

King Arthur's Death

The Middle English
Stanzaic Morte Arthur
and
Alliterative Morte Arthure

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Revised by
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Preface to the Revised Edition

This volume differs substantially in editorial practice from other volumes in the TEAMS Series, because it is a revision of Larry D. Benson's *King Arthur's Death* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1974) in the Library of Literature Series. Professor Benson goes further in regularization of spellings and forms than is characteristic of TEAMS editions. I have retained most features of his system, especially since the texts he established are highly readable and authentic in all material respects. The one oddity, which Benson notes, is that the texts may appear more "Midlands" than the manuscripts are, but the manuscript history is such that the matter of dialectal variation is problematic anyway.

Benson's edition incorporates many corrections from earlier editors without comment. I have followed his example since to be more detailed in attribution would be more of a distraction than an aid to readers. Thus, many obvious errors in the manuscripts are silently corrected. The "alliterative scribe," Robert Thornton, was particularly given to dittography, the accidental repetition of a letter or letters. The manuscript of the stanzaic poem, though freer of obvious errors, has many corrections within it which Benson and I have both accepted without tedious notation.

In the stanzaic poem, Benson has made nine changes from Bruce's edition (EETS e.s. 88), which is the basis for his text; I have accepted all of them and have so indicated in notes. The situation with the alliterative poem is more complex. Here Benson made many emendations based both on earlier commentators and on his own judgment. Where I have accepted Benson's changes, I have indicated my reliance on Benson, his sources, and subsequent editors such as Valerie Krishna (1976) and Mary Hamel (1984). Where I have disagreed, I have cited the sources of my readings.

I have also rearranged marginal glosses and foot-glosses to fit the TEAMS format and I have added and modified glossarial material as I saw fit. For example, Benson has generally glossed unfamiliar but frequently used words for their first five appearances; I have continued to gloss words when I thought it useful for the reader, especially in the case of words like *bydene* and *dight*, which have many shadings of meaning. In general, I have glossed more liberally to avoid, where possible, the necessity of distracting reliance on the Glossary. Suffice it to say that, despite my noble explanatory intentions, any confusions introduced are my responsibility.

Most of Benson's textual and explanatory notes have been reproduced largely verbatim. Many new or radically revised notes have also been added by myself and the editorial board at the University of Rochester, often with reference to the excellent

King Arthur's Death

notes in the recent editions by Krishna (K) and Hamel (H). Finally, I have updated the Bibliography and simplified the Glossary, mostly by removing etymological information.

Benson's Introduction has been retained and his section on Versification and Style has been incorporated into the Introduction. More recent commentaries, cited in the revised Bibliography, have not impaired the appropriateness of Benson's observations. I have made only minor editorial changes to the Preface and Introduction, and brought the bibliographical references up to date. I have omitted Benson's extensive sections on Pronunciation and Grammar and on Vocabulary. In general, I have tried to preserve the integrity of Benson's edition while including some more recent editorial judgments and exercising my own discretion about what might or might not be helpful to the reader. That is, after all, what is most important: to make these works, two of the finest poems of the fourteenth century, available and accessible to readers without attenuating their linguistic integrity.

I would like to thank Professor Benson for his willingness to have his edition tampered with, and for his permission to reprint in this revision some portions of the original volume. I would like to thank Matt Melendy and Greg Matthews, students of mine who patiently explained to me what was hard and what was not in these poems. I would also like to thank Cynthia Schelmerdine (Classicalist), Walter Bromer (Medievalist), and Jan Foster (wife and smart person) for their vision, literally and figuratively, in discovering errors and insufficiencies. And, finally, thanks to Alan Lupack, Russell Peck, Karen Saupe, and Tom Seiler, of the TEAMS project, for their assistance with the formatting, glossing, and annotating of this edition.

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Whitman College

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Preface

The texts in this volume have been edited for readers who have had little or no training in Middle English. The two romances in this volume have never been easily accessible to students who are not specializing in Middle English. The *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*, linguistically a relatively easy work, is available only in a diplomatic scholarly edition that presents formidable difficulties to the beginning student or casual reader. The *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, a more difficult poem, is available only in scholarly editions that make so difficult a work almost impossible reading for all but advanced students. Yet these two romances are among the finest of our English medieval narrative poems; they deserve a wider readership simply for what they are, first-rate works of art. They are furthermore essential reading for the student of Malory, for the student of the Arthurian legend in England, and even for the reader who only wants a better understanding of medieval English narrative in the later Middle Ages.

The variety of Middle English in which these poems were written is not as difficult as may at first appear, and most of the initial difficulty is due to the reader's lack of familiarity with a relatively small number of words and a few syntactic peculiarities. The texts in this volume have been edited so that a beginning student can read them independently. The marginal glosses are designed to help with vocabulary, and the notes should clear up any syntactic difficulties. The student who reads these works with care should learn a good portion of the basic vocabulary necessary for further reading in Middle English texts. Consequently, when used as a first text in classes in Middle English, these poems can provide the student with an extensive body of Middle English, valuable in itself and intelligible even before beginning formal study of the language.

The texts of this volume have not been "simplified" in any significant way. The language itself remains about the same as it is in the manuscripts. However, the spelling has been regularized (in somewhat the same way editors of Chaucer have regularized his spelling), and this makes them much easier to read. Middle English itself is not very difficult, but Middle English spelling is nearly impossible, especially in texts such as these, which are both preserved in unique manuscripts well removed in time and place from their original authors. The *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* survives in a manuscript (British Museum MS Harley 2252) produced in the late fifteenth century by two different scribes who wrote in two different dialects, neither of which was that of the author, who apparently composed his work about a century before. The *Alliterative Morte Arthure* survives in a manuscript (Lincoln Cathedral MS

King Arthur's Death

Thornton A 1, 17, now called Lincoln Cathedral MS 91) that was written about 1440 by Robert Thornton; his copy was evidently a West Midlands text, though there is reason to believe our poem was written in the East Midlands.

It is no wonder that the language of the manuscripts is confused; each shows traces of at least two different dialects along with all the other difficulties that necessarily creep into vernacular texts in the process of transmission (the Winchester Manuscript of Malory's work, for example, shows that a number of lines were missing from Thornton's exemplar). Thus far, both poems have been edited only in more or less diplomatic editions that faithfully reproduce the confusion of the scribes, though Krishna, conservatively, and Hamel, more liberally, note the confusions and obvious errors. Such texts are essential for the advanced student, who must know and study the manuscript's representation of the language (and the editions in this volume are not intended as substitutes for such texts). However, for the beginning reader, and often even for the relatively advanced student, a faithful representation of the manuscript forms is frequently a misrepresentation of the language itself. Every teacher of Middle English is painfully aware of what happens when students are necessarily taught to pronounce what they see on the page and then inevitably do pronounce what they see, thus producing a strange and wildly varying language that has only a remote connection with Middle English. Long study and much practice are necessary before a student can easily distinguish between significant and insignificant spelling variations or can tell when a later scribe has foisted a fifteenth-century sound change off on a fourteenth-century poet.

In general, I have tried to use one spelling for each form, with the spellings selected on the basis of their existence in the manuscripts, their ease of recognition for a modern reader, and their faithfulness in representing the sound probably used by, or at least understandable to, the author. In few cases have all three criteria been met; where I have had to make a choice among the three, I have chosen ease in recognition, preferring a small error in sound or a slight deviation from the form the author may have used to a major difficulty in understanding. This has resulted in giving both texts a slightly more Midlands cast than they may have originally had.

I have regularized the plural pronoun forms in the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*, but beyond that I have not changed the grammatical forms (retaining both the -eth and -es endings of the third person present tense of the verbs), since many of these variations probably represent competing forms rather than a confused dialect. I have chosen the spellings *shall* and *sholde* rather than *sal* and *suld* (the more numerous forms in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*); I have usually preferred *o* to *a* in forms like *bold/bald*; I have used the modern spellings in most cases of variation of short vowels before *r*, such as *world/werld*, and in most cases of variation of short *e* and short *i* and short *u* and short *i*, and I have used the more modern forms in regularizing un-

Preface

stressed vowels (choosing *e* instead of *i* in inflectional endings and preferring *be-* to *bi-* in forms like *before/bifore*. I have generally used *-dg*, *-tch*, and *sh-* instead of the manuscript's *-gg*-, *-ch*, and *sch*-. The one case in which I have usually adopted a more archaic form is short French *a* plus an *n*, adopting the more common Modern English spelling of words like *giaunt* instead of the modern spelling *giant*. I have not aimed at complete consistency, since phonemes as well as grammatical forms were probably in competition. So were words; as the alliterations show, *Gawain* and *Wawain* were both acceptable forms of that knight's name, and so both forms have been retained. The idea is to produce a reasonably regular but not thoroughly anesthetized text.

Although the regularized spellings are intended as a guide to the pronunciation of these texts, I have not tried to use a phonemic alphabet of any sort, and in these texts, as in Modern English, the same sound may be represented in a variety of ways. I have retained five different spellings of /i/ and six different spellings of /e/. This obviously creates some initial difficulties in learning the correct pronunciation, a problem that would have been eliminated by a more purely phonemic alphabet, but I believe that these initial difficulties are more than compensated for by the ease in recognition this spelling allows and by the better preparation it provides for the student who intends to move from these texts to unregularized editions.

The occasional explanatory notes have been purposely kept to the minimum necessary for understanding the text, and the introduction has been kept as brief as possible. My hope is that the student will concentrate full attention on the texts themselves and thereby be led to further study.

The edition of the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* is based mainly on Bruce's text (see Bibliography for this and other editions mentioned below), which was read against a microfilm of the manuscript. I have made a very few minor emendations (indicated in the Textual Notes). The edition of the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* is based mainly on Brock's text, which was also read against a microfilm of the manuscript. I have made a good many emendations (the most important are listed in the Textual Notes), and aside from the regularizing, which in both poems often involves new readings of the lines. The Textual Notes are very brief and, except for the important textual changes that they record, I have not been able to include a full discussion of the solutions I have adopted in the establishment and interpretation of the text. I hope it will be understood that I have omitted this information not out of any disrespect for the previous editors, including those whose work I have used to establish the readings, but because the considerable editorial apparatus this would require would have been out of place in an edition of this sort.

Several conjectured lines have been added to the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* and one to the stanzaic poem; they are indicated by brackets and are not counted in the numbering of lines.

