). Galehaut as a knight certainly speaks, but what of his giant half? Does the buried giant get a voice? Or has the courtly masculine killed the giant in Galehaut?

The author does not discuss Galehaut's racialization as a giant save for the brief moments in which Galehaut mentions his parentage or when the author describes his physical attributes like his height or his strength. The giant half does not get a voice. Instead, the *Prose Lancelot* and the *Prose Tristan* kills it off. In the *Prose Tristan,* Galehaut absolves Tristan of the killing of his father and the death of his giant mother. In doing so, he buries his giant half and commits to fully passing as a full human knight. Keith Busby argues that Galehaut's ancestor, the giant Dialetes, put in place customs to "halt the progress of Christianity" (389). When Tristan kills Galehaut's parents, he puts an end to those customs and thus restores Christianity to the part of Ireland where Galehaut has his kingdom. Galehaut's acceptance of this is the author's way of Christianizing the half-giant king. It is interesting then that this episode in the *Prose Tristan*

comes in the middle of the *Prose Lancelot*, specifically when Galehaut is riding away in search of Lancelot after Morgan has abducted him (*Tristan* 90). This is the start of the end of Galehaut's story. After Galehaut forgives Tristan and declares him noble (*Trisan* 95), he begins his erasure – because try as he might, Galehaut cannot escape the fact that he is part giant. Huot argues "Once safely objectified and removed from action, the giant passes into legend, where he may be commemorated in monuments or oral histories" (22). Indeed, when Galehaut does pass on, he gets relegated to a guarded tombstone.

Galehaut must die for Lancelot's story to continue. The knight must eliminate the giant. The key difference between Galehaut's death and the death of Harpin is that Lancelot does not violently kill Galehaut. Instead, Galehaut dies of heartbreak staring at the shield of Lancelot. While I will not go as in-depth here as I did in Chapter 2, it is important to mention again the conclusion of the role of a giant in Arthurian romance. Galehaut performs his role as both courtly knight and half-giant conqueror until the end. He dies because of his love for Lancelot, a fact that is etched onto his tombstone. Yet, the author absolves him from having a violent death because he adhered to his courtly mannerisms and constructions of a courtly romantic hero. The love of Lancelot both saves Galehaut and erases him.

The subsequent erasure of Galehaut's life is the conclusion of the giant in any Arthurian romance. The key difference is that other giants come back in another work, in a different Arthurian retelling. There is always a giant to slay. Cohen states, "No matter how many times King Arthur killed the ogre of Mount Saint Michael, the monster reappeared in another heroic chronicle, bequeathing the Middle Ages an abundance of *morte d'Arthurs*" (5). Cohen argues that the monster appears in another text because it represents a cultural anxiety that is ever-present. The cultural anxiety that Galehaut represents, the queerness inherent in *compagnonnage*,

gets repurposed as *fin'amor* in later romances. Callahan notes this with the burgeoning troubadour movement in France. When the love of women becomes a more prominent force in courtly romances across the continent, it slowly erases the anxieties around the homoerotics in *compagnonnage*. Thus, there is no reason for Galehaut's continued existence as a male romantic rival to Guinevere. Oven writes, "Erasure can be applied to not only physical but also textual works of art" (65). This holds explicitly true for Galehaut. Later authors do not write of him, at least, not the way the *Prose Lancelot* does. The story of the "li filz a la Jaiande" fades into quiet obscurity.

Galehaut's lineage as a half-giant creates new pathways for scholars to recognize his love of Lancelot, and furthermore, provides a way in which we can discuss how chivalric romance recognizes giants through sexuality. His complication to the construction of the giant fuels his story yet, in the end, is still a facet of death. Galehaut's queerness is thus a lesson in racialization and the complexities of what it means to be a man in love with another man in a chivalric romance.

