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Scandalous deception in the castle: an examination of the gender performance through the bedtrick trope in Arthurian literature

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SCANDALOUS DECEPTION IN THE CASTLE:
AN EXAMINATION OF THE GENDER PERFORMANCE THROUGH
THE BEDTRICK TROPE IN ARTHURIAN LITERATURE

A thesis submitted to
the Graduate College of
Marshall University

In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts

in

English

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May 2014

To "the butter to my bread, and the breath to my life,"
my wonderful husband, supportive family,
and encouraging friends
who have traveled
life's journey with me.

My thesis is dedicated to them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The bedtrick – mistaken identity in a sexual encounter – is a comic motif employed by medieval, renaissance and modern storytellers. While modern readers tend to recognize this motif as (at best) a disturbing sexual escapade and (at worst) rape, the scholarship on mistaken identity in medieval literature still generally glosses over the bedtrick as a moment of comedy. My thesis examines the literary trope of the bedtrick through the critical lens of Judith Butler's performativity theory, and the motives behind this form of deception and the modern implications. Furthermore, the bedtrick trope is explored in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* and Gottfried's Von Strassburg's *Tristan,* along with the gender roles prescribed in each performance. The results provided support for viewing the bedtrick trope as a problematic, serious, non-farcical attempt to gloss over the implications of scandalous sexual encounters that involve trickery and deceptive means.

INTRODUCTION

The bedtrick – mistaken identity in a sexual encounter – is a comic motif employed by medieval, renaissance and even modern writers. While modern readers tend to recognize this motif as (at best) a sinister act of sexual adultery and (at worst) rape, the scholarship on mistaken identity in medieval literature still generally glosses over the bedtrick as a moment of comedy, with the apparent assumption that the humorous elements nullify the realistic ramifications and emotional fallout involved in the mix up. Nonetheless, the questions that the bed-trick motif raises are expansive, encompassing the relational aspects of sex, gender, power, identity and the intimate nature of sexual encounters between two individuals.

In more specific terms, the bed-trick is an important plot device used in Arthurian Romances to beget an heir, establish political standing, or fulfill sexual desires. The bed-trick motif is utilized to beget Arthur and Galahad and to fulfill the lustful desires of Uther and Elaine; it prostitutes Brangane in order to protect her mistress Isolde from scandal. While the modern reader would recoil from these obvious rape scenes, the bedtrick act is neither condemned nor praised by the authors Sir Thomas Malory and Gottfried Von Strassburg, who employ the motif to advance their plots. Focusing on three scenes in Arthurian romance, my thesis will explore the bed-trick as a literary motif, establish a firm definition where one is somewhat lacking, and examine the motives behind this form of deception as well as its modern implications by utilizing a gender performative approach.

* * *

Most of the scholarship on the bedtrick motif in western literature focuses on the plays of William Shakespeare. In fact, Shakespeare scholars coined the term "bedtrick" itself. While Shakespeare explores the idea of the bed-trick in his sixteenth-century comedies and tragicomedies, his fourteenth-century predecessors Giovanni Boccaccio (Italian, 1313-1375) and Geoffrey Chaucer (British, 1343-1400) utilized the same form of deception in their works.

For example, in Boccaccio's *Decameron* Tale 3.9, a proud nobleman refuses to consummate his marriage with his commoner bride until she wears his ring (which he will not give her) and bears him a son (which, until she sleeps with him, is biologically impossible). After grieving, the rejected bride cleverly arranges a bedtrick with the cooperation of a noblewoman beloved by her husband. Pretending to be the noblewoman, she asks her husband through a messenger to send his ring as a sign of his love and spends nights with him until she becomes pregnant. She gives birth to twin sons who strongly resemble their father, and then comes to a feast to claim him as her husband.

Written shortly afterwards, Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale" in the *Canterbury Tales* is (in)famous for its scandalous deception of the dandy clerk Absolon, who enthusiastically prepares to kiss Allison's lips only to be tricked into kissing her bottom; albeit not exactly a *bed*trick – the actual kiss takes place at a window – the scene encompasses all of the essential elements of the motif: someone has a sexual moment with someone else that turns out to be something other than what it appears to be. These essential elements also form a crucial part of the plot of Chaucer's "Reeve's Tale": two clerks spend the night in the house of a miller who has stolen their grain, and in revenge

(or, as one of the clerks, calls it, compensation), one of the clerks pounces on the Miller's

daughter as she sleeps and the two of them have sex. John, determined not to be

upstaged by his bolder classmate, rearranges the furniture in a dark room to lure the

Miller's wife to his bed – hence the element of the bedtrick; she willingly returns his

advances, thinking that he is her husband. Thus the two clerks repay the Miller for

stealing their grain by stealing something precious of his: the honor of his daughter and

wife. The insult is intensified when the wife says that the sex was better than any she has

had in years. Although her initially happy reaction to the bedtrick – as well as the story's

fabliau genre – suggests that the incident is to be viewed comically, the tale's comical

aspects are often lost on modern readers.

Bedtricks in the light-hearted tales of Boccaccio and Chaucer may be problematic,

but they are also fairly straightforward, independent of a larger plot or overarching story.

It is in Arthurian literature that the bedtrick motif takes on added complexity and raises

questions beyond a reader's comfort level with the plot. Three bedtricks occur in

Arthurian literature. The first two are included in Thomas Malory's work *Le Morte

D'Arthur.* Malory's hefty tome begins with the infamous conception of King Arthur as

Uther Pendragon, Arthur's father, falls in love and lusts after Igraine, wife of the Duke of

Cornwall and attacks his castle. While the Duke is in battle, Merlin transforms Uther into

his likeness and he has sex with Igraine, who does not know that the man in her bed is not

her husband. As her husband is killed on the battlefield, Igraine begets Arthur. The

gender roles are reversed in the next bedtrick, which also involves a conception. Malory

once again utilizes the bedtrick to bring about the birth of a pure hero, the one who will

achieve the Holy Grail, Sir Galahad. Elaine, with the help of her father King Pelles and

the aide of Dame Brusen, tricks Sir Lancelot into thinking that she is his beloved Queen Guinevere. Malory does not include the third bedtrick in his work, but it occurs in the popular twelfth-century story of Tristan and Isolde and is told most beautifully in Gottfried Von Strassburg's *Tristan.* Whereas the two bedtricks in Malory bring about conceptions of key figures, the bedtrick in this romance has less lofty aims. Having fallen passionately in love with Tristan, and no longer a virgin, Isolde persuades her maid to take her place on her wedding night with King Mark so that her indiscretion will not be discovered.

It is important to clarify at the onset that this thesis will explore these three bedtrick stories *in general*, not these three bedtrick stories *as told only by Malory and Gottfried*. Malory's narrative style more closely resembles reporting rather than story telling. However, Malory's sources offer significantly more details about the deceptions of Igraine and Lancelot, details that would have been necessary when the story was originally told centuries earlier but taken for granted by the time *Le Morte Darthur* was completed in 1470. Because Gottfried's story also has analogues and antecedents, a complete understanding of that bedtrick requires taking those into consideration as well. Indeed, Arthurian scholars rely on this holistic approach. For example, in *Gender and the Chivalric Community in Malory's Morte d'Arthur,* Dorsey Armstrong examines the intertextuality of gender and gender-related issues in Arthurian literature by arguing that "Malory's narrative unintentionally produces and depends upon a certain model of gender identity that not only creates much of the narrative action but also heightens the significance and impact of many episodes and events *drawn from his source material*" (7, my emphasis). Another critic who takes a holistic approach to Arthurian tales is Kathryn

Gravdal. Gravdal asserts that "sexual violence is *built into the very premise of Arthurian romance*. It is a *genre* that by its definition must create the threat of rape" (qtd. in Armstrong 11, my emphasis). Like most Arthurian scholars, Armstrong and Dorsey take a global approach to Arthurian stories; i.e. while they may focus on a specific text, they consider that text in its wider literary context.

The most extensive – and certainly most comprehensive – study of the bedtrick motif in literature and culture is presented in Wendy Doniger's book *The Bedtrick: Tales of Sex and Masquerade,* published in 2000. Doniger defines the bed-trick in her *Preface* as being "about sex—more precisely, about lying about sex—and about telling the difference" (xiii). Though Doniger is an Asian scholar specializing in Indian and Hindu texts, her comprehensive study draws on the works of disparate scholars and takes a cross-cultural and interdisciplinary approach. *The Bedtrick* is a follow-up to her previous book *Splitting the Difference: Gender and Myth*. Whereas *Splitting the Difference* addresses questions regarding gender in broad terms, *The Bedtrick* focuses solely on how sexual masquerades are defined and then sorted into sex-related subcategories, varying in regards to sexual intimacies with assorted partners, even going as far to discuss sexual encounters with animals. The text encompasses examples ranging from Ancient Greece to Hollywood, yet for the sake of avoiding digressions, this introductory chapter will emphasize Doniger's attempt to define the bed-trick, focusing on her copious references to theorists and scholars within specific niches of literature.

Doniger offers the following description of "bedtrick" as a starting point for her discussion: "You go to bed with someone you think you know, when you wake up you discover that it was someone else—another man or woman...this is what Shakespearean

scholars call 'the bedtrick'– sex with a partner who pretends to be someone else" (1). At times, her text reads as a generalized compilation of various inferences from sundry sex-related classifications that cross-reference traversing cultural mythologies. She also tries to avoid cultural and historical emphasis by arranging examples into ahistorical chapters: "the bedtrickster, rejected spouse, raped spouse, god or animal, ugly or beautiful woman, sexual rival, partner of legal surrogate, politically disempowered victim, gender-crosser, incestuous relative, realistic plotter" (xiv). Generally, each story reveals the trickster and the victim, or the deceiver and the one being misled. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Doniger's subcategories is the various motives for the bedtrick such as "for love, for sex, for money, for revenge, to save their marriages, to protect themselves, to protect someone else, to gain information, to gain political power…etc." (xiv). The motives somewhat overlap, and the bedtrick is not always consummated. Doniger argues that the bedtrick motif in "high culture" texts has not received due scholarly attention because scholars tend to regard "the bedtrick as a cheap trick – morally corrupt…titillating, unrealistic, or simply farcical" (2). Doniger even goes as far to say that some Shakespearean scholars damned the exploration of bedtricks (2). On the other hand, the concept of the bed-trick still fascinates modern audiences, and compels the reader to review the motives behind the deception, whether it is black magic or sexual passions (which are both prevalent in many of the Arthurian Tales).

Therefore, not surprisingly Doniger explores Shakespeare's utilizations of the bedtrick in various consummated and unconsummated forms in *The Comedy of Errors, Twelfth Night, Midsummer Night's Dream, All's Well That Ends Well, and Measure for*

Measure, and a quasi-bedtrick in *Much Ado about Nothing*. She even covers Shakespeare as his own subcategory.

However, Doniger's contextualization of cross-cultural works is somewhat limited as she mentions some of the most well-known sexual masquerades, but neglects notable, if not outright explicitly relevant examples of bedtricks. For example, she emphasizes Chaucer's "Wife of Bath's Tale," but fails to mention the "Reeve's Tale." Doniger's omission of the "Reeve's Tale" (described above, pages 2-3) is truly odd, while her inclusion of the "Wife of Bath's Tale" shows the far-reaching scope of her work. A bedtrick *does* occur in the "Wife of Bath's Tale," but in a form that readers would not generally recognize: the tale ends with an ugly old hag turning into a beautiful woman. The knight goes to bed with a partner he does not desire only to end the night with an ideal mate, a wife who is both beautiful and faithful. While Doniger's wide range of examples necessitates that she briefly gloss over some tales and emphasize others, her omission of the "Reeve's Tale" is nevertheless surprising.

Furthermore, Doniger's cross-disciplinary approach introduces the well-known concepts of literary theorists like Jacques Lacan's idea of "self and other" in regards to the trickster and victim, as well as Jacques Derrida's deconstructionism and binary organizations. While Doniger stresses that she uses her "own mild brand of feminist consciousness" (xvi), she incorporates Judith Butler's feminist theory of performativity and Luce Irigaray's feminist position through a psychoanalytic lens. She also references English Renaissance scholars who emphasize the bed-trick: William R. Bowden, Zwi Jagendorf, Angela Carter, Terrance Cave and Marliss Desens. However, Doniger asserts that literary theorists and Renaissance scholars have left readers in the dark as to why the

bed-trick could even occur within a text. Finally, she identifies and explores the parallels between ancient and modern mythologies.