King Arthur's Death

I owe thanks to Gavin R. Benson, who worked hard on the mimeographed trial texts on which this volume is based; to Cassandra Benson, who also helped on that job; to Dr. Edward Tucker, who supplied helpful suggestions about the first of the trial editions; to the members of my Middle English class at Arizona State University at Tempe during the summer of 1970, who put up with the first trial edition; and to the members of English 2100 at Harvard during the spring term of 1971, who supplied valuable suggestions about the second. Fee Whitehall labored above and beyond the ordinary call of editorial duty, and her sharp eye saved these texts from many more errors and inconsistencies than they now contain.

*Lexington, Mass.
1972*

L. D. B.

Introduction

The romances in this volume are two of the best and most important of our surviving Middle English romances. Each deals with the last years and death of King Arthur, and yet in tone, style, characterization, and especially in plot the two poems are sharply contrasting works. They reveal two quite different aspects of the medieval Arthurian legend, and they exemplify the best of two distinct romance traditions.

The *Alliterative Morte Arthure* ranks just after the works of the *Gawain*-poet among the finest products of that late medieval literary movement that we call the “Alliterative Revival.” It lacks the delicacy and balance of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, but the vigor of its narrative, the epic sweep of its action, and its coolly realistic presentation of fourteenth-century warfare lend the poem an interest of its own. The King Arthur of this poem is neither the “somewhat childish” romance king who appears in *Sir Gawain* nor the helpless cuckold he so often seems in French romance. He is a warrior king, shifting his troops about, sending out skirmishers, and ever ready to do battle himself.

This is primarily a poem of battles, and there are no better accounts of late medieval warfare than we find in this poem. Nor are there any more sobering reminders that all was not heroic and romantic in this age. The poet’s account of the siege of Metz (lines 3032–43), with his description of the results of a medieval bombardment (from slings and catapults), reminds us all too sharply of more recent horrors. Yet our poet is finally more interested in the fates of men than of armies, and he has a keen eye for psychological facts. His description of Mordred’s momentary repentance (lines 3886–96) is a marvelous touch, unprecedented in Arthurian tradition (in which Mordred is never treated with such sympathetic understanding) and worthy of a place alongside some of the best passages in Chaucer. Each reader will find his own favorite passages, for the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* well deserves the high reputation it has among specialists, who, because of the difficulties of the text, have thus far constituted almost its only modern audience.

The *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* is a very different narrative. It is a brilliant condensation of the French prose romance (*La Mort Artu*) which, along with the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* itself, was the source of Malory’s last two tales, “The Book of Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere” and “The Most Piteous Tale of the Morte Arthur.” Writing a century before Sir Thomas Malory completed his own *Morte Darthur*, the unknown English romancer achieved many of the virtues that we associate

King Arthur's Death

with Malory's later work and produced a relatively tight and fast-moving narrative. The French *Mort Artu* is a leisurely and complex narrative, characterized by an elaborate network of episodes and by a full treatment of the psychological and philosophical implications of the action. The author of the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*, like most English romancers of his time, was less interested in psychological abstractions. He reduced the material he inherited from the French to about a fifth of its original length, producing a work that succeeds because of its lean and rapid narrative and that gains force because of its more obvious focus upon the actions themselves. Yet the author does not omit completely the psychologizing that characterized his French source. As any reader of Chaucer knows, the literature of the later fourteenth century, marked by a new interest in individual feelings, is often (as in The Second Nun's Tale or even parts of *Troilus*) what we might now call a sentimental literature ("Pitee runneth soon in gentle heart" is one of Chaucer's favorite sayings). Tears flow freely in this romance (as they do in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*), but the compression of the narrative prevents the sentiment from becoming excessive. The poet's interest in the feelings of his characters humanizes them, just as his omission of the philosophical interest in Fortune, so important in the French, focuses the tragedy upon the real people caught in a real web of tragic circumstances.

Although these two romances deserve wider audiences primarily because of their literary value, they are also of great importance from the standpoint of literary history, because of the traditions they represent and because of their later influence. Most readers of English literature know the Arthurian legend only from the work (or works) of Sir Thomas Malory. Malory's great synthesis of earlier romances shaped the Arthurian legend for later English writers — for Spenser, for Milton, for Tennyson, for Mark Twain, for writers and readers of our own day; Malory's genius was such that almost all subsequent English treatments of Arthurian themes have been based on his work.

However, there was an English Arthurian tradition before Malory, and the two romances in this volume provide the best introduction to this tradition. One should say "traditions," for these two romances embody two distinct versions of the life and death of King Arthur. The *Alliterative Morte Arthure* is in the tradition of sober chronicle history, which stems ultimately from Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth-century *History of the Kings of Britain*. Our poet, of course, used other sources as well, but his fondness for precise dates, his use of real place names, and his comparative lack of interest in the supernatural lend his poem the air of chronicle rather than romance. So does his lack of interest in matters of love and courtly manners. Honor is more important than courtesy in his poem; Gawain is a great warrior, not a famous courtier, and Lancelot is only a young and fierce knight, with no hint of

Introduction

interest in Guenevere (or Waynor, as she is called in this poem). Guenevere's desertion of Arthur seems more a political than an amatory act, and Arthur is infuriated rather than heartbroken at her betrayal.

The *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* represents a different tradition, more familiar to modern readers, one in which the emphasis is more romantic than historical. Arthur is the lord of the fictional Camelot (a place never mentioned in the alliterative poem), and his most important campaign is in Lancelot's legendary kingdom of Benwick rather than at Metz or Milan. When he goes to the Isle of Avalon, it is not because there are skilled surgeons there who try and fail to cure his wounds, as in the alliterative poem, but because the three strange ladies come to take him away in a magic boat. One can detect the skeleton of the historical tradition embedded in the plot of the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*: while Arthur is engaged in a foreign war, Mordred, his steward, usurps his kingdom; Arthur returns, and in a final battle he and the traitor are both killed. This is the basic plot of both the stanzaic and alliterative poems. What the alliterative poet adds expands but does not essentially change the action. In the stanzaic poem, the tale of the love of Lancelot and Guenevere has been superimposed on the basic plot. The focus is shifted to the clash of loyalties and internal divisions within the Round Table itself; the significant foreign war is now that between Arthur's forces and Lancelot's, and Arthur's death is now due as much to the feud between Lancelot and Gawain as it is to Mordred's rebellion. Mordred is changed from the principal (and largely unmotivated) villain to simply one more element in the complex circumstances in which all the characters are trapped.

Sir Thomas Malory must have read a good many English romances before he turned to the French prose romances that were his main sources for the *Morte Darthur*. However, the only two English romances we can be sure he read are the two romances in this volume. Apparently Malory's first attempt to write an Arthurian romance of his own was what is now the second tale in the *Morte Darthur*, the "Tale of Arthur and the Emperor Lucius." This is a straightforward modernization, with relatively few changes, of the first half of the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*. As Vinaver has shown (in the introduction to his edition of Malory), Malory's adaptation of the alliterative poem had a profound influence on his style, and though he next turned to French sources, his experience with the alliterative rhythms of this romance is apparent throughout his later work.

The last romances Malory wrote were the last two tales in the *Morte Darthur*, "The Book of Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere" and "The Most Piteous Tale of the Morte Arthur." Though his principal source for these tales was the French *Mort Artu*, Malory again turned to English romance and drew on the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*. When the English and French versions differed, he almost always preferred

King Arthur's Death

the English version, and occasionally he carried over into his own work the exact wording of the stanzaic romance. Probably the influence of the stanzaic poem is even deeper than this, since Malory's handling of his other French sources — the way in which he condensed and modified the plots — shows that he seems to have been following the example of the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*.

We cannot be sure exactly where or when the two romances in this volume were composed. Probably both were written in the North Midlands area of England in the fourteenth century, the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* around the middle of the century, the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* toward the end, probably around 1400 or so (see note to line 3773). These, however, can be only guesses. All we can say for sure is that the unknown authors produced works of exceptional merit that have a unique importance for English literary history.

The two romances in this volume represent two distinct stylistic traditions. The *Alliterative Morte Arthure* belongs to the "Alliterative Revival," the literary movement that begins in the middle years of the fourteenth century and that includes such important writers as William Langland and the author of *Gawain and the Green Knight*. The *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* is written in the more common eight-syllable, four-beat line of English romance, a line that derives ultimately from French models. Despite its foreign source, this is a simpler, more popular style than that of the alliterative romance, and the author of the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* probably intended his work for a somewhat wider and less sophisticated audience than the alliterative poet aimed for.

However, the author of the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* selected an unusual and rather difficult stanza for his poem. It is an eight-line stanza riming *abababab*. There are variations from this, as there are from his normal eight-syllable line (the first stanza rimes *ababcbcb* and variant stanzas, such as lines 361–67, do appear), but in general the poet adheres to this rime scheme, which requires two sets of four riming words for each full stanza. Such a stanza is easy enough for a lyric poet to handle (and it appears in a number of relatively short Middle English poems) but it raises real difficulties in a long narrative poem, and it is not surprising that no other romancer attempted to use it.

Our poet was able to use it successfully because he adopted a number of traditional devices that eased his task of handling this stanza. He uses a relatively limited set of stock rimes, some of them several times over. *Launcelot du Lake*, for example, almost always rimes with *sake*, *take*, *make*, or *wake*. The relatively rare word *neven* ("to name") almost invariably rimes with *heven*, *steven* ("voice"), and *seven*. In addition to stock rimes such as these, the poet frequently uses imperfect rimes. In lines 528–35, for example, the word *life* rimes with *swithe*, *kithe*, and *blithe*. This is not due to carelessness, for the same group of rimes appears several

Introduction

times in the poem. Nor does it seem to be due simply to including assonance within his definition of rime, since he also frequently rimes vowel sounds that are not exactly the same; he makes no clear distinction between open and closed vowel sounds and he is willing to rime words such as *dere* and *were*, as in the opening lines of the poem.

Such a use of rime has a definite advantage, not only for the poet but for the reader, since it helps to de-emphasize the rimes and to keep them from intruding too often upon the consciousness of the audience. As the reader will discover, the rimes remain well in the background and do not impede the narrative. That is not always the case in Middle English romance.