Conclusion
The Afterlives of Galehaut

When I set out to write about Lancelot and Galehaut, I did not expect to undertake my own quest: one of discovery, of both the medieval and the self, one of passionate friendships that challenged everything I thought about male companionship, and ultimately, one of chivalric romance that shakes the very foundation of Arthurian literature. The story of two knights, bound together by a love so legendary that it would be etched onto one of their tombstones and consecrated in a joint burial, spoke to me as a queer man who understands the way the lines between friendship and love can easily disappear. The struggles of Galehaut to get the attention of the man he loves, his heartbreak every time Lancelot chooses Guinevere, and the moments of sheer joy when he had Lancelot to himself – however brief those times were – resonate with every gay man who has been in love with his best friend. The author laces Galehaut's story with a queerness that transcends the boundaries of time and the boundaries of identities simply because a man loving another man is not a construction of the modern. That is the most poignant part of this dissertation, in which love, and affection exist despite the difference in language used to describe them.

Thus, there is a futurity to Galehaut and Lancelot. While Galehaut's historical record in the Arthurian tradition is sparse, the rediscovery of his romance with Lancelot in 21st-century internet culture is evidence of his importance to queer readers of Arthurian romance. Take, for example, the amount of Galehaut and Lancelot fanfiction in the fanfiction database website of *Archive of Our Own* or *AO3*. The website has a function where you can search by romantic or sexual pairing, genres, types of sex acts, types of romance, and character names (*AO3*). A quick

search for “Galehaut” yields seventy-two[53] different works of fanfiction, with four of these being unrelated to the Arthurian Galehaut. If we specify the pairing, or “ship,” of Galehaut and Lancelot (written as Galehaut/Lancelot du Lac in the Ao3 tagging system), we yield fifty-eight results (*AO3)*. These works are not all in English but rather are in a variety of different languages, including English, French, and Russian. Not only does this show that the couple has a wide-reaching audience across global internet users, but by the specification of (Arthurian) included in the tag of “Galehaut/Lancelot du Lac” it is evident that the readership is pulling from Galehaut as he is represented in the *Prose Lancelot,* which is likely the only example fanfiction authors have. Unless of course, they have access to a hidden manuscript that has eluded scholars for the past four hundred years. As this is unlikely, however, it is most probable that the fanfiction authors have gathered their source material from two places: Norris Lacy’s translation of the *Prose Lancelot* or the Wikipedia page for Galehaut, which in turn, pulls from Lacy’s translations and the Old French manuscripts themselves.

This signifies that Galehaut’s story has now received a resurgence in popularity. While seventy-two works on a massive archive like *AO3* are not a viral resurgence, it does signify that people write about these two fictional characters as a romantic couple. I do not mean romantic companionship as discussed in this dissertation, but a romantic couple in the modern sense. For lack of a better term, to these fanfiction writers, the two men are boyfriends/lovers/and sometimes (depending on the fanfiction) husbands. The fanfic writers have thus seen in Galehaut and Lancelot something that I have also seen: two men whose love transcends the boundaries of what it means to be friends. One does not have to be an academic to recognize the emotion in the

[53] Date accessed: 4/10/2024

words of the *Prose Lancelot*. The existence of their relationships through fanfiction and hashtags proves that.

Furthermore, Lancelot and Galehaut have a moderate following on multiple websites, such as the popular blogging site, *Tumblr.com*. Due to the multi-media[54] aspect of *Tumblr*, the posts regarding Galehaut contain a trove of art and comics as well. Arthurian characters are no strangers to having multi-media reinterpretations made of them. Yet, these reinterpretations center around the characters that have appeared in multiple legends: King Arthur, Guinevere, Morgan le Fay, Gawain, and of course, Lancelot. These reinterpretations are a direct result of these characters reappearing in Arthurian literature and being popular characters that appear in modern adaptations of Arthurian literature. Galehaut is a newer addition to this cohort of reinterpreted characters, and these fanfics and fanarts of his have only appeared in the last five or so years.

