Although a number of able scholars have devoted minute attention to Malory's actual borrowing from sources for the “Tale of Lancelot and Guenevere,” relatively scant comment is available concerning the related question of the literary purpose and general effect behind this actual borrowing. Thus we are now fairly certain of just where Malory found particular materials for this division, and of just what within it seems original on his part; but there is ample room for a detailed discussion of why Malory used these particular source materials, rejected or altered their contexts in the sources in many instances, and often added seemingly original matter to them. The evidence gained from a careful examination of Malory’s text and of his sources points to his intention of having this seventh division serve a very specific function as suspense within Le Morte Darthur as a whole. The originality in the following analysis will hinge around two points: (1) the claim that Malory means us to understand at the end of the “Grail” that Arthur is aware of the Lancelot-Guenevere adultery and has forgiven the lovers;

1 Vida D. Scudder has discussed this related question; see Le Morte Darthur of Sir Thomas Malory (New York, 1921), pp. 311-34.
and (2) the suggestion that a single pattern for suspense recurs in the narrative situation presented by each of the five subdivisions of the seventh “Tale.” Also offered here are (1) a new analysis of Malory’s structural technique in the “Poisoned Apple” and the “Fair Maid of Astolat,” and (2) new explanations for the presence in this division of the “Great Tournament,” the “Knight of the Cart,” and the “Healing of Sir Urry.”

Within the “Tale of Lancelot and Guenevere” the source relationships for the five subdivisions are as follows: ²

1. “The Poisoned Apple”—Based on the Old French Mort Ar­
tu and the Mid­dle English Le Morte Arthur.


² See Works, pp. 1573–99; E. T. Donaldson, “Malory and the Stanzacic Le Morte Arthur,” SP, XLVII (1950), 460–72; R. H. Wilson, “The Prose Lancelot in Malory,” University of Texas Studies in English, XXXII (1953), 1–15; and the earlier items cited in these references. In “A Source for the ‘Healing of Sir Urry’” (MLR, L [1955], 490–92), P. E. Tucker suggested that Malory got the idea for this subdivision from a part of the Aggravain section of the Prose Lancelot (Sommer, V, 224–28, 231, 254,
The seventh division is mainly concerned with the relationship between Lancelot and Guenevere: their attitudes toward each other, Arthur's attitude toward them, and public opinion of them within the Round Table group. In this respect, the seventh division continues and fits in with an important developing theme running through the earlier divisions of *Le Morte Darthur* and projecting forward into the eighth division. In the "Tale of Arthur" the King sees, loves, and decides to marry Guenevere; Merlin warns Arthur that Lancelot and Guenevere will love each other, but Arthur weds her anyway (39, 97–98). In the "Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius" we have an indication of Lancelot's love for Guenevere: he is "passynge wroth" because Tristram is allowed to join Isoud in Cornwall instead of going to fight the Romans, whereas Lancelot must leave Guenevere and go to the wars with Arthur (195); but we have here no suggestion of affection on Guenevere's part specifically for Lancelot. In the "Tale of Lancelot" Malory's choice and arrangement of source material seem especially dictated by his desire to show in that division the current state of the Lancelot-Guenevere relationship; the five indications of their relationship within the division—four of which are original with Malory—make clear that at this time Lancelot loves Guenevere but she, though holding him in highest regard, has still given him no assurance that she will grant him her love. Thus the third division serves to show Lancelot and Guenevere, in their own minds and in the minds of society at large, drawing more closely together in preparation for the

268–69, 275). In the Old French text, we find a quest for the best knight to remove an arrow from a wounded knight. All Arthur's other knights fail, but Lancelot accomplishes the task. Certainly several similarities exist, but the differences are so great that, in my opinion, Tucker exaggerates when he calls this bit of the *Lancelot* the "source" for the "Healing of Sir Urry."

Donaldson discusses this matter briefly on pp. 469–70 of "Malory and the Stanzaic *Le Morte Arthur*."

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adultery; but we have here no hint of suspicion on Arthur's part. The "Tale of Gareth" contains no reference to the Lancelot-Guenevere relationship. There are, however, in the "Tale of Tristram" sixteen passages of varying length which concern the attitudes of Lancelot and Guenevere toward each other, Arthur's attitude toward them, and the recognition of the adulterous affair by society at large. The total effect of these passages is to show the commencement of the adultery and its development to a degree that awareness of it has spread widely; but there is no indication as yet that Arthur is suspicious. When Morgan le Fay, in an effort to win Lancelot for herself, sends Tristram to the tournament at the castle of the Harde Roche with a shield on which she has put three figures symbolizing Arthur, Lancelot, and Guenevere, the Queen immediately recognizes this clear reference to her adulterous relationship with Lancelot; but Arthur is simply puzzled by the figures and suspects nothing (554–60). Later, when Mark writes directly to Arthur concerning the Lancelot-Guenevere adultery, the King refuses to believe him (616–18); and, still later in this division, we see clearly that Arthur suspects nothing, for he believes that Lancelot went out of his mind because of Elaine, while many others know that Guenevere was the cause (832–33). One other aspect of the Lancelot-Guenevere relationship in the "Tale of Tristram" should be noticed here briefly. Most of the way through this very large division complete harmony characterizes the relationship between Lancelot and Guenevere; but as the fifth division nears its conclusion, we find the first of a number of instances in Le Morte Darthur of the lovers' being at odds

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because of Guenevere's jealousy and quick temper. In consequence of Lancelot's unwitting connection with Elaine, the Queen angrily forbids him to remain in the court or ever again to come before her; as a result, he is insane for two years (802–8). In time, however, Guenevere deeply laments her action (809), and when Lancelot returns to the court the Queen makes him great cheer and the adultery continues (831–32). In the light of these important developments, it would seem that one main intention Malory must have had for the "Tale of Tristram" was to move the Lancelot-Guenevere relationship much farther along than it had earlier appeared in *Le Morte Darthur*.