While Doniger's book outlines the archetypal context for the bedtrick motif, Judith Butler's Theory of Performativity guides my critical approach. Butler's Theory of Performativity, briefly mentioned by Doniger, derives from Simone de Beauvoir's notion that "one is not born, but rather *becomes* a woman" (23, my emphasis). Like Beauvoir, Butler argues that a person's anatomy is distinct from his or her sense-of-self in terms of gender; while sex is biologically determined, gender is created by society. Throughout her works, Butler sets out to provide "a schematic outline of a theory of gender *invention*" (Salih 21, my emphasis). According to Butler, one cannot exist within a culture without specifically identifying with a gender, inventing a gender for oneself. Identifying, in this case, means behaving or acting in accordance with established societal expectations. In other words, in order to fit into society, one must follow prescribed social norms associated with being either male (strong, assertive, brave) or female (weak, submissive, nurturing). However, Butler is quick to point out that gender is not limited to these two normative options of "male" and "female"; instead gender encompasses a wide range of identifications including homosexual, transgendered, and cross-dressing. Furthermore Butler contends that one's gender can also change, that gender is a process, an ongoing essential project. In their helpful headnote to Butler's 1987 essay "Variations on Sex and Gender," editors Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell summarize her views as follows: "The body is neither static nor self-identical but something that is lived and experienced in specific contexts … we can only know sex *through* gender, although we 'become' our genders, there is not place outside gender which precedes this becoming"

(qtd. in Salih 21). Butler's predecessor Beauvoir argues that sex determines gender: "to *become* a woman is a purposive and appropriative set of acts, the gradual acquisition of a skill" (23). Butler, however, claims that sex determines only sex and that it is up to the individual to determine his or her gender. Butler examines many of the same gender identifications as Doniger, but whereas Butler views gender as a social construct through a psychoanalytic lens, Doniger takes a more anthropological approach and provides a vast overview of various conglomerates of texts. The underlying premise in the work of all three scholars is that people are not born into a certain behavior associated with their biological sex but instead learn to act in a way that meets society's expectations with regard to that sex – performance. In other words, none of us *are* male or female; instead, we *act* male or female (or a variety of other options). The performance is where a thesis on bedtricks faces its first challenge: for Butler, the bedtrick may not be a trick at all – at least not any more so than any other human behavior or activity – because all gender is performance.

On the other hand, Butler utilizes Beauvoir's theory, indicating that "The body becomes a peculiar nexus of culture and choice, and 'existing'[in] one's body becomes a personal way of taking up and reinterpreting received gender norms" (Salih 28-29). Therefore, accepting the notion that gender is socially constructed, determines the distinctions of "gender" and "sex," emphasizing that "if we accept the body as a cultural situation, then the notion of a natural body and, indeed, a natural 'sex' seem increasingly suspect" (29), only because the body becomes the situation in which gender is determined. The physical sex of the individual, whether conventionally one sex or another, become the determinate of gender within a society. However, Butler asserts that

"gender seems less a function of anatomy" (29). Therefore, "if gender is a way of existing [in] one's body, and one's body is a situation, a field of cultural possibilities both received and reinterpreted, then both gender and sex seem to be thoroughly cultural affairs" (29). Judith Butler's theory builds on and, to some extent, refutes Beauvoir's by reinterpreting the idea that the body's sex is anatomical, while the gender is a social construction, drawing a distinct line between the differences between sex and gender. Butler defines performativity in two ways:

> Firstly "the performativity of gender revolves around the *metalepsis*, the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as oneself itself"; "Secondly, performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration."
>
> <div align="right">(Salih 94)</div>

The anticipation of how one should behave is based on prescribed gender norms, whereas gender norms become norms due to societal constructions and expectations, which are culturally sustained, passed on, and repeated. Butler goes on to explain that "the view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body" (94). Therefore, the bedtrick is a trope in literature because it is a repeated, farcical act involving anatomical reality and deemed as normal for a certain gender (mainly male), while in actuality it is manufactured through magical illusions and under the guise of darkness and deceptions.

The acts of performativity as a "gendered essence" and as "repetition and a ritual" are indicated in Malroy's *Le Morte Darthur* when Uther "performs" his kingly duties to deceive Igraine. Additionally, Elaine attempts to tricks Lancelot repeatedly into sleeping with her in order to "perform" her duties as a royal daughter and beget an heir to the

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throne, per the instance of her father. Then Isolde "performs" her role as a virginal new bride by persuading Brangane to "perform" the sexual act in the marriage bed. In the three tales the performativity is situational and their gender is perceived as natural in the depictions, making use of the biological reality of the circumstances. Each bedtrick is perpetrated because of political obligations as well. Although the bedtrick is set in motion by the motives of lust and desire, the ultimate goal of Uther and Igraine's alliance, unites the two kingdoms at war, while Elaine and Lancelot's begets a noble and renowned lineage, and Isolde's establishes the appearance of the norm in order to avoid death and scandal, which will in turn ruin the kingdom. The performative nature of the bedtrick is accepted and seen as a viable option because the courtly love structure binds and constricts those who participate within it, leading to political agency, the body being used as a means to gain political standing. Though Butler would argue that performative gender does not always have to be political, in the Arthurian romances, the motives behind the bedtricks are indicative of deeper political affiliations tied to gender norms.

Butler would assert that desire is a driving political force; performativity is the desire, but also, the repetition and miming of dominant conventions. The dominant conventions indicate that the intermittent dialogues between Arthurian texts are tethered to social construction, namely the courtly love hierarchy, because of the motives for the unobtainable, which are the driving desires behind each bedtrick presented in this thesis. The bedtrick unifies all three kingdoms through political alliances, namely due to the successes of the deceptions of the bedtrick. Additionally, the motives differ according to gender constructions, because Uther's motive is the expected desire for sex with a beautiful woman – about as clichéd as it gets because the victim is a woman. While on

the other hand in Lancelot and Mark's case the victims are men, Elaine's motive for deceiving Lancelot accords with her father's request and foresight that she will conceive the one who will achieve the Holy Grail, and in turn protect the lineage of her family, by begetting a son from such a noble, well known and renowned knight. All three Uther, Elaine and Bragane are able to achieve their conquests due to anatomical realities, thus, sex makes it possible physically, but their genders make their deceptions possible at all, because they live within societies that presuppose the victimization.

For the sake of simplicity, I have devised a naming scheme to refer to the different deceptions that will be covered in my thesis. Each bedtrick will be named based on where it occurred. For example, the bedtrick involving Uther and Igraine will be referred to as the Tintagel Bedtrick. The first bedtrick involving Lancelot and Elaine will be referred to as the Case Bedtrick and the second will be called the Camelot Bedtrick. The final bedtrick in the thesis, the bedtrick involving Isolde, Brangane and Mark will be called the Cornwall Bedtrick.

CHAPTER 1

**THE BEGETTING OF KING ARTHUR: THE UTHER AND IGRAINE
BEDTRICK**

Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* presents the infamous conception of King

Arthur as the result of mistaken identity and is thus a typical example of the bed-trick: the

trickster is male, the tricked person is female, and the motive is lust.

Malory's lengthy tome (726 pages in the Vinaver edition) begins abruptly with

Uther Pendragon summoning the Duke of Cornwall to his castle with specific instructions

to bring his wife Igraine, who is known for her beauty. Upon seeing her, Uther "desired

to have lyen by her" (Malory 3). Uther's instant attraction to Igraine may seem unrealistic

to modern readers; instant attraction, however, is the norm in medieval romances. What is

not so much the norm, however, is Igraine's reaction: "she was a passing good woman

and wold not assente unto the kynge" (3). When Igraine learns of Uther's licentious

desires, she tells her husband Gorlois, the Duke of Cornwall, that they should leave lest

she be dishonored. They depart in secret. Uther gives the Duke an ultimatum to return

with Igraine or face war; the Duke responds by barricading Igraine in one castle and

himself in another. Like other male suitors in medieval romances, Uther becomes sick out

of longing for Igraine and anger at her departure: "I am sick for anger and for love of fair

Igraine, that I may not be whole" (4). He feels incomplete without her and that stirs up

his wrath toward the Duke. However, Merlin tells Uther that he should prepare himself

because "this night ye shall lie with Igraine in the castle of Tintagel; and ye shall be like

the duke her husband" (5). Uther and Merlin then devise a plan to have the Duke's castle

attacked and the Duke killed. In addition to transforming Uther into the likeness of

Gorlois, Merlin also transforms himself and Arthur's advisor Ulfin to appear as Gorlois's knights. After the Duke is slain, Uther journeys to Igraine's castle and "lay with Igraine more than three hours after his [the Duke's] death, and begot on her that night Arthur" (5). When the news of the Duke's death reaches Igraine, she is perplexed by the previous evening's occurrences, causing her to grieve quietly, and she "held her peace" (5) about the man she had lain with. At the barons' urging, Uther marries Igraine; when she is six months pregnant, Uther tells her that it was he who "came in the likeness [of the Duke], and therefore dismay you not, for I am the father to the child" (6). She understands now that the child has a father and "the queen made great joy when she knew who was the father of her child" (6).

One application of Butler's theory is that people act according to the way that society expects anyone of his or her gender to act. Often these actions are obvious: Uther is instantly attracted to Igraine because society expects men to lust after beautiful women; Igraine fears being dishonored because society expects women to guard their virtue; the Duke barricades Igraine in a castle because society expects men to protect their women – especially from other men who want to sleep with them. Whereas these examples are all typical gender performances, the preparation for the bedtrick itself, Merlin's transformation of Uther into the likeness of the Duke, takes the performance to the next level. The fact that Uther is not changing genders but rather changing his anatomical likeness, his clothing, and manner of speaking is the performance. In fact, his performance is achieved because he thoroughly understands the courtly behaviors accepted in the Duke of Cornwall's court.

While Igraine's happy reaction to Uther's revelation is strikingly odd for the modern reader, it can largely be explained by the fact that Igraine is 'performing' her gender. Newly married to her former enemy and six-months pregnant, Igraine is completely vulnerable and her submissiveness and "great joy" are manifestations of her performance as woman. Even in the courtly love context of the Arthurian legend, a woman who finds herself pregnant but does not know the father's identity is subject to a shaming culture. Medievalist Kathryn Gravdal situates this performance in the context of the rape theory of medieval literature. She compares the political anxiety "about the maintenance of boundaries during the times when they are being redrawn in potentially disturbing ways" to a woman's experience of rape, arguing that it serves as an apt metaphor of violation under the "sociopolitical climate in which the texts were composed" (11). No one in this part of the story, including Igraine who has essentially been raped, appears to have a problem with what has happened under the guise of the bedtrick, because Uther's rape of Igraine allies two political sides that are opposing each other. Whereas Igraine thinks that she is performing gender through her marital duties towards the man she perceives to be her husband, she is actually performing gender by being victimized in a rape that brings about the union of two warring kingdoms.

Moreover, building on the work of Larry D. Benson, Jerome Mandel points out that Arthur's admonition to the Round Table suggests that Malory's society frequently fell short of the ideals upheld in earlier Arthurian texts: Benson expresses how the historical context of Malory's work also should be considered when reading *Le Morte Darthur* because "mercy was not granted to those who asked for it, women were as often raped as supported, and knights fought for wrong as well as for rightful cause" (qtd. in

Mandel 244). According to Mandel, critics think that Malory's characters are simultaneously driven by the romance themes of love and war and by the human passions of vengeance, envy and jealousy. The straightforward approach for analyzing Malory's work is to acknowledge that "such obvious human motives, together with those generally characteristic of romance, have always provided readers with the basic framework for understanding the behavior of Malory's characters" (Mandel 244). Yet, Malory's cast of characters "arouses all the higher emotions of mankind" (244) indicating that being motivated by love and war are the typical motives seen in romances (245). These motives also apply when discussing and exploring the deception associated with, and necessary for, the success of the bedtrick. However, this could be why Malory as an author, "did not develop them [his characters] further" (245), because he was trying to avoid the inconsequential, or the idea that "personality traits which have no bearing on a character's knightliness are fundamentally trivial" as Mark Lambert indicates. The flat characterization goes along with Malory's reporting narrative writing style, which also assumes that the reader understands the motives of the characters wholly, which is why Malory may have neglected the emotional and psychological explorations in the first place (246).

Though Malory's story is a medieval culmination of the well-known tale, the bedtrick that results in Arthur's conception is part of the Arthurian legend from the beginning. Three twelfth-century chronicles tell the pre-history of the Britain: Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (*The History of the Kings of Britain,* c. 1136 A.D.), Wace's *Roman de Brut* or *Brutis (1155 A.D.), and* Lagamon's *Brut (1188 A.D.).* Geoffrey's text is written in Latin: his goal is to explain the history of Britain to the

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Norman ruling class after the Norman Conquest. It includes the first fully developed story of King Arthur, which begins with the bedtrick. Wace's text is a French translation/adaptation of Geoffrey's. Wace adds courtly elements to the story. Lagamon's text is the first story of King Arthur written in English, albeit in early Middle English which Modern readers would find challenging. Lagamon adds details and dialogue. The difference between Malory's sources and his ultimate account of the bedtrick reflect some changes with regard to how the characters perform their genders.