The earliest fanfictions in the Galehaut/Lancelot tag on *AO3* date back to 2020 (*AO3*). There is nothing in that tag before that year, with the caveat that if there was, the moderators deleted the fanfictions and archived them to another site. Looking at the dates on *Tumblr* is a bit harder, as *Tumblr*'s "time of publish" filters out "last year," "last six months," "last month," "last week," and "today" as options (*Tumblr*). The other filters sort the posts by media type and by the number of likes or "reblogs" a post has. After sorting through around a hundred posts[55], I found the content about Galehaut was published between 2022 – 2023 (*Tumblr*). This data shows that the renewed interest in Galehaut is very recent, which brings several questions to mind. Why is

[54] *Tumblr* is a website that allows users to post blog posts and maintain a personal blog. The post can be a variety of different media from text, music, images, and video.
[55] Date accessed: 4/11/2024 and again on 4/12/2024 with no changes to catalog

the renewed interest in Galehaut happening now? What is in the cultural consciousness that has a modern audience craving a queer medieval love story?

To find the answers to these questions, we must look towards the medievalism of the present and where it came from: namely, fantasy shows and video games. In the present tense of medievalism, I discuss the phenomena that is the *Game of Thrones* TV show, which in turn is based on the acclaimed epic fantasy book series *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R.R. Martin. Furthermore, I discuss the amount of AAA[56] video games set in medieval fantasy worlds that have received cultural and critical acclaim: *Dragon Age*, *Final Fantasy XVI*, *Elden Ring*, *Dark Souls*, *God of War Ragnarok*, and in recent months, *Dragon's Dogma 2*. Several of those titles, *Elden Ring* and *Dark Souls* specifically, were directly inspired by *Game of Thrones*. Before all this, however, we must look towards the where and the why of how this present medievalism came into focus.

I will not go into the entire history of medievalism but rather focus briefly on the early high fantasy medievalism in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Scholars have discussed Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* repeatedly and frequently laud the series as one of the founding works of modern high fantasy (Fini 335)[57]. Tolkien's high fantasy is a blend of medievalism (stemming from his background as a medievalist) and other facets of his life, from Christianity to his trauma in fighting in World War I. Jane Chance argues that the construction of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* and its predecessor, *The Hobbit* have strong medieval roots used to ground the

[56] [56] A Triple-A or AAA game signifies a game produced by a major producer that has a higher marketing and production budget than that of a smaller company's game. These games often get more attention than their smaller, indie cousins because of the amount of budget and internet acclaim they receive. Seth Hudson talks about this term early in his recent book, *Approaching a Pedagogy of Game Writing*.

[57] Dimitra Fini discusses the legacy of Tolkien's fantasy in her article, "Later Fantasy Fiction: Tolkien's Legacy." She argues that despite high fantasy existing pre-Tolkien, most post Tolkien works feature similar methodology and worldbuilding (335).

worldbuilding in creation of a mythological English past (2-3). Furthermore, Tolkien's post-war trauma in reflection with the characters and landscapes of Middle Earth is well documented and well argued. Michael Livingstone points out that while Tolkien initially denied that both World Wars played any part in the *Lord of the* Rings save for landscape, Tolkien did acquiesce that "an author cannot of course remain wholly unaffected by his experience" (quoted on Livingston 6). Livingston goes on to argue that Tolkien writes his post-war trauma through the character of Frodo as well as the influence of the Battle of Somme in the larger war narrative of the story. What is important to note here is the use of the medieval to create a world in which one can deal with the trauma of physical reality by relegating it to a mythological history of our current world (or in this case, Tolkien's England).

The act of creating a world as a technique to deal with psychic trauma is a large reason for modern medievalism. If we take Tolkien as the predecessor for modern high fantasy medievalism, then his method of creation – from trauma, to religion, to medieval mythology – creates a literary ancestor form which we draw our own medievalism constructions. Tolkien's *why* in his creation of medievalism did not just stem from trauma, of course, but in the need to create a mythological history of the Celts and the English. This need is reminiscent of the need of marginalized people to create their own medieval history as a way to deal with the trauma of having that history ripped away from them, or perhaps, in a better turn of phrase, to have a history that is coded in specified silence and theoretical guess work.