Then, the "Tale of the Sankgreall" immediately takes up this progressive treatment of the relationship by showing Guenevere's reluctance to have Lancelot leave her (853, 872); and throughout this division we of course find heavy emphasis upon the adultery and its limiting effect upon Lancelot in his quest of the Grail. A chief development by the end of this division is that Lancelot, having fully realized the implications and effects of his guilt, promises to give up the adulterous relationship with Guenevere. And a most important point is that by the end of the Grail quest Arthur, as well as everybody else connected with the Round Table, has had opportunity to become fully aware of the adulterous relationship which existed between Lancelot and Guenevere before the "Grail," and which was made clear to the reader in the "Tale of Tristram."

At the beginning of the "Grail," Arthur was in no way suspicious of Lancelot as his wife's lover (856, 867) but two passages—original with Malory—show that at the end of the "Grail" the King acquired full knowledge of the earlier adultery:

And there sir Launcelot tolde the kynge of hys aventures that befelle hym syne he departed. And also he tolde hym of the aventures of sir Galahad, sir Percivale, and sir Bors whych that he knew by the lettir of the ded mayden, and also as sir Galahad had tolde hym. (1020)

And whan they had etyn, the kynge made grete clerkes to com before hym, for cause they shulde cronycle of the hyghe adventures of the good knyghtes. So whan sir Bors had tolde hym of the hyghe aventures of the Sankgreall, such as had befalle hym and his three felowes, which were sir Launcelot, Percivale and sir Galahad and hymselff, than sir Launcelot tolde the adventurses of the Sangreall that he had sene. And all thys was made in grete bookes and put up in almeryes at Salysbury. (1036)

It is difficult to see how Lancelot, in recounting fully his Grail adventures, could conceal the adultery and its limiting effects. Surely, when Lancelot told of his interview with the first hermit (896–99), the King would have understood that the Queen whom Lancelot had loved for years was Guenevere, and that the hermit’s specifying of Lancelot’s old sin as lechery referred to his adulterous relationship with Guenevere.

Malory must therefore have wanted us to realize, as we begin the seventh large division, that Arthur has thus learned of the earlier adultery between Lancelot and Guenevere, that he has been willing to forgive the lovers in order to save the Round Table, and that he is now placing his hope for the future stabil-

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\(^7\) Vinaver (Ibid., p. 1524) strangely implies that Malory is confused in this matter of Lancelot’s recounting the Grail adventures to Arthur; in his view Lancelot could not have had sufficient knowledge to place on record “the adventures of the Sangreall that he had sene.” However, the text makes clear, first, that Bors—who did have knowledge of all that happened during the Quest—also reported to the King; and, second, that the clause “that he had sene” is meant to modify “adventures,” not “Sangreall.” Lancelot was of course in a position to report those adventures which he himself had experienced (“sene”), as well as those he had learned about from the “lettir of the ded mayden” and from Galahad.
ity of his marriage and his kingdom in Lancelot's changed ways as a result of his experiences and promise during the "Grail." Considerable support for this analysis of the situation at the end of the "Grail" is to be found by considering (1) the reaction of the court at large, (2) Aggravain's behavior, and (3) Arthur's later words and actions.

As we have seen, the "Grail" ends with a full recital of events to the King. Since this recital "was made in grete booke and put up in almeryes at Salysbury" (1036), the court at large presumably knows that Arthur had learned of the earlier adultery but had forgiven Lancelot and accepted his promise that the relationship would not begin again. Consequently, "than was there grete joy in the courte" (1045), joy springing from the general hope that the Round Table has been punished sufficiently for the earlier adultery by the losses during the "Grail," and can now continue unhampered in happiness and nobility. But Malory immediately points out that this hope is short-lived, for when the adultery begins again he tells us that "many in the courte spake of it" (1045). And a few lines later, Lancelot warns Guenevere "that there be many men spekith of oure love in thys courte" (1046). Such attention here to the reaction of the court at large is hard to account for unless we understand that Arthur's forgiving the lovers and putting his faith in Lancelot's promise are general knowledge. Certainly, in the "Tale of Tristram," when the earlier adulterous relationship was in progress, there was not this concern with public opinion. There Arthur would not believe Morgan le Fay's symbols or Mark's letter (554-60, 616-18); but now the King has knowledge of the former relationship, and the matter is much more delicate.

It is Aggravain who in the "Tale of the Death of Arthur" will inform the King of the recommenced adultery, and his behavior throughout is made more readily understandable by the
analysis set forth above of the situation at the end of the "Grail." Examination of all the passages in Le Morte Darthur concerning Aggravain shows that Malory paid close attention to the progressive development of this knight for his climactic role. Early in the book Aggravain is simply mentioned as one of the sons of Morgause. At the end of the "Tale of Gareth" he marries a very rich lady named Lawrell. Then come a number of instances in which he is overcome by various knights; in fact, he never defeats another knight in the whole book, a situation hardly conducive to his being a happy man. We next find two instances of his behaving in cowardly and treacherous fashion—the murders of Dinadan and Lamorak—and about two-thirds of the way through the "Tale of Tristram" we are told of Aggravain's hatred of Lancelot, of which the latter is aware. But we hear no more of Aggravain for over three hundred pages. It should be noted that despite his hatred for Lancelot, and despite his having dealt treacherously with Lamorak, Aggravain has so far given no indication of an intention to report the adulterous relationship of Lancelot and Guenevere, now widely known to the court at large, to Arthur. But, right after the "Grail," when the King has forgiven the lovers and accepted Lancelot's promise, Aggravain is introduced again: Malory emphasizes this knight's attention to the recommenced adultery and his characteristic of talking a great deal, which cause Lancelot to fear that Aggravain will tell the King of the recommenced adultery. That, of course, is exactly what happens later. The point to be observed here is that in the "Tale of Tristram" Aggravain did not report the adultery to Arthur because he knew the King would not believe him any more readily than he believed Mark; but after the King's forgiving the lovers and putting his faith in Lancelot's promise, Aggravain knows that he is now in a position to convince Arthur, if he can produce evidence. No

*For references to these passages, see ibid., p. 1661.*
other explanation seems to account for Malory's handling of Aggravain throughout *Le Morte Darthur*.