The sound texture of the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* owes almost as much to alliteration as to rime. The earliest modern critic of this poem, the eighteenth-century bibliographer Humphrey Wanley, wrote that our poet “useth many Saxon or obsolete words, and very often delighted himself (as did the author of ‘Piers Plowman’) in the Chime of words beginning with the same letter as (that I may give one example) ‘For well thee wist withouten ween.’” Examples of this delight in the chime of alliteration can be found in almost every stanza in the poem, beginning with the opening lines:

Lordinges that are *lef* and *dere*
Listeneth, and I shall you tell. . . .

This fondness for alliteration and the frequent use of alliterative formulas (such as *wo and wele*) is not unusual among the authors of the riming romances, but the man who wrote the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* seems particularly fond of the alliterative style, and one suspects that he could have cast his poem in the alliterative meter if he had so chosen.

In purely alliterative poems, such as the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, there is no rime at the ends of the lines. Instead, each line falls into two half-lines which are united by alliteration — the identity (or near identity) of the initial sound of stressed syllables. In the first half-line most often two, but sometimes three, words will alliterate. In the second half-line usually only one word will alliterate. The alliteration always falls on a word that bears metrical stress; there are two (sometimes three) stressed words in the first half-line, and two (almost never three) in the second half-line. The number of unstressed syllables can vary considerably:

Now grete glorious God through grace of Himselven
And the precious prayer of His pris Moder
Sheld us fro shamesdeede and sinful workes,
And give us grace to guie and govern us here

King Arthur's Death

In this wretched world, through virtuous living
That we may kaire til his court, the kingdom of heven. . . . (lines 1–6)

The reader need not worry too much about the metrical pattern; if one reads the lines aloud deliberately (but not too slowly) with slight pauses at the ends of the half-lines and with attention to the sense, the stresses will fall where they should.

As shown by the lines above, the poet can take certain liberties with the alliterating sounds. *Sh-* can sometimes alliterate with *s-* and *w-* with *v-* (though these sounds may have been closer to one another than in Modern English). Moreover, it is a convention of this verse that any vowel sound can alliterate with any other vowel sound:

Ye that lust has to lithe or loves for to here
Of elders of olde time and of their awke deedes. . . . (lines 12–13)

Notice that only the important words (nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs) bear the alliteration. The word “of” in the second line has no part in the alliterative scheme. Words like “of” (or “to” in the first line above) are not ordinarily stressed in speech, and such words are therefore not ordinarily stressed in alliterative poetry. That is why a reader can not go far wrong in getting the stress right by simply reading the lines with attention to the sense.

One characteristic of the alliteration of the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* is the author’s fondness for carrying one alliterating sound through several lines in a kind of *tour de force*:

But they fit them fair, these frek bernes,
Fewters in freely on feraunt steedes,
Foines full felly with flishand speres,
Fretten off orfrayes fast upon sheldes;
So fele fay is in fight upon the feld leved
That ech a furth on the firth of red blood runnes. (lines 2139–2144)

The poet seems to have an endless stock of alliterating words, and if he stops at this point, it is probably not because he has run out of words beginning with *f*; only a couple of lines later he begins another series with *f*.

The alliterative style affects more than the meter. The poets of the Alliterative Revival used the traditional line of Anglo-Saxon poetry, which had disappeared from written records about two centuries before and was revived by a number of poets (mainly living in the West and North of England) in the fourteenth century. Evidently the style of alliterative poetry had been preserved by popular, unlettered

Introduction

poets who continued to compose and transmit poems by oral, non-written means from Anglo-Saxon times until well into the fourteenth century. Verse composed in this manner depends on a heavily formulaic language and a fixed, archaic poetic vocabulary. Even the casual reader of the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* will soon recognize how much of this old, formulaic style is preserved in the poems of the Alliterative Revival. Half-lines (especially second half-lines) tend to be used over and over in identical (or nearly identical) forms, and the poet makes frequent use of the specialized vocabulary characteristic of alliterative poetry, with its many synonyms for “man” (*renk, bern, lede, freke, gome, shalk*, etc.) or for the verb “go” (*grath, boun, ferk*, etc.) Much of the difficulty in a first reading of an alliterative poem is its use of this special poetic diction, consisting largely of words that are seldom encountered outside alliterative verse.

Although the ultimate background of the alliterative style is a popular, non-literary tradition, poems such as the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* are sophisticated works that were probably addressed to rather limited audiences that prized the verbal dexterity these poems display. The language was difficult even for the average listener in Middle English times, and the poets tended to prefer description and analysis to rapidly moving plot such as we associate with more popular poetry. The *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*, with its emphasis on action, has a popular appeal quite different from that of the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, in which the careful attention to the texture of events, to the description of armor and dress, to the niceties of feasting, to fine points of heraldry, and to the exact details of military campaigns reveals the interests of a leisured and aristocratic audience. The author expects his hearers to understand an occasional French phrase, to recognize his geographical references (at least the European ones), and to share with him an interest that goes beyond the action to the definition of the quality of the action and of the life it represents.

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

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Stanzaic Morte Arthur

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Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| | <p>Lordinges that are lef and dere
 Listeneth, and I shall you tell,
 By olde dayes what aunters were
 Among our eldres that befell;
 5 In Arthur dayes, that noble king,
 Befell aunters ferly fele,
 And I shall tell of their ending,
 That mikel wiste of wo and wele.</p> | <i>beloved</i>
<i>Listen</i>
<i>adventures</i> |
| 10 | <p>The knights of the Table Round,
 The Sangrail when they had sought,
 Aunters they before them found
 Finished and to ende brought;
 Their enemies they bette and bound
 For gold on life they left them nought.</p> | <i>Holy Grail</i>
<i>Adventures</i> |
| 15 | <p>Four yere they lived sound,
 When they had these workes wrought.</p> | <i>beat</i> |
| 20 | <p>Til on a time that it befell
 The king in bed lay by the queen;
 Of aunters they began to tell,
 Many that in that land had been:
 “Sir, yif that it were your will,
 Of a wonder thing I wolde you mene,
 How that your court beginneth to spill
 Of doughty knightes all bydene;</p> | <i>if</i>
<i>,would; tell</i>
<i>become empty</i>
<i>completely</i> |
| 25 | <p>“Sir, your honour beginnes to fall,
 That wont was wide in world to sprede,
 Of Launcelot and other all,
 That ever so doughty were in deed.”
 “Dame, there to thy counsel I call:
 30 What were best for such a need?”</p> | <i>spread</i> |

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

	“Yif ye your honour holde shall, A tournament were best to bede,	If announce
	“For-why that auuter shall begin And be spoke of on every side,	Because; adventure
35	That knightes shall there worship win To deed of armes for to ride. Sir, lettes thus your court no blinne, But live in honour and in pride.”	honor by riding not cease admiration
40	“Certes, dame,” the king said then, “This ne shall no lenger abide.”	Certainly shall no longer
	A tournament the king let bede; At Winchester sholde it be Young Galehod was good in need; The cheftain of the cry was he,	commanded to be announced should
45	With knightes that were stiff on steed, That ladies and maidens might see Who that beste were of deed, Through doughtiness to have the gree.	chieftain; company strong on horses
	Knightes arme them bydene To the tournament to ride, With sheldes brode and helmes sheen To win grete honour and pride.	at once
50	Launcelot left with the queen, And seke he lay that ilke tide; For love that was them between, He made enchesoun for to abide.	remained sick; same time
55	The king sat upon his steed, And forth is went upon his way; Sir Agravain for such a need, At home beleft, for sooth to say,	has gone
60	For men told in many a thede That Launcelot by the queen lay; For to take them with the deed, He awaites both night and day.	remained; truth nation
		in the act

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

65	Launcelot forth wendes he Unto the chamber to the queen, And set him down upon his knee And salues there that lady sheen “Launcelot, what dostou here with me?	<i>himself salutes; bright dost thou as well dread</i>
70	The king is went and the court bydene; I drede we shall discovered be Of the love is us between.	
	“Sir Agravain at home is he; Night and day he waites us two.”	
75	“Nay,” he said, “my lady free, I ne think not it shall be so; I come to take my leve of thee, Out of court ere that I go.”	<i>noble do not think leave</i>
80	“Ya, swithe that thou armed be, For thy dwelling me is full wo.”	<i>Indeed, quickly lingering to me; painful</i>
	Launcelot to his chamber yede There rich attire lay him before, Armed him in noble weed, Of that armour gentilly was shore. ¹	<i>went himself; material</i>
85	Sword and sheld were good at need In many batailes that he had bore, And horsed him on a grey steed King Arthur had him geve before.	<i>shield battles given</i>
	Holdes he none highe way, ² The knight that was hardy and free, But hastes both night and day Fast toward that riche citee (Winchester it hight, for sooth to say)	
90		<i>noble</i>
95	There the tournament sholde be; King Arthur in a castle lay,	<i>great city is called; truth Where; should</i>

¹ From which his armor was nobly (gentilly) fashioned (shore)

² He does not keep to the high (main) road

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

Full much there was of game and glee.

pleasure

For-why wolde men Launcelot behold,
And he ne wolde not himselfe show
With his shoulres gan he fold

*Because; desired to see
did not want to
did turn away
head*

100 And down he hanged his hed full low,
As he ne might his limmes weld;
Kept he no bugle blow;
Well he seemed as he were old,
For-thy ne couth him no man know.

*As if; control his limbs
i.e., had no trumpeter
as if
Therefore; could*

105 The king stood on a towr on hight;
Sir Ewain clepes he that tide:
"Sir Ewain, knowestou any wight
This knight that rides here beside?"
Sir Ewain spekes wordes right
110 (That ay is hende is not to hide):
"Sir, it is some olde knight
Is come to see the yonge knighthes ride."

*tower; on high
calls; time
knowest thou in any way
speaks; directly
Whatever; genteel
young*

They beheld him both anon
A stounde for the steedes sake;
115 His horse stomeled at a stone
That all his body there-with gan shake;
The knight then braundished ich a bone,
As he the bridle up gan take;
There-by wiste they both anon
120 That it was Launcelot du Lake.