The story of Arthur's conception first occurs in Geoffrey's *Historia Regum Britanniae*. As in Malory, Uther immediately falls in love with Igerna (the spelling changes with each author's historical period) because of her beauty. Geoffrey elaborates on the extent of Uther's infatuation, specifying the things that men do to get a woman's attention: he ignores everyone else, he keeps ordering food for her, sends his personal waiters to her with golden goblets of wine, smiles at her continuously, and openly flirts with her (157). The significance of his lavish attention resides in the fact that during medieval times food was usually a scarce commodity. Whereas in Malory's text Igraine is uncomfortable with Uther's attention, in Geoffrey's original story Igerna's husband, Gorlois, is the one who is annoyed and, acting as a protective male, promptly leaves with his wife. An enraged male, Uther reacts angrily in both texts but Geoffrey's account is more violent: instead of simply besieging Gorlois's castle, Uther's vast army "ignem in urbes et oppida accumulauit" (Monmouth *De gestis* 185).[1] In both texts, the Duke leaves Igraine in Tintagel, but Geoffrey specifies that it is because the Duke is more worried about her than himself and wants to protect her. Geoffrey offers more extensive details

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[1] Michael Faletra provides the translation: Uther "[sets] flame to every city and town along the way" (Monmouth *History* 158).

both about Uther's military strategy, unbridled emotions, and the male normative behavior prevalent in Arthurian tales. By contrast, however, Igraine's emotions are wholly ignored in Geoffrey whereas Malory attempts to assert her voice; her stated apprehension at Uther's advances is unusual behavior for a woman, especially in regards to the wishes and advances of a King.

Yet, the exploration of the King's mind is surprising in Geoffrey's chronicle. Even Merlin – a prophet rather than a magician in the chronicle – is amazed at the extent of Uther's passion and tells him that "Vt uoto tuo potiaris, utendum est tibi nouis artibus et tempore tuo inauditis" (Monmouth *De gestis* 187).[2] Instead of magic, Geoffrey's Merlin uses potions to transform Uther into a "figuram" ("double") of Gorlois, specifying that he will "faciam te prorsus similar eum"[3] fooling not only Igerna but everyone else as well (*De gestis* 187). The likeness is what allows the bedtrick to succeed, along with the performative nature of a wife's duties to her husband.

While episodes are added and deleted from the Arthur story as it evolves, the bedtrick remains in the subsequent texts. Wace's *Roman de Brut* derives from Geoffrey's *Historia* and was so popular that it became the basis for Layamon's *Brut*. Wace and Layamon lower Gorlois's rank from Duke to Earl but maintain his name, while Malory simply omits the name of the Duke. Igraine is consistently deemed the fairest of them all: Wace states that when Uther gazes upon her "he loved her dearly, and coveted her hotly in his heart, for certainly she was marvellously praised" (3). Uther not only possesses a longing desire, but also covets another man's wife, which is significant in the budding

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[2] Faletra's translation: "for your wish to be fulfilled, it will be necessary to employ new arts that are unheard of in this day and age" (158).
[3] Faletra's translation: "I shall make you look just like him" (159), while in Reeve's translates this same phrase as "I will make you his double" (186), demonstrating the challenges inherent in translation; the Latin literally reads "I will make you absolutely similar to him."

Christian dogma attributed to the chivalric vows of knights to the court and God. His desire also signifies the notion that women are men's possession in Arthurian literature and Igraine is merely an object to be gazed upon, and lusted after. Furthermore, Uther's covetousness makes Igraine a possession, which is evident later when the Earl, in Wace and Layamon, seals off Igraine in Tintagel. The possessiveness of men is the normative behavior during a courtly period, because women were seen as prizes to be won, and possessions to be protected.

However, Layamon emphasizes the Earl's disdain for the King saying, "Gorlois became him wrath, and angered him greatly with the king, because of his wife" (2). Gorlois is not only vengeful but places the blame on his wife as well, because though the King "glanced to her, and she him lovingly beheld—but I know not whether she love him" (2). Ironically, Malory's Igraine is the only version of this character that objects to Uther's advances at the dinner. In the chronicles, as mentioned above, it is Gorlois – not Igraine – who is outraged and insists on leaving. Yet, in Layamon's tale, Igraine is not just a victim but a participant in the love affair, according to her husband. Gorlois's temper derives from the misconduct of the King and his wife. Gorlois even proclaims that he will never return saying, "will I never back come, nor yearn his peace, nor shall he ever in life disgrace me of my wife" (2). While, on the other hand Wace informs the reader that Igraine "neither granted Uther's hope, nor denied" (3), indicating that her emotions are unknown, and in turn Gorlois deems that his wife shall not become the object of the King's affections, taking her to Tintagel to be hidden away. Nevertheless, Layamon's Igraine reveals that she "was sorry, and sorrowful in heart, that so many men for her should have destruction" (3), emphasizing that while Gorlois is full of wrath, she

encompasses the empathy of the men who will fall at Tintagel due to her beauty. She becomes a victim even before the bedtrick occurs, because she is hidden away and feels the guilt of the men's wars.

There is a culture of shame established and attributed to the behavior of women in Arthurian texts, specifically in regards to chastity. The constraints of courtly love require women be unattainable and thus by being an "unattainable woman" the notion that women are property is prevalent. In fact, Butler writes "I think for a woman to identify as a woman *is* a culturally enforced effect. I don't think that it's a given that on the basis of a given anatomy, an identification will follow. I think that 'coherent identification' has to be cultivated, policed, and enforced; and that the violation of that has to be punished, usually through shame" (interview with Liz Kotz in *Artforum* 88*)*. Malory's social construction assumes that if a woman is in violation she must be punished for wandering eyes, emotions and affections, which is why, in Layamon's text, Gorlois blames Igraine; in the other versions, Igraine's intentions are unknown, but that social construction determines that a woman must be protected and hidden from the male gaze. Thus, the importance of Tintagel is evident in each of the accounts mentioned above; even Malory signifies that Tintagel is the place where Igraine would be kept safe. However, in Malory's version Igraine's husband does not stay with her; it is unclear in other retellings if he does or not. In all three chronicles and in Malory's text, the bedtrick that results in Arthur's conception takes place as Uther's troops lay siege to the Gorlois's/the Duke's castle. The bedtrick occurs in each tale due to anatomical likeness, but also because a man is not present to save Igraine.

In each version, the bedtrick resulting in Arthur's conception involves the skillful trickeries of Merlin, whose role is distinct in each text. Geoffrey introduces Merlin as a prophet (158). Wace identifies Merlin as a clerk, a member of the clergy, and associates him with witchcraft (4), while Layamon specifies that he lives in the wilderness during many winters, which would be unbearable to most (3). Merlin does not ask for a payment for his services in the chronicles, but does in Malory. In Malory, Merlin asks for a favor in return before transforming Uther; in Monmouth's account he makes no such request. Additionally, neither Wace nor Layamon's chronicles address the return favor for Merlin's sorcery.

In addition to transforming Uther into the likeness of Gorlois, Merlin also transforms himself and Arthur's advisor Ulfin to appear as Gorlois's knights. Therefore, the deception of the bedtrick transcends the simple act of "repetition and a ritual," but is both performative and socially constructed making the deceptions possible because more than one of the men is transfigured. Furthermore, the actions of the men are performative in so far as similarities anatomically, but also because according to Butler gender in itself is performative, that is to say that, gender subsists as being real to the extent "real only to the extent that it is performed" ("Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" 527). Likewise, the men's actions are an impersonation, meaning that the deception is only possible because all three men are performing or acting like a certain gender, like a certain solider, and like a certain courtly mannered nobleman. In fact, as Butler posits that, "Gender is an impersonation…becoming gendered involves impersonating an ideal that nobody actually inhabits" (interview with Liz Kotz in *Artform* 85). The only way the men are able to extend the deception is due to the societal structures prescribed to men at

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the time, they knew the behavior and the way to appear like noblemen of Goloris's court,

possibly because they had visited the court before. In a sense, the transformation of Uther

and his men is not unlike Butler's description of cross-dressing. Instead of merely

donning a costume, Uther goes one step forward and takes on another body, which gives

him the anatomical likeness necessary to perform as Gorlois. The entire episode can be

read through Judith Butler's theory of performative gender. In her chapter on cross-

dressing, Butler offers the following as a foundation:

> Perhaps we think we know what the anatomy of the person is (sometimes we do
> not, and we certainly have not appreciated the variation that exists at the level of
> anatomical description). Or we derive that knowledge from the clothes that the
> person wears, or how the clothes are worn.
> (*Gender Trouble* xxiii)

The gender or identification of a person is attributed to their appearance, which specifies

how gender can be deliberate. In the case of Uther, Merlin and Ulfin, the performance of

a specific gender is not necessarily difficult because the men prescribe to masculine

representations of the male gender already; what is challenging is the performance as

Gorlois's knights. The reason the deception behind the bedtrick has to be done with

trickery through magic, wine or darkness is because gender occurs as

> a stylized repetition of acts . . . which are internally discontinuous . . .[so that] the
> appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative
> accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors
> themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief.
> (*Gender Trouble* 192)

The bedtrick succeeds because the men sell the performance; they behave in a way that is

auspicious. In fact, in order to sleep with Igraine, Uther must necessarily get past the

knights guarding Tintagel, a point made in the chronicles. His outward appearance, as

well as the appearance of Merlin and Ulfin, is the first part of their performance as

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Gorlois and his men. At this stage, they rely mainly on costuming, i.e. they are dressed as Cornish knights. Uther, of course, has to successfully continue his performance as Gorlois in the bedroom, where he has only Gorlois's anatomy to work with, so to speak. His performance is successful: "Deceperat namque illam[Igerna] falsa specie quam assumpserat" (*De gestis* 187).[4] The performance is also successful because Igerna fulfilled her role as a wife in the bedchamber.

The bedtrick in the chronicles extends beyond the bedroom, both before and after the actual physical interaction between Uther and Igraine. In Malory, the bedtrick is related in one sentence: "King Uther lay with Igraine more than three hours after [the Duke's] death, and begot on her that night Arthur; and or day came, Merlin came to the King and bade him make him ready and so he kissed the Lady Igraine and departed in all haste" (5). As stated earlier, Malory's narrative style more closely resembles reporting rather than story telling. As a result, the reader has little to react to other than the fact that Igraine was tricked into having sex with Uther.

By contrast, the chronicles show Uther more heavily invested in the deception, and the bedtrick succeeds not only because Uther looks like Gorlois, but also because Uther is able to act like Gorlois in speech, mannerisms, and even fools the guards of his similarity. Additionally, Monmouth, Wace and Layamon extend the bedtrick beyond the physical likeness by having Uther deceive Igraine with his speech as well as with his body. Geoffrey of Monmouth specifies that Uther deceives Igraine not only with his disguise, but also states that:

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[4] Faletra's translation: "Indeed, even Igerna herself was taken in by the false shape that the king had assumed" (Geoffrey 159).

decepterat etiam ficticiis sermonibus quos ornate componebat; dicebat enim se egressum esse furtim ab obsesso oppido ut sibi tam dilectae rei atque oppido suo disponeret.   (*De gestis* 187)[5]

The bedtrick initially was more elaborate than a simple body-swap and, in fact, more daring since Uther runs the risk of revealing himself by speaking to Igraine. His speech is seductive and has the characteristics of wooing because he claims that he leaves his castle out of concern for her safety. Even though Uther has previously interacted with the Duke during encounters at court, the fact that Uther is able to perform in such a manner that encompasses the likeness of the Duke and mimic his speech style so distinctly is why he was able to infiltrate the bedchamber so readily. However, Malory omits these details, saying only that "King Uther lay with Igraine more than three hours after his death, and begot on her that night Arthur" (5). In Malory's account, Uther merely relies on the physical disguise or appearances to achieve the performance – in fact, Merlin specifically warns him not to talk too much to either Igraine or her men and instructs him to feign illness and go straight to bed and wait for sex. In the chronicles, the bedtrick previously was more elaborate in speech, mannerisms, and physical likeness. Additionally, in Geoffrey, Wace and Layamon, the messengers who arrive to report Gorlois's death are embarrassed, while an amused Duke (Uther disguised) is actually present and proclaims, "Non equidem interfectus sum sed ut ipsa uides uiuo" (*De gestis* 189).[6] Uther is not only the anatomical likeness of Gorlois, but apparently his speech is similar as well, because Igraine sits content next to the resemblance of her husband in a lit and public chamber. Also, in the chronicles, Uther marries Igraine right away and

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[5] Faletra's translation: "by the lying things that he said to her, things, which he planned with great skill. He said that he had come secretly from his besieged encampment so that he might make sure that all was well with her, whom he loved so dearly, and with his castle, too…" (207).
[6] Faletra's translation: "I am not dead, but I am living, as you can plainly see" (208).