Perhaps the clearest support for my reading of the situation at the end of the "Grail" is to be found in Arthur's actions and words in the "Tale of the Death of Arthur" when Mordred tells him of the events which resulted from the trap Aggravain laid for Lancelot. Contrary to Gawain's wishes, Aggravain will tell Arthur that "sir Launcelot holdith youre quene, and hath done longe, and we be your syster sunnes, and we may suffir hit no lenger" (1163). The King is loath to believe this accusation without proof, though we are told that he has "a demyng" of the adultery, presumably as a result of events which occurred in the seventh division. Then Aggravain proposes the trap: the King shall announce his intention to hunt the next day and to be away from the court the next night; Lancelot will stay at home and will visit the Queen; Aggravain and other knights will lie in wait and capture Lancelot in this compromising situation. Arthur agrees, and events unfold as Aggravain has predicted, except that he and all the waiting knights save Mordred are killed. Mordred, wounded, runs to the King and reports the situation. Arthur then sadly speaks as follows:

"And alas... me sore repentith that ever sir Launcelot sholde be ayneste me, for now I am sure the noble felyshyp of the Rounde Table ys brokyn for ever, for wyth hym woll many a noble knyght holde. And now hyt ys fallen so... that I may nat with my worshyp but my quene muste suffer dethe," and was sore amoved. (1174)

Note the two occurrences of "now" in this speech. The point is that in the former instance, after learning of the earlier adultery through the full report of the "Grail," Arthur could with honor forgive the lovers and hope to save the Round Table because of Lancelot's promise. But now, in this instance, he can see no honorable way to forgive Lancelot and Guenevere and
save the fellowship; thus the King is deeply saddened. Unless we assume this contrast, the force of the "now's" is lost.

Gawain remonstrates at length, begging Arthur to forgive Lancelot, but to no avail (1174–77). The arrangements for punishing the Queen proceed; Lancelot rescues her, but kills Gaheris and Gareth in the process. When he receives this news, the King faints with grief; upon recovering, he says:

And much more I am soryar for my good knyghtes losse than for the losse of my fayre quene; for quenys I myght have inow, but such a felyship of good knyghtes shall never be togydyrs in no company. And now I dare sey . . . there was never Crystyn kynge that ever hylyde such a felyshyp togydyrs. And alas, that ever sir Launcelot and I shulde be at debate! A, Aggravayne, Aggravayne! . . . Jesu forgylf hit thy soule, for thyne evyl wyll that thou haddist and sir Mordred, thy brothir, unto sir Launcelot hath caused all this sorow. (1184)

These words make very clear that Arthur's concern has always been far less for the behavior of his Queen than for the welfare of the Round Table. And it is perhaps not overly fanciful to see in his proud statement that no other king ever held together such a fellowship, a reminiscence of the personal sacrifice he earlier had to make by forgiving the lovers in an attempt to preserve the Round Table.

It would seem fair, then, to state that at the end of the "Grail" and at the beginning of the "Tale of Lancelot and Guenevere," Malory intends us to understand that Arthur, having learned of the earlier adultery through Lancelot's account of his experiences during the "Grail," decided to forgive the lovers and to place his hope for the future of his fellowship in Lancelot's promise to refrain from further adulterous relationship with the Queen. Accordingly, the whole fate of the Round Table at this point in Le Morte Darthur is governed by the one question of whether or not Lancelot can keep his word. Let us
now see how Malory handles this question in the “Tale of Lancelot and Guenevere.” For a time Lancelot holds to his promise, and “than there was grete joy in the courte” (1045), but Malory does not for long keep from the reader the full answer to this chief question. On the first page of the “Tale of Lancelot and Guenevere,” we find the following passage:

Than, as the booke seyth, sir Launcelot began to resorte unto quene Gwenivere agayne and forgatc the promyse and the perceccion that he made in the quest; for, as the booke seyth, had nat sir Launcelot bene in his prevy thoughtes and in hys myndis so sette inwardly to the quene as he was in semyng outewarde to God, there had no knyght passed hym in the queste of the Sankgreall. But ever his thoughtis prevyly were on the queene, and so they loved togydirs more hotter than they ded toforehonde, and had many such prevy draughtis togydir that many in the courte spake of hit, and in especiall sir Aggravayne, sir Gawaynes brothir, for he was ever opynnewomwed. (1045)

This passage removes from the reader’s mind—though not from King Arthur’s—any possibility of suspense in connection with Lancelot’s promise during the “Grail.” Malory, however, did provide the reader with suspense and dramatic interest for the seventh division of his book. He so presented the materials from his sources, and he so augmented these borrowings with original matter, as to place before the reader two large and related questions throughout the seventh division. First, we are shown further instances of lack of harmony between Lancelot and Guenevere, and we wonder whether these difficulties will lead to a permanent separation which will put an end to the adultery and perhaps save the Round Table. Second, we see Arthur pulled two ways: on the one hand, he very much wants to believe that Lancelot will keep his promise; but, on the other hand, he cannot ignore the increasing reasons for suspicion that
the adultery has recommenced. The reader therefore constantly wonders at what point the King will finally become fully aware of the recommenced adultery. Malory's handling of these two questions throughout the seventh division, as we shall see below, involves the repetition through the five subdivisions of a single pattern which makes for suspense: beneath the surface of events matters are far from ideal, but superficially all ends well in each of the five instances. In this way the seventh division functions as suspense in *Le Morte Darthur* as a whole: in the ascent toward the resolution in the eighth division of the Lancelot-Guenevere relationship whereby each separately comes to a pious end in a religious establishment; and in the descent toward the complete ruin which the Round Table will experience in the eighth division when this superficial stability is shattered by Arthur's having incontrovertible proof that the adultery is again in progress. We shall now see, through an examination of the content and sources of each of the five subdivisions, exactly how Malory presented this suspense in the "Tale of Lancelot and Guenevere."