*moment; horse's
stumbled
So that; did
shook; every
did
knew; immediately*

King Arthur then spekes he
To Sir Ewain these wordes right:
"Well may Launcelot holden be
Of all the world the beste knight,
125 Of beautee and of bountee,
And sithe is none so much of might,
At every deede best is he,

*speaks
directly
considered
beauty; generosity
since there is no one*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

	And sithe he nolde it wiste no wight, ¹	
130	“Sir Ewain, will we don him bide; He weenes that we know him nought.”	make; wait supposes to let do nearby so far hither
	“Sir, it is better let him ride, And let him don as he hath thought; He will be here ner beside, Sithe he thus fer hider hath sought;	
135	We shall know him by his deed And by the horse that he hath brought.”	
	An erl wonned there beside, The Lord of Ascolot was hight;	earl dwelled called
140	Launcelot gan thider ride, And said he will there dwell all night;	did; thither
	They received him with grete pride; A riche soper there was dight;	great pomp
	His name gan he hele and hide. And said he was a strange knight.	supper; prepared did; conceal foreign
145	Then had the erle sonnes two, That were noble knightes maked new.	earl newly made
	In that time was the manner so, ² When yonge knightes sholde sheldes shew,	
	Til the first yere were ago	
150	To bere armes of one hew, Red or white, yellow or blo;	blue
	There-by men yonge knightes knew.	young
	As they sat at their soper, Launcelot to the erle spake there:	supper earl
155	“Sir, is here any bacheler That to the tournament will fare?”	young knight

¹ *And since he wants no one to know it*

² *At that time it was the custom that, / When young knights were to show their shields for the first time, / They should bear arms all of one color (without any heraldic device) / Until the first year had passed*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| | "I have two sonnes that me is dere,
And now that one is seke full sore,
So that in company he were,
Mine other son I wolde were there." | dear
sick
<i>Providing that he had company
would</i> |
| 160 | "Sir, and thy son will thider right,
The lenger I will him abide,
And help him there with all my might,
That him none harme shall betide." | <i>if; wants to go directly there
longer</i> |
| 165 | "Sir, thee seemes a noble knight,
Courtais and hende, is not to hide;
At morrow shall ye dine and dight,
Togeder I rede well that ye ride." | courteous; polite
<i>In the morning; prepare
Together I advise</i> |
| 170 | "Sir, of one thing I will you minne,
And beseech you for to speed,
Yif here were any armour in
That I might borrow it to this deed." | <i>put in mind
succeed</i> |
| 175 | "Sir, my son lieth seke here-in;
Take his armour and his steed;
For my sonnes men shall you ken,
Of red shall be your bothes weed." | <i>If
for
sick
know
both your garments</i> |
| 180 | Th'erl had a daughter that was him dere;
Mikel Launcelot she beheld;
Her rode was red as blossom on brere
Or flowr that springeth in the feld;
Glad she was to sit him ner,
The noble knight under sheld;
Weeping was her moste cheer, ¹
So mikel on him her herte gan helde. | <i>Intently (much)
cheek; briar
flower; field
near
shield</i> |
| 185 | Up then rose that maiden still,
And to her chamber went she tho;
Down upon her bed she fell,
That nigh her herte brast in two. | <i>then
nearly; heart broke</i> |

¹ She was most often seen weeping, / So firmly was her heart set

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

	Launcelot wiste what was her will,	<i>knew; desire</i>
190	Well he knew by other mo; ¹	
	Her brother cleped he him til,	<i>called; to him</i>
	And to her chamber gonне they go.	<i>did</i>
	He sat him down for the maidens sake,	
	Upon her bedde there she lay;	<i>bed where</i>
195	Courtaisly to her he spake,	<i>Courteously</i>
	For to comfort that faire may.	<i>maid</i>
	In her armes she gan him take,	<i>did</i>
	And these wordes gan she say:	
	“Sir, but yif that ye it make,	<i>unless you do it (save my life)</i>
200	Save my life no leche may.”	<i>physician; can</i>
	“Lady,” he said, “thou moste let;	<i>must stop</i>
	For me ne gif thee nothing ill; ²	
	In another stede mine herte is set;	<i>place</i>
	It is not at mine owne will;	
205	In erthe is nothing that shall me let	<i>earth; prevent</i>
	To be thy knight loud and still;	<i>ever (at any time)</i>
	Another time we may be met	
	When thou may better speke thy fill.”	<i>speak</i>
	“Sithe I of thee ne may have more,	<i>Since; may not</i>
210	As thou art hardy knight and free,	<i>bold; noble</i>
	In the tournament that thou wolde bere	<i>would bear</i>
	Some sign of mine that men might see.”	
	“Lady, thy sleve thou shalt of-shere;	<i>cut off</i>
	I will it take for the love of thee;	
215	So did I never no ladies ere,	<i>for any; before</i>
	But one that most hath loved me.”	
	On the morrow when it was day,	<i>In the morning</i>
	They dined and made them yare,	<i>ready</i>
	And then they went forth on their way,	

¹ *He knew well by other signs in addition to her weeping*

² *Do not make yourself sick for my sake*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 220 Togeder as they brethern were.
 They met a squier by the way
 That from the tournament gan fare,
 And asked him yif he couth them say
 Which party was the bigger there. together as if
squire
did travel
if; could
i.e., more powerful
- 225 "Sir Galahod hath folk the more,
 For sooth, lordinges, as I you tell,
 But Arthur is the bigger there;
 He hath knightes stiff and fell;
 They are bold and breme as bore,
 230 Ewain, and Bors, and Lionel."
 Th'erles son to him spake there:
 "Sir, with them I rede we dwell." lords
more powerful
unwavering; fierce
fierce as a boar
advise
- 235 Launcelot spake, as I you rede;
 "Sithe they are men of grete valour,
 240 How might we among them speed,
 There all are stiff and strong in stour?
 Help we them that hath most need;
 Again the best we shall well doure;
 And we might there do any deed,
 It wolde us turn to more honour." tell
Since
succeed
Where; unwavering; battle
Let us help those
Against; endure
If
- 245 Launcelot spekes in that tide
 As knight that was hardy and free:
 "Tonight without I rede we bide;
 The press is grete in that citee."
 250 "Sir, I have an aunt here beside,
 A lady of swithe grete beautee;
 Were it your will thider to ride,
 Glad of us then wolde she be." time
noble
outside; advise; remain
crowd
very great beauty
thither
- 255 Tho to the castle gonne they fare,
 To the lady fair and bright;
 Blithe was the lady there
 That they wolde dwell with her that night;
 Hastely was their soper yare
 Of mete and drink richly dight. Then; did
supper; ready
food; prepared

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- | | | |
|-----|--|-----------------------------------|
| 255 | On the morrow gonne they dine and fare,
Both Launcelot and that other knight. | <i>ate; set forth</i> |
| | When they come into the feld,
Much there was of game and play; | <i>field
pleasure</i> |
| | A while they hoved and beheld | <i>paused</i> |
| 260 | How Arthurs knightes rode that day.
Galehodes party began to held, | <i>draw back</i> |
| | On foot his knightes are led away. | |
| | Launcelot — stiff was under sheld — | <i>stout</i> |
| | Thinkes to help, yif that he may. | <i>Intends; if; can</i> |
| 265 | Beside him come then Sir Ewain,
Breme as any wilde bore; | <i>Fierce; boar</i> |
| | Launcelot springes him again
In redde armes that he bore; | <i>runs; against
red</i> |
| | A dint he gave with mikel main; | <i>blow; much force</i> |
| 270 | Sir Ewain was unhorsed there,
That all men wend he had been slain, | <i>supposed</i> |
| | So was he wounded wonder sore. | <i>very painfully</i> |
| | Sir Bors thought nothing good,
When Sir Ewain unhorsed was; | |
| 275 | Forth he springes as he were wode,
To Launcelot, withouten lees; | <i>as if; crazy</i> |
| | Launcelot hit him on the hood, | <i>without lies (I tell it)</i> |
| | The nexte way to ground he chese; | <i>helmet</i> |
| | Was none so stiff again him stood; | <i>closest; went</i> |
| 280 | Full thin he made the thickest press. | <i>resolute against
crowd</i> |
| | Sir Lionel began to teen,
And hastely he made him boune; | <i>mourn</i> |
| | To Launcelot with herte keen, | <i>ready</i> |
| | He rode with helm and sworde brown; | <i>heart</i> |
| 285 | Launcelot hit him, as I ween,
Through the helm into the crown, | <i>shining sword</i> |
| | That ever after it was seen | <i>suppose</i> |
| | Both horse and man there yede adown. | <i>skull
went</i> |

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| 290 | The knightes gadered togeder there
And gonne with craft their counsel take;
Such a knight was never ere
But it were Launcelot du Lake; | <i>gathered together</i>
<i>did; skill</i> |
| | But, for the sleeve on his crest was there,
For Launcelot wolde they him not take, | <i>because</i> |
| 295 | For he bore never none such before,
But it were for the queenes sake. | <i>Except</i> |
|
“Of Ascolot he never was
That thus well beres him today!” | | |
| 300 | Ector said, withouten lees,
What he was he wolde assay.
A noble steed Ector him chese,
And forthe rides glad and gay; | <i>bears himself</i>
<i>without lies</i>
<i>test</i>
<i>chose for himself</i> |
| | Launcelot he met amid the press,
Between them was no childe play. | <i>crowd</i> |
| 305 | Ector smote with herte good
To Launcelot that ilke tide;
Through helm into his hed it yode
That nighe lost he all his pride. | <i>heart</i>
<i>very time</i>
<i>head; went</i>
<i>nearly</i> |
| | Launcelot hit him on the hood
That his horse fell and he beside. | <i>helmet</i> |
| 310 | Launcelot blindes in his blood;
Out of the feld full fast gan ride. | <i>is blinded; his own</i>
<i>field</i> |
|
Out of the feld they riden tho
To a forest high and hore. | | |
| 315 | When they come by them one two, ¹
Off his helm he takes there.
“Sir,” he said, “me is full wo;
I drede that ye be hurt full sore.” | <i>ride then</i>
<i>hoary</i>
<i>(it) is very sad to me</i>
<i>dread; very painfully</i> |
| | “Nay,” he said, “it is not so,
But fain I wolde at rest we were.” | <i>i.e., Lancelot</i>
<i>eagerly</i> |