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there is no discussion as to who begat Arthur on her, while Malory's version expresses how Igraine "marveled who that might be that lay with her in likeness of her lord; so she mourned privily and held her peace" (5).

The characterization in Malory's tale victimizes Igraine more so than in the other versions, because Layamon discloses that the advances of Uther may have been welcomed and Wace says "Igerne was modest and discreet" (3), indicating that her emotions were unknown. Nevertheless, Igraine is a victim in each account, however the modern reader may identify Igraine's resistance more so in Malory's version, as Igraine voices her disdain for the King's pursuits, going against gender and noble norms during the time by being faithful to her husband. Furthermore, Malory writes his work well after Chretien de Troyes crafted his stories for the bored ladies of the court, ideas about love that were then championed in the French prose romances of the fifteenth century that would have allowed Igraine to at least receive Uther's advances favorably.

Moreover, Malory's story differs from Geoffrey of Monmouth's chronicle, and the chronicles that followed by Wace and Layamon, for various reasons, namely because Malory emphasized the essential proximal characters associated with King Arthur, providing names for knights, and only a few women. Furthermore, in *Le Morte dArthur,* Malory gives Igraine a voice when she insists that she and her husband leave Uther's court. Conversely, the Duke is not as openly aggressive in Malory's tale, as in Monmouth, Wace's and Layamon's. In fact, Malory's version does not address the Duke's anger, only that he rode quickly from the court and hid Igraine away, while in the other versions previously mentioned the men are more aggressive and assertive. Uther even openly courts Igraine, while Gorlois, afraid to lose the love of his life, leaves

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angrily, full of wrath, due to Uther's covetous behavior. In turn, Uther responds more violently, asserting his masculinity. However, as Butler points out, "if gender is 'doing' rather than 'being,' a verb rather than a noun, it is not an action that is done by a volitional agent who is free to select her/his gender 'styles'" (Butler 91), indicating that the violent aspects of masculinity are not what it means to be masculine, but the prevalence of doing violent acts. Thus, when Uther responds more violently by burning, pillaging and seizing the villages around Tintagel in Geoffrey's version, Uther is adopting the mindset that kings must assert their power by destroying the possessions, citizens and villages of opposing parties. Yet, while the actions of Uther are more aggressive and evident in the sources of Malory, than in Malory's work itself, the actions of Uther are more significant than his words in Malory because "there is no 'being' behind doing, acting, becoming; the 'doer' is merely a fiction imposed on the doing – the doing itself is everything" (91). Uther's gender and in turn his power is established by what he does, the appearance of absolute power and control over the kingdoms. The identity of Uther is established and reaffirmed in his ability to take what he desires, because as the King, the old adage is upheld, no one refuses lest they lose their life. Uther's gender is performative because he must respond more violently in Monmouth, Wace and Layamon because the male refuses, believing that "he owed no faith to a lord who would supplant him in her heart" (Wace 3), and in Layamon Gorlois is told to come back and acknowledge his guilt, meaning he refused the King, then in Monmouth Gorlois took Igraine and left the court without permission. Ultimately, Uther is more aggressive in the earlier versions because the men view women as property, but also because the men establish their roles as leaders in society by maintaining respect. So, when Gorlois

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left the kingdom of Uther, he not only departed to insure the safety of his wife, but also openly refused the orders of the King.

On the other hand, Malory's Uther though not as aggressive, is still somewhat aggressive, but he does not possess the deceptions presented in the other texts. That is to say that Uther's likeness as the Duke does not go beyond anatomical realities, where Igraine sees her husband and shares the bedchamber with him. In Geoffrey, Wace and Layamon, Uther is even cocky after his encounter with Igraine, because his being, or becoming of Gorlois is factitious, meaning that his behavior is imposed on how he behaves. When the men come to report the death of Gorlois, the behavior of Uther is everything. He openly refutes his own death – actually Gorlois's – that in reality is dead. Thus, Uther's manipulative behavior is performative, because the deceptions are not only available to him because he appears in likeness of Gorlois, but he lives in a society where male dominance, and cockiness in attitude is both notable, respectable and noble.

Therefore, the patriarchal structures established in Geoffrey, Wace and Layamon are attributed to the chronicle natures of each version, as the authors were trying to reassert the power of the Britons, Anglo-Normans and so forth. The war torn tales emphasize the dominance and prevalence of noble kingdoms, specifically the attempt to historicize King Arthur, as an ancient King famous for his warrior status. On the other hand, though Malory's tale also emphasizes the patriarchy of the Round Table, and more women are mentioned, that does not necessarily mean the emotional depths of the characters are explored. The lack of emotional depth indicates that, while Layamon, Wace and Monmouth precede Malory's account, they examine the emotions of Igraine more readily. Malory's text makes it clear that Igraine is faithful to both husbands. As

the story begins, she tells the Duke of the King's advances, which results in their hasty departure. As the episode concludes, she answers Uther's question about her pregnancy honestly risking scandal or even death because the child was conceived three hours after her husband's death. In both cases the husbands' actions relieve Igraine's concerns.

Furthermore, how the characters in this episode see their own genders, and the roles they are assigned to perform as a means to an end with the unwilling partner being exploited through manipulation for personal gain. In fact, this is evident when Uther situates and eases his lust for Igraine by using a magical spell cast by Merlin to disguise himself as Igraine's husband. Merlin transforms Uther's body to have the Duke's body, assuming the anatomical likeness, perhaps the "sexual recognition and freedom" (Butler 96), were enough for Uther; yet, it begs the question Uther's utilization of the Duke's body indicates that the motion of the ocean is irrelevant. The anatomical realities of Uther, disguised as the Duke is physically possible, but Malory's text lacks the extent of the deception that is revealed in the speech, actions and demeanor of Gorlois in Monmouth, Wace and Layamon. Yet, the victimization of Igraine still remains problematic, even though the bedtrick is a literary device employed to move the plot along, then present the mystical birth of King Arthur. Even though, Igraine attempts to subvert the gender norms of the time by indicating that the advances of the King disturb her and in turn directing her husband that they should leave falls flat, as Igraine remains silent, upholding the shaming culture of victimization. Once more, this reiterates how the repetition of gender norms is oppressive within the Arthurian society, specifically in Igraine's case, because she does not have the freedom to question who impregnated her, but silently accepts her fantastical plight, she does not subvert the norm. However, as

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Butler points out "the reality of gender is also put into crisis: it becomes unclear how to distinguish the real from the unreal" (100), which is essentially Igraine's dilemma because Uther physically, in this adaptation, and in mannerisms in others, presupposes how Igraine could become a victim in the first place. Igraine, being a loving wife, was simply performing her wifely duties in the bedchamber; unbeknownst to her the man in her bed was not her husband. If Uther's likeness was a sameness, then how would she have been able to make the distinction? Yet, the bedtrick according to Simonds is an act of providence, meaning it was bound to happen, if not divinely so, that way the kingdom could advance and maintain the genealogy. The act of performativity is "repetition and a ritual" meaning that Igraine was merely participating in the acts that routinely happen in the bedchamber. Thus, Uther's deception of Igraine, presupposes the victimization of her, because "the appearance of gender to be mere artifice, play, falsehood, and illusion" (Butler 100), is the reason Uther was able to deceive so easily, as the physicality of his sex made him the likeness of Gorlois, whereas the biological was the same, his masculine performative behavior, in actions and mannerism as the Duke made the illusion succeed. Additionally, the fantasy concept is established when Igraine desires to sleep with her husband, who unbeknownst to her, is actually Uther in disguise as her husband in Malory's text.

Arthur's conception through a bedtrick is more than a literary device; it is also a trope in the story's larger mythology. As Peggy Munoz Simonds reiterates, in the Arthurian legend the bedtrick is used as a device "to provide for the conception of a divine child who *must be born* into the world of man" (Simonds 1). Munoz's observation will also apply to the discussion of the conception of Gallahad in Chapter 2. In other

words, figures of historical significance or characters larger than life often have unusual stories of conception and/or birth. Uther's bedtrick as described by Simonds is "a masculine version of deception, which leads to the birth of King Arthur himself" (2), because "the bed trick has been employed as an act of providence, this time within the legendary genealogy of the British kings" (Simonds 2). The bedtrick is used to satisfy Uther's desires for Igraine but also to reaffirm his role as King, taking whatever he pleases, reestablishing respect in the kingdom because Gorlois is made an example of what it means to disobey the orders of the king, while also bringing forth a man who will be renowned throughout history, according to Merlin.

CHAPTER 2

THE RESULTING MADNESS OF LANCELOT: ELAINE'S DECEPTION

In addition to bringing forth a great warrior, Malory once again utilizes the bed trick to bring about the birth of a pure hero, the one who will achieve the Holy Grail, Sir Galahad. Whereas the bedtrick involving Igraine – henceforth referred to as the Tintagel Bedtrick – followed the traditional formula of the man being the deceiver, in this case, the trickster is a woman and the tricked is a man. Elaine, with the help of her father King Pelles and the aide of Dame Brusen trick Lancelot into sleeping with her. Lancelot's adventure starts out fairly typically as he approaches a tower where a woman has been imprisoned for five years because of her beauty by Morgan le Fay and the Queen of Northgales out of jealousy. Elaine is trapped in boiling water. She is described as "the fairest lady … that he ever saw, and she was naked as a needle" (Malory 282). After Lancelot helps the local people by slaying a serpent, King Pelles asks him his name and learns his identity. Pelles is a descendent of Joseph of Arimathea. In the Christian New Testament, after the Crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea asks Pontius Pilate for Jesus's body, provides a tomb, and arranges for the burial. The Arthurian legend extends his story: Joseph is imprisoned for these acts but sustained by the Holy Grail during his captivity; upon his release, he brings the Grail to Britain. Joseph's descendent is Pelles; Pelles's descendent is Elaine; Elaine's descendent will be the one to achieve the Grail bringing the story back to its scriptural bloodline. Prophecy has already specified that Elaine will only conceive this descendent with Lancelot: "Sir Lancelot should beget a *pucel* upon his [Pelles's] daughter, which should be called Sir Galahad, the good knight,

by whom all the foreign country should be brought out of danger; and by him the Holy Grail should be achieved" (283).

Almost all of the women in Malory are attracted to Lancelot, but Elaine is genuinely in love with him – to the extent that characters are genuinely in love in Arthurian romances. Like Uther, Elaine pines for the object of her affection and longs for physical interaction. However, unlike Uther, Elaine's story is supported by a second motive, one not only prophesized by legend but founded in spirituality, literally connected to the body and blood of Christ. Therefore this second bedtrick, the union of Elaine and Lancelot, is more problematic than the Tintagel Bedtrick.

A significant difference between the two scenarios is that whereas Uther directs his own actions, her father orchestrates Elaine's liaison with Lancelot and the narrative initially focuses on him and his motives. In basic terms, Pelles is using his daughter to beget an heir, a common, reasonable practice among rulers. However, this heir will not rule his kingdom; instead he will regenerate the natural world out of the wasteland and restore the kingdom to health.

Whereas the motive may be loftier, the actual bedtrick follows the same basic formula as in Uther's deception of Igraine. The first challenge is that, like Igraine, Lancelot is already committed to someone else – albeit it a secret adulterous relationship with Arthur's Queen Guinevere. Therefore, like Uther, Elaine's father needs supernatural help. Just as Merlin is summoned to assist Uther, Dame Brusen "one of the greatest enchanters that was that time in the world" arrives to offer her services (Malory 283). Staging also plays a part in each performance. Just as Uther is flanked by two of his men that look like Gorlois's knights, Elaine awaits Lancelot in the castle of Case attended by

twenty-five knights, an entourage befitting of a queen. Costuming and props also play a

role, and Elaine further mimics the queen's behavior by having a ring sent to Lancelot as

a token of her presence and an implicit invitation to meet.[7] Transformations occur in both

cases but the party transformed varies: in the deception of Igraine, it is Uther's body that

is transformed by either potions or magic depending on the version; in the deception of

Lancelot, it is Lancelot's perception of reality that is transformed:

> And then Dame Brusen brought Sir Lancelot a cup of wine, and anon as he had
> drunk that wine he was so besotted and mad that he might make no delay; but
> without any let he went to bed, and so he weened that maiden Elaine had been
> Queen Guinevere.
>
> <div align="right">(Malory 284)</div>

Again the staging is critical: Malory rarely includes details in his narrative and yet here

he specifies that the not only is it nighttime but that all of the windows and "holes of the

chamber" are covered (284). The deception works, Lancelot is pleased, and Elaine

satisfies her longing for the man she desperately loves, because "she had got Sir Lancelot

in her arms" (284). For the sake of simplicity, I will refer to this event as the Case

Bedtrick from now on.