First, we should consider the large alteration Malory made in the order of presentation for the "Poisoned Apple" and the "Fair Maid of Astolat." Vinaver has indicated how in the Old French *Mort Artu* the two episodes are interwoven in a complicated tapestry-like scheme, involving frequent alternation of parts of each episode plus interspersed bits of other stories.⁹ Letting (a) equal the "Poisoned Apple," (b) the "Fair Maid of Astolat," and other letters parts of other stories, he finds the following progression: \(a^1b^1a^2b^2x\ b^2y\ b^2z\ b^2m\ b^2p\ a^3a^6a^7b^3a^5.\) Since Vinaver does not think that Malory also made use of the Middle English stanzaic *Le Morte Arthur* in preparing the seventh division, he sees Malory's technique here chiefly as the unraveling of the interwoven narrative threads of the *Mort Artu* in

order to present the two episodes as complete units in the order (a) and (b). But Wilson and Donaldson have clearly shown that Malory did use the Middle English poem, itself based on the Mort Artu, as well as the Old French prose text in preparing this division. A reconsideration of Malory's structural technique here is therefore in order, and we must view Le Morte Arthur as an intermediate step between the complicated interweaving of Mort Artu and the simple unified progression of Le Morte Darthur. The very important fact is that the Middle English poet did about nine-tenths of the unraveling of the Old French tapestry-like technique himself: he reduced the progression to b₁a₁b₂a₂. This situation makes Vinaver's complicated argument almost completely irrelevant, and we see that Malory's work here, insofar as structural presentation is concerned, involved only two matters: (1) taking the remaining small step to unify b₁ with b₂ and a₁ with a₂, and (2) reversing the order of episodes to get the progression (a) and (b). A reason for his making these two changes is not far to seek.

In the whole of the "Poisoned Apple" Arthur believes that Lancelot is holding to his promise made during the "Grail"; thus, throughout this subdivision the King has no suspicion that the adultery has recommenced. When the rest of the court knows that Lancelot and Guenevere now "loved togydirs more hotter than they ded toforehonde," Arthur remains ignorant (1045). The King is unable to understand why the Queen cannot keep Lancelot near her, and he wishes that Lancelot were

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10 See the articles cited in note 2 above. For the purposes of my argument, it does not matter who is right here. Everyone agrees that Malory used Le Morte Arthur as well as Mort Artu for later sections of Le Morte Darthur; surely we can therefore assume that Malory was already familiar with the Middle English poem when he was preparing the two episodes now under consideration.

11 J. D. Bruce (ed.), Le Morte Arthur (London, 1903). The passages concerned are as follows: The "Fair Maid of Astolat"—b₁ (137–839); b₂ (952–1317); The "Poisoned Apple"—a₁ (840–951); a₂ (1318–1671).
present to save her from the stake (1051). When Lancelot has defeated Mador and saved the Queen, Arthur is most courteous to him and promises to reward him; then “there was made grete joy, and many merthys there was made in that courte” (1058–59). On the other hand, in the “Fair Maid of Astolat” the King at first has reason to suspect that the adultery has started again, because both the Queen and Lancelot do not accompany him to the tournament at Winchester (1065); later, however, when he penetrates Lancelot’s disguise (1066), his suspicions are allayed. Since Malory in the “Tale of Lancelot and Guenevere” as a whole will present Arthur as having increasing reason for suspicion, as we approach the complete revelation to him of the recommenced adultery in the “Tale of the Death of Arthur,” the obvious requirements of climactic arrangement for this matter led Malory to unify each of the two subdivisions and to put the “Poisoned Apple,” with no evidence of Arthur’s suspicion, before the “Fair Maid of Astolat,” in which his suspicion, though rapidly stilled, is nonetheless present.

Let us now return to the main issue in this discussion: Malory’s use of the five subdivisions of the “Tale of Lancelot and Guenevere” to provide suspense in the progress of Le Morte Darthur as a whole, suspense derived from the two related questions stated earlier—the increasing lack of harmony between Lancelot and Guenevere, and the degree of Arthur’s awareness of the recommenced adultery. As we just saw, in the “Poisoned Apple,” there is no indication of the King’s being at all suspicious; however, the growing lack of harmony between the two lovers—which, as we noticed earlier, was introduced in the “Tale of Tristram”—forms the central theme in this subdivision. Right after we are told that the adultery has recommenced (1045), we learn that Lancelot “had many resortis of ladys and damesels which dayly resorted unto hym that be-
soughte hym to be their champion." He accepts these requests in order to please Christ and also to allay suspicion by avoiding the Queen: "Wherefor the Quene waxed wrothe with sir Lancelot." She accuses him of slackening love for her; he maintains that religion, caution, and regard for her reputation explain his actions; she is not convinced and expels him for the second time from the court and her presence. Though very sad, Lancelot this time does not faint or become insane; rather, he seeks advice from his kinsmen, and Bors sends him to Sir Brascias, a nearby hermit. As he departs, Lancelot charges Bors, "in that ye can, gete me the love of my lady quene Gwneyvere." Here, then, at the beginning of the subdivision we see a separation of the lovers resulting from Guenevere's unreasonable anger. After Lancelot's departure, the Queen makes every effort to seem undisturbed, and, in a parallel to his earlier accepting the requests of many ladies, she arranges a banquet for twenty-four knights. Thus, in a way wholly original and directly connected with the lack of harmony between Lancelot and Guenevere, Malory sets the stage for the episode of the poisoned fruit. As this subdivision progresses, Patryse dies of the poisoned apple, Mador accuses the Queen of treason, and Bors agrees to defend her "onles that there com by adventures a better knyght than I am to do batayle for her" (1053). When Bors tells Lancelot of this arrangement, the latter is happy at the opportunity to relieve Bors and win the Queen's good graces again. And that is exactly what happens: when Lancelot has overcome Mador, the Queen and he "made grete joy" of each other (1059). For the first subdivision, therefore, we see a pattern specifically designed to furnish suspense: in the beginning the two lovers are at odds and it looks as if they may be permanently separated, but as events unroll Lancelot saves the Queen and they are reunited in their