¹ *When they came alone by themselves (those two alone)*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- “Sir, mine aunt is here beside,
 There we bothe were all night;
 Were it your will thider to ride,
 She will us help with all her might,
 And send for leches this ilke tide;
 Your woundes for to hele and dight;
 And I myself will with you abide,
 And be your servaunt and your knight.”
- To the castle they took the way,
 To the lady fair and hende.
 She sent for leches, as I you say,
 That wonned both fer and hende,
 But by the morrow that it was day,
 In bed he might himself not wend;
 So sore wounded there he lay
 That well nigh had he sought his end.
- Tho King Arthur with mikel pride
 Called his knightes all him by,
 And said a month he wolde there bide,
 And in Winchester lie.
 Heraudes he did go and ride
 Another tournament for to cry;
 “This knight will be here beside,
 For he is wounded bitterly.”
- When the lettres made were,
 The heraudes forth with them yede,
 Through Yngland for to fare,
 Another tournament for to bede;
 Bade them busk and make them yare,
 All that stiff were on steed.
 Thus these lettres sente were
 To tho that doughty were of deed.
- Til on a time that it befell
 An heraud comes by the way
 And at the castle a night gan dwell

where

*physicians; very time
heal; prepare (dress)*

*courteous
physicians
lived; far; near
morning
turn*

*Then; much pomp
Heralds; caused to
announce*

*letters
heralds; went
England
announce
hasten; ready
stout
letters
those*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

	There as Launcelot wounded lay, And of the tournament gan tell That sholde come on the Sunday; Launcelot sighes wonder still And said: "Alas and wele-away!"	<i>Where</i> <i>should</i> <i>woe is me</i>
360	"When knightes win worship and pride, Some aunter shall hold me away, As a coward for to abide. This tournameint, for sooth to say, For me is made this ilke tide;	<i>honor; admiration</i> <i>chance</i>
365	Though I sholde die this ilke day, Certes, I shall thider ride."	<i>very time</i> <i>very</i> <i>Certainly</i>
370	The leche answered also soon And said: "Sir, what have ye thought? All the craft that I have done I ween it will you help right nought. There is no man under the moon,	<i>physician; immediately</i> <i>intended</i>
375	By Him that all this world hath wrought, Might save your life to that time come That ye upon your steed were brought!"	<i>believe; not at all</i> <i>created</i> <i>if the time should come</i>
380	"Certes, though I die this day, In my bed I will not lie; Yet had I lever do what I may Than here to die thus cowardly!" The leche anon then went his way	<i>Certainly</i> <i>rather; can</i>
385	And wolde no lenger dwell him by; His woundes scried and still he lay, And in his bed he swooned thrie.	<i>physician immediately</i> <i>longer</i> <i>broke open</i> <i>thrice</i>
390	The lady wept as she were wode, When she saw he dede wolde be; Th'erles son with sorry mood The leche again clepes he And said: "Thou shalt have yiftes good For-why that thou wilt dwell with me." Craftily then staunched he his blood	<i>crazy</i> <i>dead would be</i> <i>physician; calls</i> <i>gifts</i> <i>Providing</i> <i>Skillfully</i>

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

And of good comfort bade him be.

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 395 | The herald then went on his way
At morrow when the day was light,
Also swithe as ever he may,
To Winchester that ilke night;
He salued the king, for sooth to say
(By him sat Sir Ewain the knight),
And sithe he told upon his play ¹
What he had herde and seen with sight: | herald
morning
As quickly
same
saluted

heard |
| 400 | “Of all that I have seen with sight,
Wonder thought me never more ²
Than me did of a fooled knight
That in his bed lay wounded sore;
He might not heve his hed up-right
For all the world have wonne there; ³
For anguish that he ne ride might
All his woundes scried there.” | foolish

lift

could not ride
broke open |
| 410 | Sir Ewain then spekes wordes free,
And to the kinge said he there:
“Certes, no coward knight is he;
Alas, that he nere hole and fere!
Well I wot that it is he
That we all of unhorsed were.
The tournament is best let be,
Forsooth, that knight may not come there.” | noble

is not healthy and sound
know
By whom all of us were unhorsed |
| 415 | There tournament was then no more,
But thus departeth all the press;
Knightes took their leve to fare;
Ichon his owne way him chese.
To Camelot the king went there, | company
leave
Each one; took |

¹ And then he told them about his amusements

² Never a greater wonder did it seem to me

³ Even if by doing so he could have won the whole world

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

	There as Queen Gaynor was; He wend have found Launcelot there; Away he was, withouten lees.	Where; Guinevere expected to without lies
425	Launcelot sore wounded lay; Knightes sought him full wide; Th'erles son night and day Was alway him beside. Th'erl himself, when he ride may, Brought him home with mikel pride	<i>painfully</i> <i>always</i> <i>can</i> <i>much pomp</i> <i>pleasure</i>
430	And made him both game and play Til he might bothe go and ride.	<i>could; walk</i>
435	Bors and Lionel then swore, And at the king their leve took there, Again they wolde come never more, Til they wiste where Launcelot were. Ector went with them there To seech his broder that was him dere. Many a land they gonне through fare And sought him bothe fer and ner.	<i>from; leave</i> <i>knew</i> <i>seek; brother</i> <i>did</i> <i>far and near</i>
440	Til on a time that it befell That they come by that ilke way, And at the castle at mete gonне dwell, There as Launcelot wounded lay. Launcelot they saw, as I you tell,	<i>same</i> <i>food did</i> <i>Where</i>
445	Walk on the walles him to play; On knees for joy all they fell, So blithe men they were that day.	<i>enjoy himself</i> <i>Such glad</i>
450	When Launcelot saw tho ilke three That he in worlde loved best, A merrier meeting might no man see, And sithe he led them to rest. Th'erl himself, glad was he	<i>those same</i> <i>then</i>
455	That he had gotten such a guest; So was the maiden fair and free That all her love on him had cast.	

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

	When they were to soper dight Bordes were set and clothes spredde; Th'erles daughter and the knight Togeder was set, as he them bade;	<i>prepared tablecloths Together</i>
460	Th'erles sonnes that both were wight, To serve them were never sad, And th'erl himself with all his might, To make them both blithe and glad.	<i>strong happy</i>
	But Bors ever in mind he thought That Launcelot had been wounded sore: “Sir, were it your will to hele it nought ¹ But tell where ye thus hurte were?”	
465	“By Him that all this world hath wrought,” Launcelot himselfe swore,	
470	“The dint shall be full dere bought, Yif ever we may meet us more!”	<i>blow; dearly If</i>
	Ector ne liked that no wight, The wordes that he herde there;	<i>not a bit heard</i>
475	For sorrow he lost both strength and might; The colours changed in his lere. Bors then said these wordes right:	<i>face directly</i>
	“Ector, thou may make ivel cheer; For sooth, it is no coward knight That thou art of ymanased here.”	<i>evil (sour) expression menaced by</i>
480	“Ector,” he said, “were thou it were That wounded me thus wonder sore?”	<i>was it you who</i>
	Ector answered with simple cheer: “Lord, I ne wiste that ye it were;	<i>innocent expression</i>
	A dint of you I had there;	<i>didn't know</i>
485	Felled I never none so sore.” Sir Lionel by God then swore That “Mine will seen be ever more!” ²	<i>blow from</i>

¹ Sir, would it be your desire not to conceal it

² That “My (wound) will be seen forevermore!”

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

	Sir Bors then answerd as tite As knight that wise was under weed:	<i>quickly</i> <i>garment</i>
490	"I hope that none of us was quite; I had one that to ground I yede; Sir, your broder shall ye not wite; Now knowes either others deed; Now know ye how Ector can smite, To help you when ye have need."	<i>suppose; free (of wounds)</i> <i>went</i> <i>brother; must; blame</i>
495		
	Launcelot lough with herte free That Ector made so mikel site: "Brother, nothing drede thou thee, For I shall be both hole and quite.	<i>laughed; noble</i> <i>much lament</i> <i>dread</i>
500	Though thou have sore wounded me, There-of I shall thee never wite, But ever the better love I thee, Such a dint that thou can smite."	<i>healthy; free (of harm)</i> <i>blame</i>
505		
	Then upon the thridde day, They took their leve for to fare; To the court they will away, For he will dwell a while there: "Greet well my lord, I you pray, And tell my lady how I fare,	<i>third</i> <i>leave</i>
510	And say I will come when I may, And biddeth her long nothing sore." ¹	
515	They took their leve, withouten lees, And wightly went upon their way; To the court the way they chese, There as the Queen Gaynor lay. The king to the forest is, With knighthes him for to play;	<i>without lies</i> <i>stoutly</i> <i>went</i> <i>Where; Guinevere</i>
	Good space they had withouten press Their errand to the queen to say.	<i>without a crowd</i> <i>message</i>

¹ *And tell her not to long sorely for me*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 520 They kneeled down before the queen,
 The knightes that were wise of lore,
 And said that they had Launcelot seen
 And three dayes with him were,
 And how that he had wounded been,
 And seke he had lie full sore:
 “Ere ought long ye shall him seen;
 He bade you longe nothing sore.”
- learning
sick; lain
*Before much longer; see
languish not sorely*
- 525 The queen lough with herte free,
 When she wiste he was on life:
 “O worthy God, what wele is me!
 Why ne wiste my lord it also swithe!”¹
 To the forest rode these knightes three,
 To the king it to kith;
 Jesu Crist then thankes he,
 For was he never of word so blithe.
- laughed; relieved
knew; alive
joy
*make known
Because; of a word so happy*
- 530 He cleped Sir Gawain him ner,
 And said: “Certes, that was he
 That the red armes bore,
 But now he lives, wele is me!”
 Gawain answerd with milde cheer,
 As he that ay was hende and free:
 “Was never tithandes me so dere,
 But sore me longes Launcelot to see.”
- called; near
joy
expression
ever; courteous; noble
tidings
I yearn
- 535 At the king and at the queen
 Sir Gawain took his leve that tide,
 And sithe at all the court bydene,
 And buskes him with mikel pride,
 Til Ascolot, withouten ween,
 Also fast as he might ride;
 Til that he have Launcelot seen,
 Night ne day ne will he bide.
- From*
then; together
hastens; display
To; doubt
As