For Tolkien, there was the need to create an ancient national identity, one that he lamented on when white supremacists misappropriated this during WWII (Chism 62)[58]. For

[58] In "ruining, perverting, misapplying, and making forever accursed" the "northern spirit" Tolkien had loved, Nordic race-mythology sharpened an ethical dilemma in the ambitions and costs of his creative writing" (63). Chism,

queer people, it is the need to create a mythological queer history. The reason for medievalism lies therein. Even if the history created is anachronistic, fantasized, and relies more on creative storytelling than hard academic research, the power to create a history gives the writer (and, I would argue, the reader) a sense of lineage and a place where identity, trauma, and history meet. As with Tolkien and his lamentation as mentioned earlier, white supremacists utilize this for their own hate-filled gains. They gain their power through the misinterpretation of history, often citing pseudo-academic sources and attempting to place their false history as fact to keep marginalized people out of Western Culture. To do this, they create their type of cultural medievalism for the sheer purpose of harm.

In contrast, the marginalized writer, speaking directly of queer and Black writers here, has a sense of power in actively transgressing homophobic and racist interpretations of the Middle Ages and reclaiming a space, in saying to everyone "we have *always* been here." It is not about creating a physical history as much as seeking to see ourselves in a fantastic history that is part of a larger cultural mythos. Rather than attempting to mask a fantasy with pseudo-academia, the creation of a queer and BIPOC Middle Ages through medievalism wants to use the fantasy of magic and dragons, warriors, and legends, to gesture to a Western cultural mythology that we are and have always been a part of. Like Tolkien, there is a need to create and expand upon a cultural mythology. It is only through the eyes of queer and BIPOC people we can see the lived reality of a diverse modern people influenced by the Middle Ages.

I bring up these different media not to go into a close reading of each one, but rather to show the cultural importance of the Middle Ages in popular culture, even if the Middle Ages in question is highly fantasized. The fantasy of the Middle Ages in popular culture is a way for the

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Christine. "Middle-Earth, the Middle Ages, and the Aryan Nation." *Tolkien the Medievalist*. Edited by Jane Chance, Routledge, 2002, pp. 63-93.

modern audience to engage in a nostalgia theatre of historical anachronism. From Tolkien to Martin to AAA Video Games, the lineage of medievalism as nostalgia theatre is storied mythology that continues to expand upon itself in the same way the Arthurian legend does. It is important to note that it is not the historical accuracy (or lack thereof) that is the focus here; it is the concept of the Middle Ages as a shared cultural Western mythology and the complications that brings in terms of marginalized identities. In speaking directly to queer medievalism, the use of medieval characters in a literary format has given rise to a queer space in which to hold and expand upon a mythological queer history. Like most mythologies, it is a communitive one consistently maintained and constructed by artists, writers, and a larger organism called fandom.

The construction of a queer space that gives the idea of a queer history in an easy and communally accessible place has become increasingly paramount as internet literacy has developed over the last two decades and become an integral part of queer young adulthood and adulthood. Steven Krueger discusses internet queer medievalism in his article, "Gay Internet Medievalism: Erotic Story Archives, the Middle Ages, and Contemporary Gay Identity." In the article, he is primarily concerned with the eroticism in gay internet medievalism and the spaces in which that takes place (from erotic story websites like *Nifty*, to gay pornography like *Hard as Marble*). He writes, "A medievalism intent on using the Internet to explore the investment of gay sexual identities, fantasies, and representation in the Middle Ages has at its disposal an extremely wide range of material" (917). Indeed, this wide range of material has only increased in the past decade since Krueger authored the article. Instead of *Nifty* (one of his major focuses which has seen a resurgence in terms of audiodramas), we now have *Ao3*, *Tumblr*, and *Whatpadd* generating the majority of gay fanfiction, both erotic and romantic.

Furthermore, these spaces do what *Nifty* could not in its original conception: they created an online community in which people consume ideas, discussions, and stories at a faster rate than in previous years. Furthermore, there has been a rapid increase in medieval-inspired fantasy video games that were not out when Krueger published his article in 2010. The recent boom in the fantasy gaming sphere has not only introduced medievalism to a new generation of young adults but has married with the already available online spaces to create a unique space of queer adults and young adults that utilize the medieval world to write portions of their own communal history. The medieval online space has thus been a major project of those writing queer stories. Krueger states, "Post-Stonewall gay men's culture, including sexual/erotic culture, stands in a consistent (but largely, unanalyzed) relationship to the Middle Ages" (913). I would argue that now, it is not just gay men's culture that has a relationship to the Middle Ages, but queer people in general that have this relationship with the Middle Ages and the consistent need to recreate it.