The Case Bedtrick ends abruptly, however, when Lancelot arises and opens a

window, shining light on the illusion, and thus breaking the enchantment revealing the

true nature of the deeds that had occurred in the bedchamber. By contrast, Igraine learns

that she has been tricked only when Uther chooses to tell her six months later when they

are married and she is expecting Arthur; theoretically this bedtrick could have gone

undetected – or at least unexplained. While Igraine accepts the news with a disturbing

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[7] Recall Boccaccio's *Decameron,* Tale 3.9, discussed on page 2 of the Introduction, where the sending of a
ring is also used as part of a bedtrick deception.

calmness, Lancelot draws his sword and calls Elaine a "traitress" (284), both the action and the verbal response consistent with his masculine performance.

Drawing a sword in response to an unexpected sexual or near-sexual encounter appears to be a common knightly reaction. For example, in an earlier episode, which is based on the early thirteenth-century French *Lancelot do Lac*, but also found in Malory's text, Lancelot falls asleep in another knight's pavilion. He awakens to find himself being caressed by the knight who has mistaken him for his lover. Feeling the rough beard, Lancelot is horrified, draws his sword and seriously wounds the knight (Malory 100). While the drawing of the sword is suggestively phallic, it reaffirms Lancelot's tendency to react with masculine aggression.

His dramatic response to Elaine's deception is accompanied by an equally dramatic outburst: "traitress" (284). While the accusation is almost a synonym for villain in Malory, here it is particularly appropriate: a bedtrick is indeed an act of betrayal and the perpetrator is indeed a traitor of the victim's trust. In the story's courtly love, Lancelot fidelity to Guinevere is widely known. In fact, their plot depends on it. Lancelot's reaction to being deceived is somewhat similar to Igraine's. Like Igraine, the bedtrick results in shame for Lancelot. However, while Igraine's shame is gender-based, Lancelot's is based in the tradition of Courtly Love, which requires him to do whatever he possibly can to please Guinevere. He realizes that even though he has been tricked into sleeping with Elaine, that he has betrayed Guinevere.

Elaine's only defense at that moment resides in her womb, and she proclaims, "slay me not; for I have in my womb begotten of thee that shall be the most noblest knight of the world" (Malory 284). Lancelot then forgives Elaine's trickery and kisses

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her. Elaine explains "for I have obeyed me unto a prophecy that my father told me. And by his commandment to fulfill this prophecy I have given thee the greatest riches and the fairest flower that I ever had, and that is my maidenhood that I shall never have again; and therefore, gentle knight, owe me your good will" (285).

Like Igraine, Lancelot is quickly satisfied with Elaine's clarification then departs from her, and Elaine begets Sir Galahad. Here we run into a problem of terminology of how to refer to Igraine and Lancelot: "the tricked?" "the deceived?" "victims?" Both Igraine and Lancelot accept their plights, but Igraine does so immediately with uncanny assent followed by joy, while Lancelot first expresses anger and outrage, a more reasonable or expected reaction. Furthermore, while Igraine conveniently disappears from the story, we see the later aftermath of the bedtrick for Lancelot who goes insane when Elaine tricks him into bed a second time. The tricked / the deceived / the victim of bedtrick often feels guilt because as Doniger points out, the trick can only succeed if the tricked / the deceived / the victim is to some extent complicit by participating in the fantasy of the event, something which is almost inevitable: "the lying of the trickster is the obviously false element in the bedtrick, but the lying of the victim, though less obvious, is often what sustains the mythology" (8). In other words, had Lancelot not lusted for Guinevere, Elaine would not have been able to lure him by sending the ring and trick him by disguising herself as Guinevere. Moreover, Lancelot's fantasies about sexual tryst itself contributed to the success of the bedtrick. And, even if Lancelot somehow recognized the trick and resisted Elaine's advances, his union with Elaine to beget Galahad was still destined by prophecy.

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Whereas Uther's bedtrick of Igraine results in a marriage and sustained relationship, Elaine is not so lucky. A complication that Igraine avoids is that there is no third party to appease after the bedtrick, whereas Lancelot faces Guinevere's wrath. He assures her that he slept with Elaine only because she appeared in her likeness (Malory 285).

When she arrives at Camelot, Lancelot is so ashamed of his reaction after the Case Bedtrick that he snubs Elaine, which devastates her. She attempts to trick Lancelot a second time while they are at the castle in Camelot, and it is this second bedtrick that more closely parallels the deception of Igraine. In fact, it takes two bedtricks to achieve the two effects of the bedtrick perpetrated by Uther on Igraine: the bedtrick at Tintagel quenched Uther's desire for Igraine *and* conceived Arthur, whereas Elaine's first bedtrick was undertaken to conceive Galahad, and the second was undertaken to satisfy her longing which is expressed in terms not unlike Uther's desperate desire for Igraine. Again Lancelot thinks that he is going to Guinevere's bed, and again Dame Brusen leads him to Elaine's chamber. The Camelot Bedtrick is revealed when the Queen overhears Lancelot talking in his sleep and purposely coughs loud enough to wake him. She meets him in the hallway and calls him a traitor. He responds by leaping out of a window and running mad for two years (Malory 288). The consequences of the Camelot Bedtrick continue to affect not only Lancelot but also Elaine, because Queen Guinevere tells Elaine to avoid the court from now on. The consequences of the bedtrick, cause Lancelot guilt and mourning, but also cause the knights of the court to mourn the loss of their best knight.

Then after searching for Lancelot for two years, Elaine finds him because her cousin Sir Castor describes a knight as "Sir Lancelot was so arrayed like a knight, he was

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the seemliest man in all the court, and none made so well" (Malory 297). Subsequently when Elaine hears this description, she asks to see the knight, and encounters Lancelot again in a forest, but Lancelot is wounded. Lancelot is found in the garden by Elaine and her maidens, and they "espied where lay a goodly man by the well sleeping" (297). Elaine knew that the man was Lancelot due to their previous encounter. After recognizing Sir Lancelot, "she fell on weeping so heartily that she sank even to the earth. And when she had thus wept a great while, then she arose and called her maidens and said she was sick. And so she yode out of the garden as straight to her father as she could" (297). Elaine seeks the advice of her father and the King says "then hold you still and let me deal" (297). The King once again arranges a meeting with Dame Brusen. Brusen recommends dealing carefully with Lancelot because "this knight is out of his mind" (298). The enchantress casts a spell on Lancelot so "that he shall not awake of an hour" (298). Lancelot awakes and stricken with grief tells Elaine "I drew my sword to you to have slain you upon the morn after when I had lain with you, and all was for the cause that ye and Dame Brusen made me for to lie by you in maugre my head, and as ye say, Sir Galahad you son was begotten" (298-299). Lancelot goes mad with sorrow and Elaine professes her love saying "I will live and die with you, only for your sake; and if my life might not avail you and my death might avail you, wit you well I would die for your sake" (299). Conversely though, the previous sexual encounter with him is not forgotten by Lancelot, but emphasizes the bed-trick deceiving a man, not once but twice, which is significant because the typical bedtrick is man tricking a woman. The bedtrick events cause Lancelot to lapse into insanity for a time. Additionally, Elaine's tale is reminiscent of the biblical tale of Jacob, Leah and Rachel, where Leah and Rachel's father promise

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Jacob the hand of Rachel in marriage after Jacob works for seven years, but Laban sends in his daughter Leah instead of Rachel.

On the other hand, Elaine also uses magic to convince Lancelot that she is the likeness of Guinevere's features and body twice, once more indicating that the biological implications of sex are more important in these scenes than the performative acts of gender roles. However, Butler claims "it is not possible to oppose the 'normative' forms of gender without at the same time subscribing to a certain normative view of how the gendered world ought to be" (Malory 99). Suggesting that subverting normative gender roles would be freeing, which in the cases of Uther and Elaine, the sexual actions encourage freedom in the physical acts of sex. In *Gender and the Chivalric Community in Malory's Morte d'Arthur,* Dorsey Armstrong starts with the premise "the *Morte d'Arthur* focuses on the masculine activity of chivalry—fighting, questing, ruling—while simultaneously revealing the chivalric enterprise as impossible without the presence of the feminine in a subjugated position" (1). Lancelot desires to be the best upstanding knight that he can, to try and maintain the courtly love, chivalric and Christian triangle presented in Chretien de Troyes' *Arthurian Romances*; however, Lancelot is unable to uphold his knightly duties in Malory's text because, as Jerome Mandel observes, "until Lancelot is tricked into bed with Elaine, all of his actions may be attributed to constraints placed upon him" (248). Consequently, the performative constraints are associated with his reputation at court, meaning that once his pride as a knight deteriorates when he learns that he has betrayed Guinevere, his mental stability begins to wax thin as well.

Then Butler explores Freud's idea of *melancholia*, stating that "we did not appreciate the full significance of this process and did not know how common and how

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typical it is" (Salih 246) and "we have come to understand that this kind of substitution

has a great share in determining the form taken by the ego and that it makes an essential

contribution toward building up what is called 'character'" (246). Indicating that the

process of melancholia determines the character or integrity of a person. As Freud

explains that "when it happens that a person has to give up a sexual object, there quite

often ensues an alteration of his ego which can only be described as setting up of the

object inside the ego, as it occurs in melancholia" (246). The reason melancholia is such

a central force in the depiction of Lancelot after he learns about Elaine's trickery could be

because "Malory's narrative unintentionally produces and depends upon a certain model

of gender identity that not only creates much of the narrative action but also heightens the

significance and impact of many episodes and events drawn from his source material"

(Armstrong 7). Additionally, Lancelot's role as a knight defines his identity, but also

maintains and reasserts his power as the most beloved knight in King Arthur's court.

Thusly, when Lancelot's deeds are seen as betrayals and his reputation tarnished, he sinks

into madness, because his performance as a knight is undermined by Elaine's trickery.

Thus, melancholia is the deep sadness or even a deep depression caused by

gloomy feelings or an outlook on life. Demonstrating, perhaps, why Lancelot sinks into

madness or a deep depression upon learning that Elaine has deceived him, because

"gender identifications or rather, the identifications that become central to the formation

of gender are produced through melancholic identification" (Salih 247). Lancelot, having

perceived his manhood challenged and in turn his seed made into an illegitimate child

causes his gender identification as a noble and faithful man within the courtly love

structure to become questionable. Furthermore, the chivalric code, which is the basis for

Lancelot's characterization as a knight, identifies "love as a force which compels men to support wrongful causes and to behave in less than rightful ways in war" (Mandel 244). Also, the medieval romance literary genre tends to emphasize more so "the fulfillment of desire" as a motive (Mandel 244). The motives for Elaine are out of desire to first fulfill the prophecy, and then the satiate her longing for her beloved Lancelot. Her motives to look like Queen Guinevere are situated by the desire to achieve the unattainable noblest knight Sir Lancelot. Elaine rejects the courtly love system, reversing the roles of the unattainable woman, to be the unattainable man. She subverts her gender role within the normative behaviors of the society in order to achieve her "fulfillment of desire" (Mandel 244).

Additionally, the deeds of the knights are emphasized more so than the feelings of the knights (Mandel 246), which is why Lancelot becomes distraught when Elaine deceives him, because his reputation as a knight comes into question as well as his courtly devotion to and relationship with Guinevere. Consequently, this is why Queen Guinevere exiles Lancelot, because as a knight entangled in the courtly love system, Lancelot is supposed to adore and cherish only one (preferably unattainable) woman, that being Guinevere. Thus, when the misdeeds of Lancelot are learned, he is punished, rightly so within the confines of the courtly love system.

Furthermore, Lancelot's character is determined by his masculine displays of grandeur. The characterization of Lancelot in Malory's text, is derived from Chretien de Troyes creation of Lancelot as the best knight; however, while Lancelot in Malory's text is considered King Arthur's best knight by secular standards, yet he does not achieve the Grail, which is a purely spiritual quest. Mandel emphasizes that, "Lancelot, Malory's

hero and the best expression of an extraordinary civilization, is motivated … by the twin forces of love and war that are central to any romance" (Mandel 247). Lancelot is almost always quick to draw a sword, to attack others with a masculine aggression, possibly to reaffirm his role as a valiant knight. Thus, the formation of inherently ingrained masculine gender identification produces melancholia for Lancelot, especially when his gender role is challenged and subverted.