¹ *If only my husband knew this quickly!*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| | By that was Launcelot hole and fere
Buskes him and makes all yare;
His leve hath he take there; | <i>healthy; sound</i>
<i>Hastens; ready</i> |
| 555 | The maiden wept for sorrow and care:
“Sir, yif that your willes were,
Sithe I of thee ne may have more,
Some thing ye wolde beleve me here,
To look on when me longeth sore.” | <i>if it were your wish</i>
<i>leave</i>
<i>I yearn</i> |
| 560 | Launcelot spake with herte free,
For to comfort that lady hende:
“Mine armour shall I leve with thee,
And in thy brothers will I wende;
Look thou ne longe not after me, | <i>noble</i>
<i>courteous</i> |
| 565 | For here I may no lenger lende;
Long time ne shall it nought be
That I ne shall either come or sende.” | <i>go</i>
<i>longer remain</i>
<i>send word</i> |
| 570 | Launcelot is redy for to ride,
And on his way he went forth right;
Sir Gawain come after on a tide,
And askes after such a knight. | <i>ready</i>
<i>directly</i>
<i>time</i> |
| 575 | They received him with grete pride
(A riche soper there was dight),
And said, in herte is nought to hide,
Away he was for fourtenight. | <i>prepared</i>
<i>a fortnight</i> |
| 580 | Sir Gawain gan that maiden take
And sat him by that sweete wight,
And spake of Launcelot du Lake;
In all the world nas such a knight. | <i>creature</i>
<i>was not</i> |
| 585 | The maiden there of Launcelot spake,
Said all her love was on him lighte:
“For his leman he hath me take;
His armour I you shewe might.” | <i>alighted</i>
<i>beloved</i>
<i>show</i> |
| | “Now damesel,” he said anon,
“And I am glad that it is so;
Such a leman as thou hast one, | <i>immediately</i>
<i>beloved</i> |

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| | In all this world ne be no mo.
There is no lady of flesh ne bone
In this worlde so thrive or thro,
Though her herte were steel or stone,
That might her love holde him fro. | <i>more (i.e., better)</i>
<i>excellent; strong</i>
<i>withhold from him</i> |
| 590 | "But damesel, I beseech thee,
His shelde that ye wolde me shew;
Launcelotes yif that it be
By the coloures I it knew."
The maiden was both hende and free,
And led him to a chamber new;
Launcelotes sheld she let him see,
And all his armour forth she drew. | <i>show</i>
<i>would know it</i>
<i>courteous; noble</i> |
| 600 | Hendely then Sir Gawain
To the maiden there he spake:
"Lady," he said, "withouten laine,
This is Launcelotes sheld du Lake.
Damesel," he said, "I am full fain
That he thee wolde to leman take
And I with all my might and main
Will be thy knight for his sake." | <i>Courteously</i>
<i>without concealment</i>
<i>Launcelot du Lake's shield</i>
<i>very pleased</i>
<i>as a beloved</i>
<i>force</i> |
| 605 | Gawain thus spake with that sweete wight
What his will was for to say. | <i>creature</i> |
| 610 | Til he was to bed ydight,
About him was game and play.
He took his leve at erl and knight
On the morrow when it was day,
And sithen at the maiden bright, | <i>prepared</i>
<i>pleasure</i>
<i>from</i> |
| 615 | And forth he went upon his way. | <i>then</i> |
| 620 | He niste where that he might,
Ne where that Launcelot wolde lende,
For when he was out of sight,
He was full ivel for to find.
He takes him the way right.
And to the courte gan he went; | <i>did not know; could go</i>
<i>stay</i>
<i>evil (i.e., difficult)</i>
<i>directly</i>
<i>go</i> |

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

Glad of him was king and knight,
For he was both courtais and hende.

courteous

Then it befell upon a tide,
The king stood by the queen and spake:
Sir Gawain standes him beside;
Ichon til other their mone gan make,
How long they might with bale abide
The coming of Launcelot du Lake;
In the court was little pride,
So sore they sighed for his sake.

*Each to; complaint
suffering*

“Certes, yif Launcelot were on life,
So long fro court he nolde not be.”
Sir Gawain answerd also swithe:
“There-of no wonder thinketh me;
The fairest lady that is on life
Til his leman chosen hath he;
Is none of us but wolde be blithe
Such a seemly for to see.”

*alive
away from; would not
quickly
it seems to me
As his beloved
seemly (i.e., lovely) one*

The King Arthur was full blithe
Of that tithinges for to lere,
And asked Sir Gawain also swithe
What maiden that it were.
“Th'erles doughter,” he said as swithe,
Of Ascolot, as ye may here,
There I was made glad and blithe;
His sheld the maiden shewed me there.”

*glad
tidings; learn
quickly
hear*

The queen then said wordes no mo,
But to her chamber soon she yede,
And down upon her bed fell so
That nigh of wit she wolde wede.
“Alas,” she said, “and wele-a-wo,
That ever I ought life in lede! ¹

*more
immediately; went
nearly; go mad
woe is me*

¹ *That I ever had life in this nation (was ever born)!*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 655 The beste body is lost me fro
 That ever in stour bestrode steed." *battle*
- 660 Ladies that about her stood,
 That wiste of her privitee,
 Bade her be of comfort good;
 Let no man such semblaunt see. *private affairs*
 A bed they made with sorry mood,
 Therein they brought that lady free;
 Ever she wept as she were wode; *appearance*
 Of her they had full grete pitee. *crazy pity*
- 665 So sore seke the queen lay,
 Of sorrow might she never let, *sorely sick stop*
 Til it fell upon a day
 Sir Lionel and Ector yede *went*
 Into the forest, them to play.
 That flowred was and braunched sweet, *had sweet branches*
- 670 And as they wente by the way,
 With Launcelot gonue they meet. *did*
- 675 What wonder was though they were blithe,
 When they their master saw with sight!
 On knees they felle also swithe, *quickly*
 And all they thanked God all-might;
 Joy it was to see and lithe *hear*
 The meeting of the noble knight.
 And sithe he frained also swith:
 "How fares my lady bright?" *then he quickly asked*
- 680 Then answered the knighting free,
 And said that she was seke full sore:
 "Grete dole it is to here and see,
 So mikel she is in sorrow and care;
 The king a sorry man is he,
 In court for that ye come no more;
 Dede he weenes that ye be, *hear*
 And all the court, both less and more. *Dead he supposes*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- “Sir, were it your will with us to fare,
 For to speke with the queen,
 690 Blithe I wot well that she were
 Yif that she had you ones seen.
 The king is mikel in sorrow and care,
 And so is all the court bydene;
 Dede they ween well that ye are
 695 From court for ye so long have been.”
- He grauntes them at that ilke sithe
 Home that he will with them ride;
 Therefore the knightes were full blithe
 And busked them with mikel pride
 700 To the court also swithe;
 Night ne day they nolde abide;
 The king and all the court was blithe
 The tidandes when they herde that tide.
- The king stood in a towr on high,
 705 Besides him standes Sir Gawain;
 Launcelot when that they sigh
 Were never men on molde so fain.
 They ran as swithe as ever they might
 Out at the gates him again;
 710 Was never tidandes to them so light;
 The king him kissed and knight and swain.
- To a chamber the king him led;
 Fair in armes they gonue him fold,
 And set him on a riche bed,
 715 That spredde was with a cloth of gold;
 To serve him there was no man sad,
 Ne dight him as himselfe wolde
 To make him both blithe and glad,
 And sithe aunter he them told.
- 720 Three dayes in court he dwelled there
 That he ne speake not with the queen,
 So muche press was ay them ner;
- Glad; would be
but once
as well
Dead; think
grants; time
hastened
would not
tidings; heard
tower
saw
on earth so happy
quickly
against (i.e., toward)
tidings; joyful
young man
embrace
spread
But served him whatever he wanted
afterwards adventures
crowd*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----------------------------------|
| | The king him led and court bydene. | <i>as well</i> |
| | The lady, bright as blossom on brere, | <i>briar</i> |
| 725 | Sore she longed him to sen; | <i>see</i> |
| | Weeping was her moste cheer, | <i>most [frequent] expression</i> |
| | Though she ne durst her to no man mene. | <i>dared not speak to any man</i> |
| | Then it fell upon a day | |
| | The king gan on hunting ride, | |
| 730 | Into the forest him to play, | |
| | With his knightes by his side. | |
| | Launcelot long in bedde lay; | |
| | With the queen he thought to bide. | |
| | To the chamber he took the way | |
| 735 | And salutes her with mikel pride. | <i>salutes; great honor</i> |
| | First he kissed that lady sheen, | <i>beautiful</i> |
| | And salutes her with herte free, | <i>salutes</i> |
| | And sithe the ladies all bydene; | |
| | For joy the teres ran on their blee. | <i>face(s)</i> |
| 740 | “Wele-away,” then said the queen, | |
| | “Launcelot, that I ever thee see! | |
| | The love that hath us be between, | <i>been</i> |
| | That it shall thus departed be! | |
| | “Alas, Launcelot du Lake, | |
| 745 | Sithe thou hast all my herte in wold, | <i>in [your] possession</i> |
| | Th’erles daughter that thou wolde take | |
| | Of Ascolot, as men me told! | |
| | Now thou levest for her sake | <i>abandon</i> |
| | All thy deed of armes bold; | |
| 750 | I may wofully weep and wake | |
| | In clay til I be clongen cold! ¹ | |
| | “But, Launcelot, I beseech thee here, | <i>of necessity</i> |
| | Sithe it needinges shall be so, | <i>reveal</i> |
| | That thou never more diskere | |

¹ Until I am clasped in cold clay (dead and buried)

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 755 The love that hath been betwix us two,
 Ne that she never be with thee so dere,¹
 Deed of armes that thou be fro,
 That I may of thy body here,
 Sithe I shall thus beleve in wo."
- 760 Launcelot full still then stood:
 His herte was hevy as any stone;
 So sorry he wex in his mood,
 For rewth him thought it all to-torne.
 765 "Madame," he said, "For Cross and Rood,
 What betokeneth all this mone?
 By Him that bought me with His blood,
 Of these tidandes know I none.
- 770 "But by these wordes thinketh me
 Away ye wolde that I were;
 775 Now have good day, my lady free,
 For sooth, thou seest me never more!"
 Out of the chamber then wendes he;
 Now whether his herte was full of wo!
 The lady swoones sithes three;
 Almost she slew herselfe there.
- 780 Launcelot to his chamber yede,
 There his own attire in lay,
 Armed him in an noble weed,
 Though in his herte were little play;
 785 Forth he sprang as spark of glede,
 With sorry cheer, for sooth to say;
 Up he worthes upon his steed,
 And to a forest he wendes away.
- Tithinges come into the hall
 785 That Launcelot was upon his steed;