12 These matters are absent from the Mort Artu (see Works, p. 1583) and from Le Morte Arthur.
adulterous relationship. On the surface all now seems well in Arthur's court, but actually the adultery is leading it to its doom.

This pattern of suspense is present, as we saw earlier, in the "Fair Maid of Astolat" in connection with the degree of the King's awareness of the adultery: he at first has cause for suspicion, but subsequent events point contrariwise. The pattern is also apparent in this second subdivision from the passages concerning the more frequent lack of harmony between the lovers. Near the beginning, the Queen upbraids Lancelot for staying behind with her while Arthur has gone to the tournament; in contrast to his completely subservient attitude in the two preceding instances (802–9, 1047), Lancelot is here sharply ironic with the Queen; and she is unpleasantly formal toward him:

"Have ye no doute, madame," seyde sir Launcelot, "I alow youre witte. Hit ys of late com syn ye were woxen so wyse! And therefore, madam, at thys tyme I woll be ruled by youre councyele, and thys nyght I woll take my reste, and to­morow betyme I woll take my way towarde Wynchestir. But wytte you well," seyde sir Launcelot unto the quene, "at that justys I woll be ayenste the kynge and ayenst all hys felyshyp."

"Sir, ye may there do as ye lyste," seyde the quene, "but be my councyele ye shall nat be ayenste youre kynge and your felyshyp, for there bene full many harde knyghtes of your bloode."

"Madame," seyde sir Launcelot, "I shal take the adventure that God wolle gyff me." (1066)

Lancelot's decision to fight in disguise against King Arthur presumably results from his annoyance with the Queen. Here, then, we have the lovers at odds again; and when Guenever learns that "hit was sir Launcelot that bare the rede slyve of the Fayre Maydyn of Astolat, she was nygh ought of her mynde for
wratthe” (1080). She even proclaims to Bors that she does not care if Lancelot is dead. Lancelot finds that Gawain has recognized his shield, and his first reaction is concern that Guenevere will be angry with him (1082); Bors soon makes this concern an actuality for him and urges him to love the Fair Maid of Astolat, but Lancelot cannot forget Guenevere (1084). Then Bors unsuccessfully tries to mollify the Queen (1087). So matters stand until Lancelot returns to the court, at which time Guenevere will not speak to him despite his efforts to see her (1092). When the Fair Maid’s corpse arrives, the Queen inconsistently says to Lancelot in Arthur’s presence, “ye myght have shewed hir som bownte and jantilnes whych myght have preserved hir lyff.” In answer, Lancelot makes a statement which seems his indirect way of warning her that she must cease her unreasonable demands of him:

“Madame,” seyde sir Launcelot, “she wolde none other wayes be answerd but that she wolde be my wyff, othir ellis my paramour, and of these two I wolde not graunte her. But I proffird her, for her good love that she shewed me, a thousand pound yerely to her and to her ayres, and to wedde ony maner of knyght that she coude fynde beste to love in her harte. For, madame,” seyde sir Launcelot, “I love nat to be constrayned to love, for love muste only aryme of the harte selff, and nat by none constraynte.” (1097)

Apparently the warning has its desired effect, for as soon as the Fair Maid is buried harmony is restored:

Than the quene sent for sir Launcelot and prayde hym of mercy, for why that she had ben wrothe with hym causeles.

“Thys ys nat the firste tyme,” seyde sir Launcelot, “that ye have ben displese with me causeles. But, madame, ever I muste suffer you, but what sorow that I endure, ye take no forse.” (1098)
Again Lancelot and Guenevere are united in adultery. Thus, in this subdivision we have had a repetition of the pattern for suspense which we observed in the “Poisoned Apple”: the lovers are at odds and seem headed for a permanent separation which might save the Round Table from ruin; but they resolve their differences and the adultery continues. Though all now seems superficially well in the court, beneath the surface there still exists the cause for future trouble.

The third subdivision, the “Great Tournament,” seems almost wholly original with Malory, and there has been a marked lack of discussion of Malory’s reasons for including this material. From the analysis of the two preceding subdivisions, we have good reason to suspect that its chief function is to continue the suspense presented by those subdivisions. We are here given an ostensibly happy view of the Round Table engaged in its favorite pastime and training procedure, a large tournament: when the “cry” announces the time and place, “many knyghtes were glad and made them redy to be at that justys in the freysshyste manner” (1103); the King himself takes a vigorous part in the jousting (1108); the Queen sits on the platform as one of the judges (1108); Arthur, in commenting favorably on the events of the tournament, delivers a lecture on the chivalric essentials, ending “And allways a good man woll do ever to another man as he wolde be done to hymselff” (1114); and the subdivision closes with the following cheerful paragraph: “So than there were made grete festis unto kyngis and deukes, and revell, game, and play, and all maner of nobeles was used. And he that was curteyse, trew, and faythefull to hys frynde was that tyme cherysshed” (1114).