Therefore, as Mandel indicates, "Lancelot is a prisoner of his reputation as 'the floure of knyghthode'" (249). The performative nature of the masculine knight viewed through Butler's lens, is that of "a false stabilization of gender in the interests of the heterosexual construction and regulation of sexuality within the reproductive domain" (37). Even though, Lancelot is deceived, he accepts his son, but this is also in conflict with his love for Guinevere, because in some texts Lancelot marries Elaine after impregnating her. The performative nature of gender roles as Butler explains:

> Gender proves to be performative-that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be… there is not gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performativity constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results…the action of gender requires a performance that is *repeated.*
> (*Gender Trouble* 34, 191)

Therefore, when Lancelot descends into a melancholic state it is due to his loss of chivalric code, while Elaine's motivations are driven by "parental obligation and prophesy as well as motivated by her own desires" (Mandel 250). Therefore, Butler's definition is that "masculine and feminine are not the expression of the preexisting gender identity, but rather, the appearance or repeated performance of these signs or marks is gender itself" (38), when applied to Malory's story explains the societal constructions necessitating Elaine's desires for a noble knightly heir. Furthermore, the

motives of Lancelot are "to ride out on adventures and to sleep with Guinevere, to pursue

love and war, the basic motives of knights in medieval romances" (Mandel 250). So,

when Lancelot's gender identity as defined by the social construction of the chivalric

code is broken, when he is deceived assuming that the woman is Guinevere, his lustful

motives to sleep with Guinevere are what drive him to sleep with Elaine. As Armstrong

explicates, "theme—the love of a man for an unattainable woman—immediately praise

this motif with the masculine display of violence intrinsic to chivalric literature" (44).

The bedtrick succeeds because of Lancelot's lustful desires, though problematic for the

modern reader due to the notion of "sameness" and "similar" being wholly different

things, the women play a role in the alliance of power and kinship, women are gifted to

other men, serving as the reinforcement of social alliances (Armstrong 48). Elaine utilizes

an opportunity to align herself with the most renowned knight. However, this is also why

Lancelot's madness is not wholly ambiguous because Lancelot has broken the courtly

code, because "his lust for Elaine also accounts for his delay in admitting his indiscretion

to the queen. Malory portrays Lancelot as unfaithful to Guinevere both in thought and

body. The shock of this realization fells him and turns his mind" (Mandel 252). Though

Mandel's assertion seems to be a bit of a reach, Lancelot does think that Elaine, "was the

fairest woman that he ever saw in his life days" (Malory 286); however, that does not

mean that Lancelot lusted for Elaine as Elaine, because each of the subsequent bedtricks

where the deception is performed she is made to look like Guinevere, not herself.

Therefore, Mandel's assessment is not wholly correct in this regard, but Lancelot's mind

turns to madness because he feels the guilt of being unfaithful even though he knows that

the likeness of Guinevere was a trick. Lancelot's mourning the loss of Guinevere leads to

his melancholia; this melancholia, in turn, prevents him from identifying and performing as a knight.

The deception of Elaine leads to Lancelot's madness, but the performative nature and constraints of the courtly love code are what ultimately lead to Lancelot's insanity. In Malory's tale, "madness means a disregard for the civilizing forces of society that motivate and constrain people to behave in a socially approved manner" (Mandel 253). Therefore, the madness because Lancelot did not foresee a woman trying to deceive him, so his madness becomes associated with political agency. Elaine reasserts her power at court, as her desires are tied to her political motivations to begat an honorable knight who will heal her father's kingdom. Additionally, the bedtrick is merely the means to gain what she desires, and in turn a tool she uses, as "she lectures Guinevere on what her relationship ought to be to her husband, telling her that she has a lord of her own, and therefore ought to love him and him alone" (Mandel 256). However, even Elaine's assertions, even if there is truth in them, imply that the courtly love system is fraught with inconsistencies, which is also why the deception of the bedtrick is possible. The implications are that the bedtrick not only helps lead to the cessation of the desire, but establishes the political alliances of two parties. Recall that the barons urge Uther to marry Igraine to establish peace with the kingdom of Cornwall. Ultimately, the medieval political sphere dictates the narrative backdrop of Malory's tale, because "knights in Malory always read women as vulnerable, helpless and ever in need of the services of a knight…constructs them as "feminine" in the chivalric sense—helpless, needy, rape-able" (Mandel 36), and when this is turned on its head the most noble knight descends into madness. Thus, the bed-trick as Doniger demonstrates is something scholars should

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consider further, because the idea of "sameness" and "similar" are two paradoxical aspects of the bed-trick. She considers the argument of night-blindness, but asserts that deconstructing vision is not attributed to feminist scholars in regards to sexual deviousness due to ambiguity of gender asymmetry (Doniger 6). Here Doniger defines gender asymmetry as the challenge where, "men and women do not always feel the same about the power of sex to reveal either the distinct individualism of the sameness of partners in the dark" (6). The implications of what occurs under the guise of darkness emphasizes how the complexities of the double reaffirm how "sameness" and "similar" are further convoluted by the bedtrick costuming, disguised and the way the visual deception along with the performativity aspects could turn someone's mind to madness, just as Lancelot suffers a form of post-traumatic stress from the incidents of deception with Elaine.

CHAPTER 3

THE MISTREATMENT BY A MISTRESS: ISOLDE'S SCANDAL

Gottfried Von Strassburg's *Tristan* contains the most problematic bedtrick in this study. Von Strassburg makes use of the bedtrick through the social relationship between a noble lady, Isolde, and her companion Brangane. Von Strassburg begins the tale with a moral, "thus love instructs honest minds to practise perfidy, though they ought not to know what goes to make a fraud of this sort. This is what the lovers [Tristam and Isolde] did" (Von Strassburg 205). Von Strassburg's tale emphasizes courtly love, while relaying the chivalric deeds of the knight, Tristan: Tristan is the nephew of King Mark of Cornwall. Cornwall is in conflict with Ireland because the Irish King Gurmun refuses to pay the tribute he owes to King Mark. Acting on behalf of King Mark, Tristan fights Morold, the champion of the Irish king. Tristan defeats Morold but becomes mortally wounded by a poisonous sword and has to seek the remedy from Queen Isolde of Ireland. Tristan is accepted into the court in the guise of a minstrel, where in turn he meets the fair and beautiful daughter of the Queen, also named Isolde. Tristan tutors the younger Isolde in the courtly arts, and thus the affectionate relationship begins.

Upon returning home to King Mark's court, Tristan tells his uncle that he believes Isolde would be a fair match for him stating, "Isolde … is a girl so lovely that all the world has ever said of beauty is nothing beside hers. Radiant Isolde is a girl of such charm, both in person and in manner, that none was born, nor ever will be so enchanting and exquisite" (Von Strassburg 151). Motivated by their own political agendas, the Cornish lords persuade Mark to seek Isolde's hand in marriage. Tristan agrees and sails

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to Ireland, where he knows that King Gurmun will give Isolde to whoever kills the dragon terrorizing his land. Tristan kills the dragon and, after a series of complications, tells Isolde, Isolde's mother and Brangane that he killed the dragon to obtain Isolde as a wife for his uncle, King Mark. Isolde's family is happy and her father declares that the feud between the two countries over.

As Isolde prepares to depart to marry King Mark, Isolde's mother attempts to secure her daughter's happiness in this arranged marriage to an older man. She makes a powerful love potion and entrusts it to Brangane, begging her to keep it safe until Isolde and Mark's wedding night. The love potion is meant to bind the two together forever through passionate desire and longing for only each other. However, as the ship pulls onto shore during rough weather and Tristan calls for wine, one of the "very young ladies in waiting" finds the potion, brings it to him and he shares it with Isolde (194-95). Immediately afterwards Brangane enters and realizes what has happened: "Alas, poor me…alas that ever I was born! Wretch that I am, how I have ruined my honour and trust! May God show everlasting pity that I ever came on this journey and that death failed to snatch me" (Von Strassburg 195). She is distraught because Queen Isolde had trusted her saying, "I most dearly and urgently commend Isolde to your care. The better part of my life is bound up in her. Remember that she and I are in your hands, by all your hopes of Paradise!" (Von Strassburg 192). Brangane being the rational overseer of Isolde, acknowledges that the incident was her fault, and consumed with guilt explains, "Ah, Tristan and Isolde, this draught will be your death" (Von Strassburg 195). Tristan and Isolde's physical union is inevitable; despite their best efforts to resist. Like Uther and Elaine, they each desire their beloved so greatly that it is beyond painful and they

succumb to these desires. In fact, Brangane, seeing their anguished desire, essentially gives her blessings but asks them to be discreet. By the time they arrive in Cornwall, Tristan, Isolde and Brangane share a common problem. Although Von Strassburg specifies only the two lovers, their guilt-ridden chaperon is also clearly implicated in the following:

> Fear for their reputations and standing began to rack their hearts. They could not think what to do to keep the king in ignorance that Isolde was a maid no longer. Yet however un-resourceful youthful lovers are in their inexperience, a ruse was vouchsafed to the girl.   (204)

The "ruse" is the bedtrick, of course, and it hinges on Brangane. Brangane's character is in an odd place. Until this point in the story, her function somewhat resembles Merlin and Dame Brusen, both of whom have transforming potions and, like Chaucer's Pandarus, come to the aid of a pining lover. At this point however, the dynamic changes and Brangane shifts from her role as the Merlin/Brusen figure to the role of the trickster. However, even this is not quite true, because she is not acting of her own volition or agency, but rather at the desperate request of Isolde:

> Young though she was, Isolde devised the best ruse that she could at this juncture, namely that they should simply ask Brangane to lie at Mark's side during the first night in perfect silence and keep him company. He could be denied his due in no better way, since Brangane was beautiful and a virgin. … They begged and implored Brangane till they brought her to the point where she promised to do the deed. But she promised it most reluctantly. It was not just once that she turned red and then pale at this request under the stress of great emotion: after all, it was a strange one. (205)

Therefore, while the motive behind the Tintagel Bedtrick is purely lust, the motive behind the Case Bedtrick is a conception foretold by prophecy, and the motive behind the Camelot Bedtrick is (once again) lust, the bedtrick about to happen in this story will occur for entirely practical purposes. Each of the main characters has to hide a betrayal.

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Isolde needs to protect her honor. Her groom expects his bride to be a virgin and she is not. Tristan needs to protect his loyalty to Mark. He was supposed to escort Isolde to Cornwall to marry his uncle and on the way he slept with her. Brangane needs to protect her faithfulness to Isolde's mother. She promised to keep the potion safe until Isolde and Mark's wedding night and instead she left it unattended. For this final bedtrick, the Cornwall Bedtrick, three characters each have a motive to deceive King Mark.

Like the other bedtricks, the Cornwall Bedtrick is carefully planned by three conspirators and performed under the guise of darkness. Thus far, each individual has had a prescribed role in the bedtrick performance: the person actually performing the trick, the helper who causes the transformation, and someone who lends credibility to the illusion. For the Tintagel Bedtrick, Uther is the trickster, Merlin is the helper and Ulfin lends credibility. For the Case and Camelot Bedtricks, Elaine is the trickster, Dame Brusen is the helper and King Pelles lends credibility. However, these roles are somewhat harder to define in the Cornwall Bedtrick. By now it is apparent that bedtricks are not simply deceptions – they are performances requiring staging, costuming and even scripting (i.e. they are *not* supposed to say anything).

Because Von Strassburg writes in a more detailed style, the Cornwall Bedtrick provides a much more detailed description of what actually happens during the trick. After the ceremony, Mark retires to his bedchamber. Isolde functions as the helper, transforming Brangane into her likeness but using wardrobe instead of potions, and Tristan enhances the credibility of the moment, escorting the bride and later bringing the wine for the toast: "Brangane had donned the Queen's robes – they had exchanged clothes between them – and Tristan now led her towards him to suffer her ordeal. Her

mistress Isolde put out the lights and Mark strained Brangane to him" (Von Strassburg

207). The notable difference lies in Brangane's performance. Unlike Uther and Elaine,

she endures the bedtrick out of guilt and duty rather than performs it out of lust and

yearning. Whereas Igraine and Lancelot fulfill the tricksters' yearnings, it is Brangane

who meets Mark's demands "to his satisfaction" (207). Once "she had done duty for

Isolde and her debt had been discharged," Brangane and Isolde switch places, the

chamber is lit up, and Isolde drinks the customary toast with her husband (207). She and

Mark then "resume" their amorous encounter:

> To him [Mark] one woman was as another: he soon found Isolde, too, to be of
> good deportment. There was nothing to choose between them – he found gold and
> brass in either. Moreover, they both paid him their dues, one way and another, so
> that he noticed nothing amiss.
>
> (208)

In short, the trick works. While modern readers tend to sympathize with Lancelot and

more so with Igraine, Mark's apathy evokes an equally apathetic response.