¹ *May she never be so dear to you / That you give up performing deeds of arms; / Since I must remain alone in sorrow, / I would at least like to hear of your deeds of prowess*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- Out then ran the knightes all,
 Of their wit as they wolde wede; *would go mad*
 Bors de Gawnes and Lionel
 And Ector that doughty was of deed,
790 Followen him on horses snell, *swift*
 Full loude gonне they blow and grede. *blow horns; cry*
- There might no man him overtake;
 He rode into a forest green;
 Muche mone gonне they make, *moan*
795 The knightes that were bold and keen.
 “Alas,” they said, “Launcelot du Lake,
 That ever sholdestou see the queen!” *you should have seen*
 And her they cursed for his sake,
 That ever love was them between.
- 800 They ne wiste never where to fare,
 Ne to what land that he wolde; *would go*
 Again they went with sighing sore,
 The knightes that were keen and bold;
 The queen they found in swooning there,
805 Her comely tresses all unfold;
 They were so full of sorrow and care,
 There was none her comforte wolde. *who would comfort her*
- The king then hastes him for his sake,
 And home then come that ilke day,
810 And asked after Launcelot du Lake,
 And they said: “He is gone away.”
 The queen was in her bed all naked,
 And sore seke in her chamber lay;
 So muche mone the king gan make,
815 There was no knight that lust to play. *wanted*
- The king clepes Gawain that day,
 And all his sorrow told him til: *summons*
 “Now is Launcelot gone away,
 And come, I wot, he never will.” *to him*
820 He said: “Alas and wele-away,” *know*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- Sighed sore and gave him ill; *made himself sick*
 "The lord that we have loved alway,
 In court why nill he never dwell?" *will not*
- Gawain spekes in that tide, *time*
 825 And to the king said he there:
 "Sir, in this castle shall ye bide,
 Comfort you and make good cheer,
 And we shall both go and ride,
 In alle landes fer and ner; *walk*
 830 So prively he shall him not hide
 Through hap that we ne shall of him here." *far and near*
secretly
By chance; hear
- Knightes then sought him wide;
 Of Launcelot might they not here, *hear*
 Til it fell upon a tide,
 835 Queen Gaynor, bright as blossom on brere,
 To mete is set that ilke tide, *Guinevere; briar*
 And Sir Gawain sat her ner,
 And upon that other side
 A Scottish knight that was her dere. *supper*
dear to her
- 840 A squier in the court hath thought
 That ilke day, yif that he might,
 With a poison that he hath wrought
 To slay Gawain, yif that he might;
 In frut he hath it forthe brought *squire; intended*
 845 And set before the queene bright;
 An apple overest lay on loft,
 There the poison was in dight. *fruit*
uppermost; above
prepared
- For he thought the lady bright
 Wolde the best to Gawain bede; *offer*
 850 But she it gave to the Scottish knight,
 For he was of an uncouthe stede.
 There-of he ete a little wight;
 Of tresoun took there no man heed;
 There he lost both main and might *foreign place*
 855 And died soon, as I you rede. *ate; bit*
treason
force
immediately; tell

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

	They niste not what it might bemene, But up him stert Sir Gawain And sithen all the court bydene, And over the borde they have him drayn.	<i>knew; mean leaped then; together table; drawn</i>
860	“Wele-away,” then said the queen, “Jesu Crist, what may I sayn? Certes, now will all men ween Myself that I the knight have slain.”	<i>say</i>
	Triacle there was anon forth brought; The queene wend to save his life; But all that might help him nought, For there the knight is dede as swithe.	<i>Medicine hoped right away</i>
865	So grete sorrow the queen then wrought, Grete dole it was to see and lithe: “Lord, such sites me have sought! Why ne may I never be blithe?”	<i>hear misfortunes</i>
	Knightes don none other might But buried him with dole ynow At a chapel with riche light, In a forest by a clough;	<i>could do nothing else much sorrow i.e., expensive candles ravine</i>
870	A riche tomb they did be dight, A crafty clerk the lettres drow, How there lay the Scottish knight The queen Gaynor with poison slogh.	<i>had prepared drew slew</i>
	880 After this a time befell To the court there come a knight; His broder he was, as I you tell, And Sir Mador for sooth he hight;	<i>was called fierce</i>
875	He was an hardy man and snell In tournament and eek in fight, And mikel loved in court to dwell, For he was man of muche might.	<i>greatly</i>
	Then it fell upon a day Sir Mador went with mikel pride	

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 890 Into the forest, him for to play,¹
 That flowred was and braunched wide;
 He fand a chapel in his way,
 As he came by the cloughes side,
 There his owne broder lay,
 895 And there at mass he thought to abide.
- A riche tomb he fand there dight
 With lettres that were fair ynow;
 A while he stood and redde it right;
 Grete sorrow then to his herte drow;
- 900 He fand the name of the Scottish knight
 The Queen Gaynor with poison slogh.
 There he lost both main and might,
 And over the tomb he fell in swough.
- 905 Of swooning when he might awake,
 His herte was hevy as any lede;
 He sighed for his brothers sake;
 He ne wiste what was beste rede.
- The way to court gan he take,
 Of nothing ne stood he drede;
- 910 A loude cry on the queen gan make,
 In challenging of his brothers dede.
- The king full sore then gan him drede,
 For he might not be again the right;
 The queen of wit wolde nighe wede,
 Though that she aguilte had no wight.
- 915 She moste there beknow the deed
 Or find a man for her to fight,
 For well she wiste to dethe she yede,
 Yif she were on a quest of knighthes.
- 920 Though Arthur were king the land to weld,

¹ *To amuse himself [he went] into the forest, / Which was in flower and had wide branches overhead*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- | | | |
|-----|---|--------------------------------------|
| | He might not be again the right; | <i>against</i> |
| | A day he took with spere and sheld | <i>set; spear</i> |
| | To find a man for her to fight, | |
| | That she shall either to dethe her yeld | <i>yield</i> |
| 925 | Or put her on a quest of knightes; | <i>submit herself to judgment by</i> |
| | There-to both their handes upheld | i.e., <i>Mador and Gaynor</i> |
| | And trewly their trouthes plight. | <i>pledged their words</i> |
| | When they in certain had set a day | |
| | And that quarrel undertake, | |
| 930 | The word sprang soon through ech countree | <i>immediately; each</i> |
| | What sorrow that Queen Gaynor gan make; | |
| | So at the last, shortly to say, | |
| | Word come to Launcelot du Lake, | |
| | There as he seke ywounded lay; | |
| 935 | Men told him holly all the wrake, | <i>wholly; trouble</i> |
| | How that Queen Gaynor the bright | |
| | Had slain with grete tresoun | <i>treason</i> |
| | A swithe noble Scottish knight | |
| | At the mete with strong poisoun; | <i>poison</i> |
| 940 | Therefore a day was taken right | |
| | That she sholde find a knight full boun | <i>ready</i> |
| | For her sake for to fight | |
| | Or elles be brent without ransoun. | <i>burnt; ransom</i> |
| | When that Launcelot du Lake | |
| 945 | Had herde holly all this fare, | <i>heard completely; affair</i> |
| | Grete sorrow gan he to him take, | |
| | For the queen was in such care, | |
| | And swore to venge her of that wrake, | <i>for that trouble</i> |
| | That day yif that he livand were; | <i>if he were living</i> |
| 950 | Then pained he him his sorrows to slake | <i>exerted himself</i> |
| | And wex as breme as any bore. | <i>grew fierce; wild boar</i> |
| | Now leve we Launcelot there he was, | |
| | With the ermite in the forest green | <i>hermit</i> |
| | And tell we forth of the case | |
| 955 | That toucheth Arthur, the king so keen. | <i>concerns</i> |

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

Sir Gawain on the morn to counsel he tas,
 And morned sore for the queen;
 Into a towr then he him has
 And ordained the best there them between.

takes
mourned grievously
tower

960 And as they in their talking stood
 To ordain how it best might be,
 A fair river under the towr yode,
 And soon there-in gonне they see
 A little bote of shape full good
 To them-ward with the streme gan te;
 There might none fairer sail on flood
 Ne better forged as of tree.

went

boat

current approached
made of wood

When King Arthur saw that sight,
 He wondred of the rich apparail
 That was about the bote ydight;
 So richly was it covered sanzfail,
 In manner of a vout with clothes ydight
 All shinand as gold as it gan sail.
 Then said Sir Gawain the goode knight:
 "This bote is of a rich entail."

furnishings
boat arranged
without fail
vault; fashioned
shining

fashion

"For sooth, sir," said the king tho,
 "Such one saw I never ere;
 Thider I rede now that we go;
 Some adventures shall we see there,
 And yif it be within dight so
 As without, or gayer more,
 I dare savely say there-to
 Begin will aunters ere ought yare."¹

decorated

safely

980 Out of the towr adown they went,
 The King Arthur and Sir Gawain;
 To the bote they yede withoute stint,
 They two alone, for sooth to sayn;

tower

went without delay
say

¹ Adventures will begin very soon

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- | | | |
|------|--|---------------------------------------|
| | And when they come there as it lente,
They beheld it fast, is not to laine; | <i>remained
carefully; hide</i> |
| 990 | A cloth that over the bote was bent
Sir Gawain lift up, and went in bain. | <i>readily</i> |
| | When they were in, withouten lees,
Full richly arrayed they it fand, | <i>without lies (truly)
found</i> |
| | And in the middes a fair bed was
For any king of Cristen land. | <i>Christian
cease</i> |
| 995 | Then as swithe, ere they wolde sese,
The coverlet lift they up with hand; | <i>saw</i> |
| | A dede woman they sigh there was,
The fairest maid that might be fand. | |
| 1000 | To Sir Gawain then said the king:
“For sooth, deth was too unhende, | <i>discourteous</i> |
| | When he wolde thus fair a thing
Thus yonge out of the world do wend; | <i>make go</i> |
| | For her beautee, without leesing,
I wolde fain wite of her kind, ¹ | <i>beauty; lying</i> |
| 1005 | What she was, this sweet derling,
And in her life where she gan lende.” | <i>darling
lived</i> |
| | Sir Gawain his eyen then on her cast
And beheld her fast with herte free, | <i>eyes
carefully</i> |
| 1010 | So that he knew well at the last,
That the Maid of Ascolot was she, | |
| | Which he some time had wooed fast
His owne leman for to be, | <i>beloved</i> |
| | But she answerd him ay in haste
To none but Launcelot wolde she te. | <i>draw</i> |
| | To the king then said Sir Gawain tho:
“Think ye not on this endres day, | <i>other day</i> |
| | When my lady the queen and we two
Stood togeder in your play, | |