This entire situation seems to take us back to the early days of the Round Table, before the “Grail” and before the beginnings of the adultery, when Arthur’s hopes were high for a brave

13 Works, p. 1578.
new world guided by the chivalric virtues of his utopian fellowship. Nowhere in this subdivision do we find any indication that Arthur suspects the adultery. But such an ideal impression is purely superficial, for side by side with this attractive and hopeful view, we are again clearly shown the adulterous aspects of the Lancelot-Guenevere relationship, which is leading the Round Table to its doom. Shortly after Arthur proclaims the great tournament to be held “besydes Westemynster, upon Candylmasse day,” Guenevere summons Lancelot and says:

“I warne you that ye ryde no more in no justis nor tumementis but that youre kynnesmen may know you, and at thys justis that shall be ye shall have of me a slyve of golde. And I pray you for my sake to force youreself there, that men may speke you worship. But I charge you, as ye woll have my love, that ye warne your kynnesmen that ye woll beare that day the slyve of golde upon your helmet.”

“Madame,” seyde sir Launcelot, “hit shall be done.” And othir made grete joy of othir. (1103)

The recommenced adultery is in full progress; Guenevere, presumably to erase the memory of Lancelot’s having worn the Fair Maid’s red sleeve (1068), here demands that he wear her token. Lancelot has again assumed his completely subservient role, and carries out her haughty instructions to the letter. Nothing points toward a permanent separation of the lovers. The situation contrasts sharply with the impression of the Round Table that derives from this great tournament itself. Thus, in this subdivision we find another instance of the pattern of suspense which Malory is establishing for the entire “Tale of Lancelot and Guenevere”: superficially all seems well, but beneath the surface the situation points toward the coming disaster.

For source materials in the fourth subdivision, the “Knight of the Cart,” Malory shifted from the Mort Artu and Le Morte
Arthur, which he had used for the first two subdivisions and to which he returns for the eighth and final division of Le Morte Darthur. Here he selected material in the Prose Lancelot, from which he had earlier borrowed for his “Tale of Lancelot.” This very act of inserting matter from a different source presupposes a careful plan on Malory’s part, and it seems clear that this plan resulted from his desire to continue the suspense he had developed in the three preceding subdivisions. That Malory gave careful thought to his presentation of the “Tale of Lancelot and Guenevere” is also indicated by the chronological continuity to be found as we move from subdivision to subdivision: the “Poisoned Apple” begins right after the “Grail” and ends with the court in quiet happiness, which continues until the beginning of the “Fair Maid of Astolat” on “Lady day of the Assumption”; this second subdivision ends at Christmas and the “Great Tournament” begins immediately thereafter, ending with a period of feasts and revelry which presumably covers the month of January; at the beginning of the “Knight of the Cart” we are told, “And thus hit passed on frome Candylmas untill Ester, that the moneth of May was com,” and the action in this subdivision covers the period until Pentecost, at which time the “Healing of Sir Urry” begins. Then the “Tale of the Death of Arthur” opens the following May, allowing time for the year during which Lancelot traveled only by cart (1154).

There is also some evidence earlier in Le Morte Darthur which suggests that Malory’s use in the fourth subdivision of Meleagant’s abduction of Guenevere was not a last-minute or haphazard decision. Twice in the “Tale of Tristram” we find apparently foreshadowing touches concerning Meleagant. First, when Lamorak leaves Tristram and stops at a chapel, Meleagant

"See the article by Wilson, “The Prose Lancelot in Malory.” Wilson’s view that the Prose Lancelot is the only source for the fourth subdivision seems to me preferable to Vinaver’s claim that Malory also used here a version of Chrétien’s Charrette (Works, pp. 1578–81)."
comes to the same chapel but does not notice Lamorak. "And then thyk knyght sir Mellygaunce made hys mone of the love that he had to quene Gwenyver, and there he made a wofull complaynte" (485). The next day Lancelot, Lamorak, Meleagant, and Bleoberis engage in a discussion of a knight’s proper regard for his lady, and the fact of Meleagant’s love for Guenevere is made clear to all. Since in the source this fact is kept secret from Lancelot, one suspects that Malory’s alteration here is intentional preparation for the Lancelot-Meleagant animosity in the “Knight of the Cart.” Second, in the course of the tournament at Surluse we are told that Bagdemagus sends away “his sonne Mellygaunce, bycause sir Launcelot sholde nat mete with hym; for he hated sir Launcelot, and that knewe he not” (658). Here Malory’s alteration of his source seems aimed at preparing for the emphasis which will be placed on Meleagant’s fear of Lancelot in the “Knight of the Cart” (e.g., 1124).

Malory’s presentation in the “Knight of the Cart” is much shorter than the corresponding section in the Prose Lancelot. In shortening the account, Malory also made a marked alteration in the emphasis emerging from the episode. Whereas the French prose-writer devoted most attention to the earlier matters concerning Lancelot’s use of the cart and his overcoming various obstacles to reach Guenevere, Malory’s treatment puts heaviest stress on the bloodstained bed and the jeopardy in which the Queen is placed. In this connection it is important to note that Guenevere’s being in danger of burning at the stake (1137) is Malory’s original addition; this fact suggests

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15 *Works*, p. 1458.
16 Ibid., p. 1491.
17 This fear is Malory’s original conception; in the Prose Lancelot Meleagant defies Lancelot; see H. O. Sommer (ed.), *The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances*, IV, 203.
18 Sommer, IV, 154–226.
that Malory's purpose in making the addition was to place this instance in a planned progression of three such situations in Le Morte Darthur. First, in the “Poisoned Apple” the Queen, accused of treason for the murder of Patryse, was saved from the stake by Lancelot’s defeating Mador; here she was completely innocent of the charge. Second, we have the present instance in the “Knight of the Cart” when Lancelot saves her from the stake by defeating Meleagant; here the question of her guilt is a quibble; she did share her bed with Lancelot, but she is innocent of Meleagant’s actual charge that one of the wounded knights was allowed to enter her bed. Third, in the “Tale of the Death of Arthur” Guenevere will be accused directly by Mordred of an adulterous relationship with Lancelot and will be saved by him from the stake through the fighting in which Gaheris and Gareth are killed (1174–78); here the Queen will be undeniably guilty. Thus, we have a climactic progression: Guenevere at first innocent, then directly innocent but indirectly guilty, and finally directly guilty.