With Galehaut this becomes ever more apparent. As a character that has articles and arguments surrounding his sexuality, Galehaut becomes the perfect character to use for works of queer medievalism. This may in large part be due to the *Wikipedia* page for "Homosexuality in the Middle Ages"[59] linking his page and discussing him as having homosexual feelings for Lancelot. It is easy for anyone crafting a story of medievalism and browsing medieval studies *Wikipedia* pages to eventually come across Galehaut – especially if they are looking for examples of homosexuality in the Middle Ages. There is an argument here about the dangers of using *Wikipedia* as a source, and as a scholar, I often tell my students those same arguments. However, we are not discussing academics, but rather, discussing the resources the public has access to, resources that are *free* and easy to navigate and understand. To give credit where it is

[59] Date accessed: 4/10/2024

due, *Wikipedia* does list sources and references at the end of each page. Thus, it would not be a stretch to imagine a curious queer writer finding Galehaut's page and finding out more about him through those sources.

This, of course, is a "what if" scenario as I have no definitive way of knowing if that is what happened, without interviewing every single author of Galehaut fanfiction and fanart. If I expand my study of Galehaut beyond this dissertation, then a qualitative study like that is something I would highly consider doing. We can learn a lot about the field of medieval studies by looking at what a lay audience has access to and what the current cultural perception of the Middle Ages is. While this takes my current study of Galehaut from strictly medieval studies and into the realm of medievalism, that is a valid course for the evolution of medieval studies. By looking at what medieval works/characters/images a modern audience engages with, we can build a picture as to what in the medieval maintains relevancy to our modern sensibilities, and more importantly, *why* it does.

It is prudent then that I end this dissertation with a discussion of Galehaut's medievalism, rather than rehash every argument I have thus far made. This gesture is two-fold in nature: on one hand, it furthers the idea that medievalism is an important part of the general practice of medieval studies, and on the other hand, it shows that while Galehaut lost his relevancy in the medieval and renaissance eras, his story has been renewed in the modern era. This is due to several reasons, the strongest one among them is shifting attitudes towards homosexuality. For example, Sir Thomas Malory briefly mentions Galehaut in his famous work, *Le Morte Darthur* but does not go beyond stating that Galehaut and Lancelot are friends and rivals, and that Tristan killed Galehaut's parents (515 - 519). Every instance of their intense friendship, including

Galehaut's frequent love confessions for Lancelot, are all erased. In doing so, Galehaut gets his entire identity erased. His motivation is gone and there is no reason to keep him around.

From his absence in one of the most important works of late medieval Arthurian literature, to his resurrection as a fundamental queer Arthurian character in the modern mind, Galehaut has undergone a transformation of character on par with other major Arthurian figures, such as Merlin and Morgan le Fay. While he is still lesser known than those two titans of Arthurian literature, he is still important to those that recognize him. He is the example of a lovelorn man in love with another man that so many gay men can see themselves in. He is a knight of nobility and power, with a tragic ending that fits well with other queer historical representations. Thus, he is the Arthurian Patroclus, dying for his Arthurian Achilles. Like Patroclus, he rests beside his beloved.

While I have talked in length about Galehaut and his constructions as a modern model for queer knighthood, I have not talked about his other half, his Achilles to his Patroclus: Lancelot. While a modern audience remembers Galehaut as a tragic love-interest for Lancelot, they restructure Lancelot as an icon of medieval bisexuality. This is because Lancelot is one of the more famous characters in Arthurian literature. In every media that utilizes Arthurian themes or characters, Lancelot gets representation. He is the ultimate knight in shining armor. It was Marion Zimmer Bradley's 1983 novel, *The Mists of Avalon*, that first put a bisexual light onto Lancelot[60]. From there, other works made Lancelot out to be bisexual or even homosexual, as in the case of *Spamalot's* (2005) gay Lancelot. Curiously, Galehaut is rarely in those works as opposite Guinevere, instead, as in *The Mists of Avalon*, Lancelot gets in a love triangle with Arthur, Guinevere, and himself. While this makes sense in the narrative scheme of things, as

[60] Specific mentions of Lancelot's bisexuality in Bradely's *Mists of Avalon*: pgs 141, 324.