Brangane barely qualifies as a trickster. Unlike Uther and Elaine, Brangane is

only superficially in control of her situation, a fact made ironic by Isolde's immediate

concerns:

> While these two lay in bed disporting themselves, Isolde was in great fear and
> anguish. 'Lord God help and preserve me lest my cousin prove unfaithful to me!'
> Such was her constant thought. 'If she plays this bed-game over-long and too
> intently I fear she will take such a likeing to it that she will lie there till daylight,
> and we shall be all the talk of the town!' But no, Brangane's thoughts and feelings
> were true and unsullied.   (207)

Isolde recognizes that Brangane is the only threat to her secret love affair with Tristan

and worries that her cousin might even love Mark and "divulge her shameful deed to

him" and she arranges for her murder (208).

In "Brangane: Isolde's Alter Ego," medieval scholar Henry Hall Peyton III argues that Isolde must prove her virginity in the marriage bed, because, as Kathleen Coyne Kelly points out, "virginity…was crucial to female sexual and gender identity in medieval Western Europe" (Peyton 96). As the summary above demonstrates, this part of the tale is as much about Isolde's relationship with Brangane as it is about her love for Tristan.

The theme of substitution permeates this text and the scholarly discussion of this text. The contrast between the women is emphasized in Tristan's description right after he kills the dragon as he hails "Isolde, the bright Sun" and "Brangane, the fair Full Moon" (Peyton 166). The sun and the moon imagery is replaced by precious metals with gold being better than brass, even the highest quality brass: on the wedding night, Brangane meets Mark's desires "to his satisfaction with brass and with gold. I am convinced that it can rarely have happened before that such fine brass was passed as bed-money for payment due in gold. Indeed I would wager my life on it that false coin of such nobility had never been struck since Adam's day, nor had so acceptable a counterfeit ever been laid beside a man" (Peyton 207). Doniger explores how "Brangane substitutes (unofficially) for Isolde to atone for her sin in serving the love potion that made the servant Tristan substitute (unofficially) for the king" (277). Implying that the substitution of Brangane goes unnoticed because one could assume this was the first time Isolde slept with King Mark, or that because "he has no basis for comparison; but even when he *does* have such a basis, he cannot tell the difference" (Doniger 277). Even though, Mark in a drunken state is unable to ascertain who slept with him in the marriage bed, the implications of the bedtrick performed by a woman on another woman is situated

as a practical devotion to hide the realism and implications of the love potion. Still, Isolde

is performing because as Doniger explicates:

> The woman who does this is oppressing another woman to avoid her own
> oppression, for any bedtrick inflicts sexual damage on both the bedtrickster and
> the victim, but the bedtrickster in a double-cross is doubly humiliated,
> simultaneously as victim (of the first quasi bedtrick, the levirate or droit du
> seigneur) and trickster (of the second bedtrick, the subversion).
>
> (276)

Furthermore, Isolde utilizes and seizes the opportunity to place the guilt on Brangane

because her servant was the one in charge of the love potion. Isolde removes the guilt

from herself, negating her friendship with Brangane, merely seeing her as a pawn to be

used in the bedtrick. The socially constructed hierarchy is what necessitates Isolde's

feelings of superiority and in turn her desire to have Brangane preform the sexual acts on

Isolde's wedding night.

However, Isolde has second thoughts about having her maid bed her new

husband, and she begins to have "great fear and anguish" that her plan will be foiled by

her maid if "she plays this bed-game over-long" (Von Strassburg 207), meaning she

believes that Brangane will have enjoyed the marriage deeds too greatly and stay until the

sunrises. After Brangane consummates the marriage bed, there is a tradition where the

husband and wife share a cup of wine. As the light shines brighter Isolde assumes the role

"with secret pain in her heart" and she then "laid herself down beside her lord the King

who, clasping her close to him, then resumed his pleasures. To him one woman was as

another" (Von Strassburg 208). King Mark is fooled and assumes that his wife had lain

beside him the entire night. Doniger attributes the success of the bedtrick to Mark's lack

of perceptiveness: "Mark notices neither the switch nor the switch back (to Isolde),

because it is dark, he is drunk from the wedding feast, nobody says a word, and it's in

everyone's best interest to allow the deceit to succeed" (277). Furthermore, while Doniger discusses other bedtricks where a maidservant takes the place of their mistress, the reason Brangane's is significant is because her mistress essentially rapes her by guilting her / ordering her / blackmailing her into taking her place on the wedding night. However, Doniger is quick to point out that "Brangane's position is unusual, for her personality, her individuality, prevail as she decides her fate. Servant she may be, but she acts and thinks independently" (Doniger 97). In other words, Brangane, is the victim, but also understands the consequences if Isolde's consummation with Tristan is discovered, which means Isolde will be put to death; this is why Brangane allows the bedtrick to happen, due to the guilt and shaming culture of the time. So, in turn Brangane is wholly pragmatic determined to save Isolde from the implications of the love potion. Yet, Isolde acknowledges that Brangane is a threat, and this places Brangane is grave danger, because, "other than the lovers, she is the only living creature who knows the subterfuge with King Mark, so that Isolde begins to fear her" (Peyton 97).

However, Isolde is unable to suppress her fear that Brangane will betray her and decides that "once Brangane were gone" her scandal will not be found out (208). Isolde devises a plan to murder Brangane, which becomes the political implications of the bedtrick, and how the performance of deception leads to greater atrocities. Isolde orders that her servant take her maid "secretly to a forest somewhere – no matter if it is a long way off or near to hand" and her servants are advised to "cut off her head" (Von Strassburg 208). Brangane is then told by her captors that she is condemned to die by the new Queen and "what must be, must be. Your mistress Isolde has ordained that you shall die" (209). Brangane – still the faithful maid and companion of Isolde – proclaims, "My

death I do forgive her. I commend my soul to God, my body to your bidding" (210). Even in death Brangane does not have control over her body but is bound by her secrets and promises to the Queen to carry out the wishes of Isolde. Brangane's body is not hers after the performance. Von Strassburg even explores the inner turmoil of Isolde as she turns against Brangane, believing that the extreme circumstances necessitate actions that would subvert the normative gender roles, yet at the same time Isolde prescribes to the notions that her virginal status is deemed the most important notion, rightly so, because during the medieval period virginal status would mean either life or death. The performative nature of the socially constructed female behavior during the time was constrictive and detrimental for Isolde and Brangane's relationship, as maiden and maid, in some texts as cousins, in others as niece and Aunt. However, the situation is indicative of just how Von Strassburg's characterization of Brangane is disconcerting, because her "role in the Middle High German romance was indeed unsettling because she behaves nobly and is treated badly by Isolde" (Peyton 94). Moreover, Brangane is the plot device that propels the actions in the text, she is the nucleus around which the text develops. The performance of Isolde and Brangane establish the power struggle and necessitates the bedtrick as an acceptable social guise for an arranged marriage established to unite to feuding kingdoms. She traveled with the couple to Cornwall from Ireland, she is the overseer and the secret keeper of their trysts together, and she covers for them whenever they are about to be discovered by King Mark. Furthermore, Peyton indicates that Brangane and Isolde are entangled, not just due to their relationship as maid and mistress, but because Brangane's "personality is intertwined with that of Isolde to the extent that at times the two function as parts of a whole. Isolde is overwhelmingly a spirit of passion

and Brangane is the rational and pragmatic" (Peyton 94). Therefore, if Isolde and Brangane are two parts to a whole, Isolde's treatment of Brangane is also a mistreatment of herself as a woman. She places Brangane's virginal status as something to be utilized to her own advantage, disregarding the fact that one day Brangane may need to prove her virginity in her own marriage bed. While Isolde is painted as the villain in the tale because she oppresses another woman, sadly Brangane accepts her plight due to her oversight about the love potion.

Furthermore, Isolde determined to maintain her secret realizes that Brangane could reveal the results of the love potion, in turn making the status of Isolde as Queen come into question, and even reasserting the role of Brangane as Queen. Thus, after some time, "Isolde's unbridled inner strife dictates extreme measures which she will later regret. She orders the murder of Brangane" (Peyton 97). Isolde orders that Brangane be brought to the forest to be murdered and in order to prove the act was completed Isolde commands that her servant to cut out Brangane's tongue and bring it back to her. Yet, the servant is unable to complete the task, and "balks at the last minute and kills a deer instead, taking back its tongue as proof of the murder…the physical proof provided by Brangane's tongue is a double of the physical proof of the dragon's tongue that Tristan used earlier to prove that he…killed the dragon" (Doniger 277). Therefore, the symbolism is that wagging tongues are what entangle and weave the web of lies that Isolde finds herself wrapped up in, whereas the bedtricks performed earlier are more out of political establishments of alliances, Isolde's is an alliance of two kingdoms, but her motive is found in concealing a secret. Firstly, the tongue the servant brings back is false, but the tongue that Tristan presented to rightfully win the hand of Isolde was true. Yet,

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the reason Brangane is sent to her death in the first place is due to the deception and concealment of the consequences of the love potion and thus in turn the performance of the bedtrick. Furthermore, the bedtrick in a part of the elaborate performative aspects of Isolde pretending to be a virginal maiden, Tristan trying to be a faithful and noble knight, and Brangane obligated to right a wrong and serve her mistress the best way she can. However, the fact that the bedtrick even occurs is intriguing because, Doniger remarks on how body language and the changing of "a person's speech patterns, nuances, rhythm and accent are all identifiable marks, but they can be hidden or changed as part of an effective disguise" (189). Yet, Brangane merely dresses in Isolde's clothing, she does not talk, which is coincidently what she does throughout the text in order to hide Tristan and Isolde's relationship. Through her silence, she was able to continually maintain the concealment of the couple's affair, but through her actions she was able to achieve the bedtrick, the deception and manipulation of King Mark. Even though Brangane willingly accepts her participation in the performative role as a virgin, her secrecy comes into question for Isolde leading to the death of possibly all of the parties who participated in the bedtrick, indicating that what Brangane said about the potion being the death of Tristan and Isolde, would become a fulfilled prophecy for not only them, but possibly herself as well.

After deciding to murder her maid, Isolde changes her mind and regrets the fact that she ordered the beheading of her maid. Isolde says "I entrusted my maid to you so that you could escort her to a place where she was to fetch me something for my ailment. You will have to give her back to me, or it will cost you your lives" (Von Strassburg 211). In fact, "because the squires have not fully carried out their orders (that is,

Brangane is still alive), they bring her to court again where she is warmly received by the penitent Isolde, whom the ever-devoted Brangane forgives" (Peyton 97). Brangane is returned to Isolde and the two become inseparable because Brangane was of "upright character" (211). Once more, Brangane's obligation to her courtly duties, not her emotions, are reasserted and reaffirms her pragmatic role, as a pawn to be used by Isolde, but also the rational voice of reason within the castle, she is the one who aides in the plan, and the one who provides wordy speeches as to why Tristan and Isolde are often found together to King Mark. Therefore, Isolde's worries are unfounded because Brangane remains a true friend and servant to her lady. Yet, Brangane seeks revenge on Isolde after the knight Cariado accuses Brangane of sleeping with the cowardly knight Caerdin, because "she has borne Isolde's attempt to murder her, and she has sacrificed her virginity for Isolde, but she can stand no more. Isolde's rational, loyal second-self at this one time reflects the passions of Isolde's ego" (Peyton 99). Eventually, Brangane's anger diminished when she learns of the dying Tristan residing in Brittany, who is in need of Isolde's healing techniques. In almost every scenario Brangane comes to the aid of Isolde, recusing her from her troubles, while Isolde so consumed with the passions and desires for Tristan (due to the love potion), Isolde neglects her friend rather seeing her as an opportunity to continue her affairs.