The “Knight of the Cart” continues the suspense, present in the three preceding subdivisions and deriving from the two questions concerning the lack of harmony between the lovers and the degree of Arthur’s awareness of the recommenced adultery. The subdivision opens with a lengthy discourse, original with Malory, on Maytime and the nature of true love. Here the fresh description of the coming of Spring and the idealistic attitude toward love form an ironic contrast to the covert adultery which Lancelot and Guenevere are conducting. This passage also points forward to the similar material which will ironically introduce the “Tale of the Death of Arthur” (1161), just before the continued adultery brings about the final crisis. Presumably

19 Works, p. 1596. Vida D. Scudder earlier suggested this purpose behind Malory’s originality; see Le Morte Darthur, p. 320.
20 Works, p. 1591.
motivated by a desire to prevent suspicion of the adultery—a motivation she had earlier stressed (1048, 1066)—Guenevere arranges the Maying expedition with the “Quenys Knyghtes,” during which she is captured by Meleagant. When Lancelot receives her plea for help, he comes immediately and soon reaches Meleagant’s castle. Then Meleagant, fearful of Lancelot, begs Guenevere to make peace, and she tells Lancelot that there is now no need for fighting. At this point, we find another possibility of a quarrel between the lovers:

“Madame,” seyde sir Launcelot, “syth hit ys so that ye be accorded with hym, as for me I may nat agaynesay hit, how-behit sir Mellyagaunte hath done full shamefully to me and cowardly. And, madame,” seyde sir Launcelot, “and I had wyster that ye wolde have bene so lyghtly accorded with hym I wolde nat a made such haste unto you.” (1129)

But Lancelot’s displeasure rapidly fades and he tells the Queen, “Madame, . . . so ye be pleased, as for my parte ye shall sone please me” (1129). The possibility of a rift is soon over, and Lancelot spends that night in bed with the Queen (1131). There is no further indication of lack of harmony between the lovers, and the subdivision ends with the recommenced adultery continuing after Lancelot slays Meleagant.

Arthur does not appear in the “Knight of the Cart” until the Queen and the wounded knights return to the Court; meanwhile, Lancelot is imprisoned as a result of Meleagant’s trick (1135). When told of Meleagant’s charging the Queen with infidelity and of Lancelot’s challenging Meleagant, Arthur says, “I am aferde sir Mellyagaunce hath charged hymselff with a

As has often been observed, Malory almost completely shifts the emphasis away from the Cart episode, which traditionally had been the core of the story.

Malory’s treatment is completely different from that in the Prose Lancelot; see Sommer, IV, 201–6.
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grete charge.” Here Arthur is completely noncommittal about what presumably is uppermost in his mind—the bloodstained bed as evidence of the Queen’s infidelity—and simply adds that Lancelot will almost certainly appear to defend the Queen. Meleagant’s insistence forces Arthur to have Guenevere “brought till a fyre to be brente” (1137); when Lancelot does not appear, Lavayne asks the King to allow him to take Lancelot’s place. Arthur agrees:

“Grauntemercy, jantill sir Lavayne,” seyde kynge Arthur, “for I dare say all that sir Mellyagaunce puttith uppon my lady the quene ys wrongful. For I have spokyn with all the ten wounded knyghtes, and there ys nat one of them, and he were hole and able to do batayle, but he wolde prove uppon sir Mellyagaunce body that it is fals that he puttith upon my lady.” (1137)

Note that this passage—original with Malory⁴³—gives evidence of Arthur’s having been busy with the question of Guenevere’s possible infidelity: he has satisfied himself that no one of the wounded knights shared her bed. Lancelot then arrives and kills Meleagant, and this subdivision, like the three preceding, ends happily: “And than the kynde and the quene made more of sir Launcelot, and more was he cheriysshed than ever he was aforehande” (1140). We thus see at the close of the “Knight of the Cart” the same pattern for suspense observed in the earlier subdivisions: all seems well superficially, but beneath the surface the adulterous relationship continues. And here Arthur has good reason to suspect the adultery, for though the Queen has been saved and the disturbance caused by Meleagant has been successfully quieted, the King has had absolutely no explanation for the bloodstained bed. Since he established that no one of the wounded knights was guilty, circumstances point straight toward Lancelot as the culprit.

The fifth and final subdivision—the “Healing of Sir Urry”—

⁴³ Sommer, IV, 222.
is Malory's original creation. It has been suggested that Malory added this material in order to glorify Lancelot and to present a kind of convocation of the Arthurian worthies just before the tragic eighth division.\textsuperscript{24} Be that as it may, there is another explanation of Malory's intention, which fits the pattern we have been examining. As we just saw, Arthur is justified at the end of the "Knight of the Cart" in suspecting that the adultery is again in progress.\textsuperscript{25} Then the appearance of Urry and his mother, the circumstance whereby only "the beste knyght of the worlde" (1145) can heal Urry, and the failure of everyone else to heal the wounded knight, present the King with an excellent opportunity for testing Lancelot. In Arthur's mind, the situation would seem to be as follows: If Lancelot can heal Urry, after the King and others have failed, he is "the beste knyght of the world," a title for which he could not qualify if he has broken his promise made during the "Grail" to refrain from the adultery; but if Lancelot cannot heal Urry, Arthur has evidence that the adultery has recommenced. Thus it is that we are told the King's purpose in having Urry searched: "to wyte whych was the moste nobelyste knyght amonge them all" (1149); and thus Arthur is impatient at Lancelot's absence—"'Mercy Jesu!' seyde kynge Arthur, 'where ys sir Launcelot du Lake, that he ys nat here at thys tyme?'" (1150). Further, Arthur explicitly sets the stage for the testing of Lancelot when he sees the latter approaching—"'Pees,' seyde the kynge, 'lat no man say nothyng untyll he be come to us'" (1151).