Guinevere is Arthur's wife and thus there is the element of an extra-marital affair, however, there is rarely the kind of emotional intensity between Arthur and Lancelot the way there is between Lancelot and Galehaut, or even, in some cases, Lancelot and Gawain. This is primarily due to a couple of reasons, the chief among them being Arthur is, of course, a much more popular character than Galehaut, and in relation to that, a wider audience knows of Lancelot's affair with Guinevere behind Arthur's back. The pairing of Lancelot and Arthur is then inevitable.

Scholarship exists about medieval interpretations of Arthur and Lancelot's relationship as erotic, such as Majorie Garber's "Erotic Triangles." Garber's work, however, focuses only on Arthur and Lancelot and their erotic relationships with Guinevere. She does not feature the two of them separately as lovers. Indeed, there is a scarcity of scholarship regarding just Arthur and Lancelot as romantic or erotic partners, especially when compared to articles surrounding Lancelot and Galehaut or Lancelot and Gawain. This contrasts with the amount of fanfiction surrounding Arthur and Lancelot from a non-academic perspective. While there are few academic resources for this pairing, there are numerous works of fanfiction and fanart of both *Tumblr* and *Ao3*. There are even more articles pertaining to Lancelot's queerness in modern works of medievalism, such as Joseph Brennan's article, "You Could Shame the Great Arthur Himself: A Queer Reading of Lancelot from BBC's 'Merlin' with Respect to the Character in Malory, White, and Bradely." These works often focus on Lancelot's construction in relation to his gender, rather than a stark discussion of his sexuality. Taking Brennan's article as a primary base for this, Brennen supports his queering of Lancelot in *BBC's Merlin* with works of both the medieval and medievalism. The queerness in Brennan's work focuses on the BBC's Merlin's Lancelot as a character that comes from a tradition of Lancelot's whose sexuality in other literature is "rich in speculation" (21). Lancelot, as Brennen describes him, is an important figure

in the medievalism of Arthurian literature because of his ability to pair with so many different characters, both romantically and antagonistically. Due to Lancelot's popularity, there is bound to be a difference in how he appears versus a character like Galehaut who has only recently received modern attention.

To illustrate just how big the difference in scope Lancelot/Arthur is to Galehaut/Lancelot in the modern mind, let us return to *AO3*. As stated earlier, there are around seventy-two hits for Galehaut/Lancelot, whereas for Lancelot/Arthur there are around 10,515[61] (*AO3*). Granted, a sizable number of them come from the *BBC's Merlin* and the intense pairing of their renditions of Arthur and Lancelot[62]. This is the difference between the pairings of Arthur/Lancelot and Lancelot/Galehaut. One couple gets its traction from modern media adaptations of Arthurian legends, whether from TV shows, movies, or novels. The small (by comparison) number of people pairing together Galehaut and Lancelot are pulling from the medieval, Old French sources. This is not that one pairing is more legitimate than the other, as that is impossible to say given the very nature of Arthurian literature as a genre that builds upon itself. All Arthurian literature is fanfiction itself. The point in focusing on Galehaut and Lancelot as drawn directly from medieval sources is to focus on how a modern audience has seen something queer in the medieval texts and rewritten it in the voice of modern sexuality.

The modern renditions of Lancelot and Galehaut show that they have a future beyond their death in the *Prose Lancelot*. Furthermore, the rewriting of the two knights shows that Galehaut continues to exist in the literary mind, and that through the work of medievalism, a renewed interest in him is formed. Galehaut, a king and prince in his own right, will rise again in

[61] Date accessed: 4/11/2024
[62] The number of Arthur/Lancelot fanfiction that results from the *BBC's Merlin* pales in comparison to the amount of fanfiction between the show's renditions of Merlin and Arthur as that is by far the most popular pairing from the show.

the minds and creative works of modern fans of Arthurian literature. Let the straight people have Arthur. For those of us who find themselves in Galehaut, he is our once and future king.

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