Additionally, Isolde's motive for tricking King Mark is also performative, because she is trying to protect herself from the societal consequences; however, she is concealing her loss of virginal status, which is irrelevant because Mark does not acknowledge or even recognize the distinctions between Isolde and Brangane in the bedchamber. Doniger suggests that "the general themes of inattentiveness to sexual

others takes three forms: men do not usually notice (a) women, (b) people of other races or classes, and (c) people who simply do not interest them" (448). Indicating that inattentiveness is one of the reasons the bedtrick occurs. Mark is concerned with the biological act of sex with a woman, but he also pragmatically engages in the act in order to sustain the dichotomy of the kingdom, an alliance between Ireland and Cornwall. Even though Mark is a victim, because he is deceived and easily so due to his drunken state, Brangane is also the victim in the circumstances, because her body becomes the means of the trick. She is forced to take Isolde's place on her wedding night, and, as Gottfried reveals, is perhaps even determined to help her mistress and cousin Isolde out of guilt (Doniger 178). Ironically, Isolde, who is absent from the occurrence, is raping Brangane in this scene, in turn making the act performative because Brangane's body is disposable to her mistress, due to the socially constructed hierarchal systems of lords and ladies. Furthermore, "both the bedtrickster and the victim suffer a kind of debasement, each in his or her own way" (Doniger 84), because the relationship between Isolde and Brangane becomes strained, full of suspicion and more deception. In fact, as Doniger points out, "the injured feelings of Brangane, Isolde's maid who substitutes for Isolde on the wedding night with King Mark, are an important ingredient in the subsequent plot, as are the feelings of other women whose mistress employ them in the a double-cross" (83). Brangane neglects her feelings seeing that her job was performative, a necessary evil in order to maintain her promise to Isolde's mother and also her duty as a maid servant, which is why Isolde accepts her silence. Yet, later on Brangane acknowledges somewhat the injustices she has suffered at the hands of Isolde when a knight tries to defame Brangane and sully her reputation as sleeping with the most coarse and cowardly knight.

Yet, Isolde continually frees herself from the bedchamber, neglecting the feelings of Brangane, by asking and even forcing Brangane in some versions of the tale to have sex with King Mark, breaking the normal gender roles of a wife (contrary to Igraine, who was performing her duties and was deceived by Uther), because Brangane is not only her maidservant, but also her kinswoman. The reason Isolde does not use magic to deceive King Mark, is due to the fact that Tristan and Isolde had the magic of the love potion, originally intended for Mark and Isolde. Moreover, the likeness of the characters in each sexual situation is indicative of the success of the deception. In turn this reiterates that the likeness was essential because "gender appears in this or that form, and then normative judgment is made about those appearances and on the basis of what appears" (Butler 99). Thus, under the veil of darkness the appearances of each deceiver were deemed normal representations of likeness, which is essential to the performative subversion of sexual norms. However, Butler points out that "it would be a mistake to take it as the paradigm of subversive action, or indeed as a model for political agency" (*Gender Trouble* xxiii), indicating that the differences of perceptions of reality imply which gender is being seen. Thus, the viewer believes what they are seeing is reality, when in turn the appearance of gender is false, "mere artifice, play falsehood and illusion" (Salih 100). Therefore, "the *reality* of gender is also put into crisis: it becomes unclear how to distinguish the real from the unreal" (Salih 100). Demonstrating why Uther and Elaine are successful in their magical deceptions, and even why Isolde's bed trick goes unnoticed because her husband is drunk, blurring the actions in his mind. Therefore, the subversions of sexual trickery are not political, but merely "what we invoke as the naturalized knowledge of gender is, in fact, a changeable and revisable reality" (Salih 100).

Furthermore, the concept of sexual masquerades is that the victim can be tricked into performing the bed-trick, just as Brangane does in Von Strassburg's *Tristan*. Yet, the concept falls flat when Brangane is forced to perform the marital duties of Isolde on Isolde's wedding night in Gottfried's tale. Therefore, there is a paradox between what is self and other, and what role performativity plays in regards to sexual intimacies. Thus, the sexual masquerades of the various types of bed-tricks are powerful because of the myth of sameness, and the proverb "in the dark, all cows are black" (Doniger 11), revealing that one's inability to establish who their sexual partner is should be feasibly discernable if it where not for the darkness. Doniger remarks on how body language and the changing of a person's nuances would be associated with the success of the disguise (189). Moreover, Doniger suggests that the inattentiveness is one of the reasons the bedtrick occurs, because disguises of magic or under the veil of darkness may cover the nuances.

CONCLUSION

Although the bed trick motif is a prominent reoccurring structure in Arthurian romances, the circumstances of each occurrence is dissimilar in regards to motivations behind such acts. The conception of King Arthur transpires after Uther's rivalry with Gorlois, the Duke of Cornwall, for his lady and for his political power. Uther being the King of England, desires his enemy's wife, and wages a war to win her and cause her husband's death. Similarly, a powerful man arranges Elaine of Corbin's circumstances as well, Merlin arranges Uther's, and while her father King Pelles devises Elaine's schemes. In fact, King Pelles decides to arrange an instance where Elaine would lie with Lancelot because the knight would impregnate his daughter with a son, begetting a male heir for King Pelles' kingdom. Elaine is happy to partake in the bed trick because she is infatuated with Lancelot. Actually, Elaine later arranges her own tryst with Lancelot when he falls asleep in a garden. Elaine takes advantage of the situation recognizing the knight as Lancelot and lies with him once more. Lancelot becomes mad with grief having learned he has been tricked twice by Elaine and begotten a son. Elaine's bed tricks are driven by a desire for an heir and out of lust. Yet another woman uses the bed trick due to lust. However, Isolde uses the bed trick out of necessity, in order to hide her consummation with Tristan, preserving her virtuous chastity. Isolde does not wish to conquer a kingdom, nor have children but merely hopes to conceal her affair with her husband's most trusted knight, Tristan. Though all three bedtricks occur under different circumstances, the acts of deception are driven by lustful desires.

Therefore, the study of literary themes, especially fantasy, "has been crucial to the feminist task of (re)thinking futurity; to that end feminist theory relies on the capacity to postulate through fantasy a future that is not yet" (Barkowski and Haraway cited in Butler 185). In order to understand gender theory, most academic scholars utilize various literary tales to indicate the patriarchal or matriarchal structures present. However, in Barkowski and Haraway's formulation "fantasy is not equated with what is not real, but rather with what is not *yet* real, what is possible or futural, or what belongs to a different version of real" (185). In turn, indicating why the reality of gender is perceived and socially constructed according to Butler. Furthermore, the three bed tricks involve the exploitation of fantasy on some level, either by magical spells, potions, or the veil of darkness. Butler asserts that "fantasy informs political discourse in ways that often defeat the very purposes to which political discourse is put" (Salih 188), maintaining that subverting gender norms is done in fantasy sometimes as a means to change the political norm. However, in Arthurian literature Malory's deceptions of Uther and Elaine, as well as Gottfried's mistreatment of Brangane were not wholly political moves on the part of the characters, but deemed as necessary to achieve desirable sex with a married woman by Uther, to beget an heir by Elaine, and to protect the virginal status of Isolde. On the other hand, Uther was a foe of the Duke of Cornwall, Elaine was a lady of the court and knew of Guinevere's and Lancelot's courtly love relationship, and Isolde wanted to prevent her own tarnished reputation, possible banishment and even death.

Moreover, Butler asks "does fantasy compel a phantasmatic identification with aggression or victimization?" (Salih 188). In the case of Malory's and Gottfried's characters the answer is yes, because Uther has his troops wage war against the Duke of

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Cornwall, resulting in the Duke's death. Then the victimization of Igraine occurs not only because he sleeps with her against her will (even against her knowledge, as incredible as that sounds), but also as a likeness of her husband, preying on her wifely duties. His acts of aggression against the Duke leave Igraine husbandless, and he impregnates her but does not claim Arthur until Igraine is about to give birth, he tells her and she is happy about it.

Then Elaine attacks Lancelot, not once but twice, finding him in the forest both times, but disguises herself to look like Guinevere, hiding under the guise of costuming in attempts to sleep with him. The second time Elaine tries to sleep with Lancelot, he learns he has a son and regresses into madness at the thought that he betrayed Guinevere by sleeping with another woman. Furthermore, the aggression of Isolde is witnessed when she deems that Brangane will not conceal the secret that occurred in the bedchamber and may tell others. In turn, Isolde has Brangane taken to the forest to be tied to a tree and murdered by Isolde's servants. The victimization of Brangane explores how fantasy can lead to harsh realities of gender roles within a society, because Isolde out of fear of public ridicule sought to deceive King Mark and while modern readers may agree that the deceptions are not agreeable, the motivations of the women seem nobler than Uther's, but also more full of more aggressive and passive aggressive displays of behavior.

Therefore, the simplistic definition of the bed-trick as someone taking the place of another in bed turns out to be a comprehensive literary motif, crossing various cultural and historical periods, as a relevant concept today within modern literary works, and even popular culture. For example, in the popular CBS television sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* the character Barney Stinson utilizes various schemes in order to trick women

into sleeping with him, because he is motived by lust. In the Season 5 episode "The Playbook," we find that Barney has a literal book of bedtricks that he uses to coerce unsuspecting women in to sleeping with him. Each of these "plays," as Barney refers to them, involves some sort of lie or deception that makes him appear to be someone his targets want to sleep with. In one such play called "The Lorenzo Von Matterhorn," we find that Barney has created a plethora of websites about a fictional celebrity named "Lorenzo Von Matterhorn" and takes photos of himself as the titular celebrity. He then goes to a bar and introduces himself to an unsuspecting woman wasting time browsing on her smart phone. He acts surprised that this woman has no idea who he is and comments about how refreshing it would be to get to know someone who will not already have preconceptions of him from his fame. Barney then leaves the girl alone for a few minutes enabling her to search for "Lorenzo Von Matterhorn" on her smart phone. The woman is immediately star struck by the plethora of Barney's fake websites and immediately agrees to go home with him. While the situation is treated as comedy, further reflection shows that Barney has acted in a highly devious manner and that his actions are truly deplorable. The woman in question, having thought that she was sleeping with a celebrity, later learns that she was duped and is devastated, even heartbroken by what has transpired.

The bedtrick still matters today not just because it is a significant literary trope, but because it is still seen as comical, namely in modern sitcoms, where the darker trajectory of this trope is wholly ignored. The success of Barney's playbook derives from the fact that he usually hits on women at McLaren's Pub, where some of the women are intoxicated, or somewhat dimwitted. The performative nature of Barney's bedtricks relies on costuming, disguises, and sometimes even sleight of hand magic. Barney does not use

the bedtrick to establish political alliances or beget an heir as in the Arthurian Bedtricks. Motivated by lust and desire, he does, however, use the bedtricks to establish, maintain and reinforce his reputation as a ladies man, a far cry from Tristan and Isolde who use Brangane to conceal that they have already consummated their love. Rather than to conceal his shame of sleeping with various women, he is applauded for his lewd behavior, and often seen as a farcical character.

As can be seen, when the bedtrick is employed for the sake of a humorous writing, like that of *How I Met Your Mother*, it is seen as comical, harmless even, so long as the darker implications of the bedtrick are wholly ignored, such the indirect rape and deception. The farcical antics that occur in literary texts, and modern television shows containing traumatizing bedtricks should disturb rather than provoke laughter from an audience like Barney's sitcom antics. Although there are witty and whimsical representations of the bedtrick within literature, even the comical bedtrick can also contain deeper serious tones, which the viewer should be aware of. The notion of the unattainable female or male assumes that certain mistreatment of gender representations are acceptable and of the norm, when the actuality is that these identifications cultivate the notion that humans are commodities rather than people. In the end, it is not that women need to be protected by men, but that objectification of any kind should not be the comical norm in literary motifs. Therefore, the bedtrick is still relevant today and seen in modern entertainment as a comical device, for better or worse.

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- Evaluated, assigned grades, and provided feedback on students' work and advised students on academic concerns

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2013   iPed Conference on Teaching and Learning, Marshall University Center for Teaching and Learning, Aug. 20, 2013

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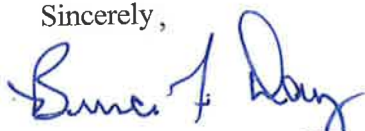Office of Research Integrity

May 6, 2014

Abby Daniel
211 Providence Hill Dr APT 128
Ashland, KY 41101

Dear Ms. Daniel:

This letter is in response to the submitted thesis abstract entitled *"Scandalous Deception in the Castle: An Examination of the Gender Performance through the Bedtrick Trope in Arthurian Literature."* After assessing the abstract it has been deemed not to be human subject research and therefore exempt from oversight of the Marshall University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The Code of Federal Regulations (45CFR46) has set forth the criteria utilized in making this determination. Since the information in this study does not involve human subjects as defined in the above referenced instruction it i not considered human subject research. If there are any changes to the abstract you provided then you would need to resubmit that information to the Office of Research Integrity for review and a determination.

I appreciate your willingness to submit the abstract for determination. Please feel free to contact the Office of Research Integrity if you have any questions regarding future protocols that may require IRB review.

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