Upon Lancelot's arrival we have the following passage:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Than seyde kynge Arthur unto sir Launcelot, "Sir, ye muste do as we have done," and tolde hym what they had done and shewed hym them all that had serched hym.}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{24} Wilson, "The Prose Lancelot in Malory," and Works, p. 1578.

\textsuperscript{25} Arthur's suspicion here seems to be the reference when in the eighth division Malory states that the King had "a demying" of the adultery (Works, p. 1163).
“Jesu defende me,” seyde sir Launcelot, “whyle so many noble kyngis and knyghtes have fayled, that I shulde presume upon me to enchyve that all ye, my lordis, myght nat enchyve.”

“Ye shall nat chose,” seyde kynge Arthur, “for I commaunde you to do as we all have done.”

“My moste renowned lorde,” seyde sir Launcclot, “I know well I dare nat, nor may nat, disobey you. But and I myght or durste, wyte you well I wolde nat take upon me to towche that wounded knyght in that entent that I shulde passe all othir knyghtes. Jesu deffende me frome that shame!”

“Sir, ye take hit wronge,” seyde kynge Arthur, “for ye shall nat do hit for no prcsumpcion, but for to beare us felyshyp, insomuche as ye be a felow of the Rounde Table. And wyte you well,” seyde kynge Arthur, “and ye prevayle nat and heale hym, I dare sey there ys no knyght in thys londe that may hele hym. And therefore I pray you do as we have done.”

(1151-52)

Two points are noteworthy here. First, the King’s manner with Lancelot differs greatly from his customary kindly tone: he gives Lancelot a flat command to “search” Urry, leaving him no way to avoid this test. Second, Lancelot is hesitant to be put in this position, presumably because of his adulterous guilt; he attempts to escape the test on grounds of modesty, but Arthur advances “fellowship” as the reason Lancelot must “search” Urry.

When the other knights and Urry himself beg Lancelot to “search” the wounds, Lancelot clearly states his unworthiness: “‘A, my fayre lorde,’ seyde sir Launcelot, ‘Jesu wolde that I myght helpe you! For I shame sore with myselff that I shulde be thus requyred, for never was I able in worthynes to do so hyghe a thynge’” (1152). Then he says to the King, “I muste do youre commaundemente, whych ys sore ayenst my harte.” Seeing no way out, Lancelot now prays to the Trinity for the power to heal Urry. Included in his prayer is his request “that my symple worship and honeste be saved”; apparently, Lancelot
understands this situation as a test presented by the King, a test which he fears he shall fail. But he then proceeds to heal Urry. Arthur is overjoyed, and Lancelot weeps like a child with relief because his unworthiness, stemming from the adultery, has not been made apparent by failure to heal Urry.

That Lancelot is able to heal Urry, despite the recommenced adultery, is understandable in accord with Malory's definition of "the beste knyght of the worlde." For him the term means "best worldly knight"; the sections of the "Grail" concerning Lancelot made clear Malory's conception of Lancelot as "the best worldly knight," despite the adultery and his limitations as a spiritual knight. Earlier, in the Elaine section of the "Tale of Tristram," Lancelot as "the beste knyght of the world" had been able to free a lady from boiling waters after Gawain had failed to help her (792). Similarly, this definition in the "Healing of Sir Urry" does not disqualify Lancelot because of the adultery. But his success in healing Urry does not lead Lancelot to consider himself exonerated from the adulterous guilt. When we next see him, trapped in the Queen's room, he makes clear his continued realization that their relationship is "wronge," and he discloses his previous arrangement with Bors and others against just such an emergency (1166).

As the King sees it, however, Lancelot has passed the test; Arthur's suspicion does not have to be followed up, and he happily arranges a tournament and rewards Urry and Lavayne with knighthood (1153). Thus, the subdivision ends with the same situation we have observed in each earlier instance: on the surface all seems well, but the adulterous relationship of Lancelot and Guenevere, which will bring about ruin for all, continues. Though for the time being joy reigns in the court, we are told just before the end of the "Tale of Lancelot and Guenevere": "But every nyght and day sir Aggravayne, sir Gawaynes brother, awayted quene Gwenyver and sir Launcelot to put hem bothe to a rebuke and a shame" (1153); and the
“Tale of the Death of Arthur” will open with Aggravain’s determination to inform the King of the adultery.

In summary, it would seem that Malory selected, altered, and augmented the materials he used for the “Tale of Lancelot and Guenevere” with the specific intention of giving the seventh division a function as suspense—in the structure of *Le Morte Darthur* as a whole, and in connection with the presentation of the Lancelot-Guenevere relationship throughout the book. The suspense derives from the two related questions concerning the lack of harmony between Lancelot and Guenevere and the degree of Arthur’s awareness of the adultery. In each of the five subdivisions we have found the same pattern of suspense: there is a crisis in the affairs of the court; the crisis is seemingly happily resolved, but the continued adultery provides the basis for the future tragedy. In this way the “Tale of Lancelot and Guenevere” serves as preparation for the series of crises in the eighth division, which cannot be successfully resolved and which bring about both Arthur’s public awareness of the recommenced adultery and the eventual separation of the lovers.

Finally, if the evidence presented here concerning suspense in the “Tale of Lancelot and Guenevere” has merit, it should weigh heavily against Vinaver’s claim that Malory wrote eight separate romances, and for the unqualified acceptance of *Le Morte Darthur* as an intentionally unified work. For when read in this light, the seventh division contributes greatly to the functioning of the other divisions and cannot be adequately understood if considered either completely alone or in conjunction only with Tale VIII.