¹ *I would like to know about her family lineage*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 1020 Of a maid I told you tho,
 That Launcelot loved paramour ay?"
 "Gawain, for sooth," the king said tho,
 "When thou it saidest well think I may."
as a lover forever
- 1025 "For sooth, sir," then said Sir Gawain,
 "This is the maid that I of spake;
 Most in this world, is not to laine,
 She loved Launcelot du Lake."
hide
- 1030 "Forsooth," the king then gan to sayn,
 "Me reweth the deth of her for his sake;
 The enchesoun wolde I wite full fain;¹
 For sorrow I trow deth gan her take."
*did say
I rue
believe*
- 1035 Then Sir Gawain, the goode knight,
 Sought about her withoute stint
 And fand a purse full rich aright,
 With gold and perles that was ybent;
 All empty seemed it nought to sight;
 That purse full soon in hand he hent;
 A letter there-of then out he twight;
 Then wite they wolde fain what it ment.²
*delay
richly arrayed
pearls; banded
seized
took*
- 1040 What was there writen wite they wolde,
 And Sir Gawain it took the king,
 And bade him open it that he sholde.
 So did he soon, withoute leesing;
 Then fand he when it was unfold
 Both the end and the beginning
 (Thus was it writen as men me told)
 Of that fair maidens dying:
*gave it to the king
lying*
- 1045 "To King Arthur and all his knighthes
 That longe to the Round Table,
 That courtaiis been and most of mightes
*belong
who are courteous*

¹ *I would very much like to know the cause*

² *Then they wanted to know what it said*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- Doughty and noble, trew and stable,steadfast
 And most worshipful in alle fightes,
 To the needful helping and profitable,
 The Maid of Ascolot to rightesby right (justly)
 1055 Sendeth greeting, withouten fable;without lying (truly)
- “To you all my plaint I make
 Of the wrong that me is wrought,
 But nought in manner to undertakeclaim
 That any of you sholde mend it ought,
 1060 But only I say for this sake,
 That, though this world were through sought,
 Men sholde nowhere find your make,
 All noblesse to find that might be sought.¹searched through
equal (match)
- “Therefore to you to understand
 1065 That for I trewly many a daytruly
 Have loved leliest in land,most loyally
 Deth hath me fette of this world away;fetched me from
 To wite for whom, yif ye will fonde,know; wish to discover
 That I so long for in langour lay,
 1070 To say the sooth will I not wonde,delay
 For gaines it nought for to say nay.For denying it gains nothing
- “To say you the soothe tale,true
 For whom I have suffred this wo,
 I say deth hath me take with bale,suffering
 1075 For the noblest knight that may go;
 Is none so doughty dintes to dele,blows; deal out
 So real ne so fair there-to;royal nor
 But so churlish of manners in feld ne hall,
 Ne know I none of frend ne fo.friend nor foe
- 1080 “Of fo ne frend, the sooth to say,
 So unhende of thewes is there none;discourteous in manners
 His gentilness was all away,

¹ *Though they searched out all the nobleness in the world*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 1085
- All churlish manners he had in wone;
 For no thing that I coude pray,
 Kneeling ne weeping with reful mone,
 To be my leman he said ever nay,
 And said shortly he wolde have none.
- [his] possession
could
pitiful moan*
- 1090
- “Forthy, lordes, for his sake
 I took to herte grete sorrow and care,
 So at the last deth gan me take,
 So that I might live no more;
 For trewe loving had I such wrake
- Therefore
pain
made barren*
- 1095
- And was of bliss ybrought all bare;
 All was for Launcelot du Lake,
 To wite wisely for whom it were.”
- 1100
- When that King Arthur, the noble king,
 Had redde the letter and ken the name,
 He said to Gawain, without leesing,
 That Launcelot was gretly to blame,
 And had him won a reproving,
- read; learned
reproof*
- For ever, and a wicked fame;
 Sithe she died for grete loving,
 That he her refused it may him shame.
- 1105
- To the king then said Sir Gawain:
 “I gabbed on him this ender day,
 That he longed, when I gan sayn,¹
 With lady other with some other maye.
 But sooth then said ye, is not to laine,
- lied about him; other
hide*
- 1110
- That he nolde not his love lay²
 In so low a place in vain,
 But on a pris lady and a gay.”
- “Sir Gawain,” said the king tho,

¹ When I said that he belonged / To a lady or to some other maid

² That he would not waste his love / In so low a place (a mere maiden) / But would rather
love some noble and gay lady

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- “What is now thy beste rede? advice
 How may we with this maiden do?”
- 1115 Sir Gawain said: “So God me speed,
 Yif that ye will assent there-to,
 Worshipfully we shull her lede
 Into the palais and bury her so
 As falles a dukes daughter in-deed.” As God may save me
*Honorably; take
 palace
 befits*
- 1120 There-to the king assented soon;
 Sir Gawain did men soon be yare,
 And worshipfully, as fell to don,
 Into the palais they her bore.
 The king then told, withoute lone,
 To all his barons, less and more,
 How Launcelot nolde not graunt her boon,
 Therefore she died for sorrow and care. commanded; ready
*fitting to do
 palace
 concealment*
- To the queen then went Sir Gawain
 And gan to tell her all the case:
 1130 “For sooth, madame,” he gan to sayn,
 “I yeld me guilty of a trespass.
 I gabbed on Launcelot, is not to laine,
 Of that I told you in this place;
 I said that his bidding bain
 1135 The dukes daughter of Ascolot was. say
*confess myself
 lied about; hide
 Concerning what
 lover ready at his bidding*
- “Of Ascolot that maiden free
 I said you she was his leman;
 That I so gabbed it reweth me,
 And all the sooth now tell I can;
 1140 He nolde her not, we mowe well see;¹
 For-thy dede is that white as swan;
 This letter there-of warrant will be;
 She plaineth on Launcelot to eche man.” lied; pains me
complains about; every

¹ *He did not want her, as we can well see, / And therefore, that maiden, as white as a swan, is dead*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 1145 The queen was wroth as wind, *angry*
 And to Sir Gawain said she then:
 "For sooth, sir, thou were too unkind
 To gabbe so upon any man,
 But thou haddest wiste the sooth in mind, *lie so about*
 Whether that it were sooth or none;
 1150 Thy courtaisie was all behind *gone*
 When thou tho sawes first began. *those tales*
- 1155 "Thy worship thou undidest gretlich,
 Such wrong to wite that goode knight;
 I trow that he ne aguilt thee never much¹
 Why that thou oughtest with no right *cause*
 To gabbe on him so vilainlich, *lie*
 Thus behind him, out of his sight.
 And, sir, thou ne wost not right wiselich²
 What harm hath falle there-of and might.
- 1160 "I wend thou haddest be stable and trew
 And full of all courtaisie,
 But now me think thy manners new; *changed*
 They ben all turned to vilainy,
 Now thou on knighting makest thy glewe *are; churlishness*
 To lie upon them for envy;
 Who that thee worshippeth, it may them rew; *honors*
 Therefore, devoied my company!" *leave*
- 1165 Sir Gawain then slyly went away; *wisely*
 He sigh the queen agreved sore; *saw; sorely aggrieved*
 1170 No more to her then wolde he say,
 But trowed her wrath have ever more. *believed; would last forever*
 The queen then, as she nigh wode were, *crazy*

¹ *I believe he never wronged you so much / That you ought so unjustly / To lie about him so churlishly*

² *And, sir, you do not know right wisely (realize) / What harm has and could yet come from what you said*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- Wringed her handes and said: “Wele-away!
 Alas! in world that I was bore! born
 1175 That I am wretched well say I may!”
- “Herte, alas! Why were thou wode
 To trowe that Launcelot du Lake crazy
 Were so false and fikel of mood believe
 Another leman than thee to take? fickle
 1180 Nay, certes, for all this worldes good,
 He nolde to me have wrought such wrake!” pain
- (At this point one leaf from the manuscript has been lost; evidently it told of the burial of the Maid of Ascolot and of the queen's distress, the material in chapters 74 and 78 of the French *Mort Artu*, our poet's source. Probably not more than ninety lines are missing, but I follow the line-numbering in Bruce's edition.)
- To find a man for her to fight
 Or elles yeld her to be brent; surrender; burnt
 1320 If she were on a quest of knights judgment
 Well she wiste she sholde be shent; shamefully destroyed
 Though that she aguilt had no wight, of guilt; no trace
 No lenger life might her be lent. to her; granted
- The king then sighed and gave him ill, made himself ill
 1325 And to Sir Gawain then he yede,
 To Bors de Gawnes and Lionel,
 To Ector that doughty was in deed,
 And asked if any were in will intended
 To help him in that mikel need.
- 1330 The queen on knees before them fell,
 That nigh out of her wit she yede.
- The knights answerd with little pride —
 Their hertes was full of sorrow and wo —
 Said: “All we saw and sat beside
 1335 The knight when she with poison slogh, slew
 And sithe, in herte is not to hide,
 Sir Gawain over the borde him drow; table; drew

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- Again the right we will not ride,
We saw the sooth verily ynow.” *Against
very truly*
- 1340 The queene wept and sighed sore;
To Bors de Gawnes went she tho,
On knees before him fell she there,
That nigh her herte brast in two;
“Lord Bors,” she said, “thine ore! *then
burst
mercy*
- 1345 Today I shall to dethe go,
But yif thy worthy will were
To bring my life out of this wo.” *Unless*
- Bors de Gawnes stille stood,
And wrothe away his eyen went; *angrily; eyes turned*
- 1350 “Madame,” he said, “By Cross on Rood,
Thou art well worthy to be brent!
The noblest body of flesh and blood,
That ever was yet in erthe lente,
For thy will and thy wicked mood, *Body (?); Cross
burned
given
mind
has gone*
- 1355 Out of our company is went.”
- Then she wept and gave her ill,
And to Sir Gawain then she yede; *made herself sick*
- 1360 On knees down before him fell,
That nigh out of her wit she yede;
“Mercy!” she cried loud and shrill,
“Lord, as I no guilt have of this deed,
Yif it were thy worthy will *[I ask] if it*
- 1365 Gawain answerd with little pride;
His herte was full of sorrow and wo:
“Dame, saw I not and sat beside
The knight when thou with poison slogh? *slew*
- 1370 And sithe, in herte is not to hide,
Myself over the borde him drow. *drew*
- 1370 Again the right will I not ride;
I saw the sooth very ynow.” *very truly*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- Then she went to Lionel,
 That ever had been her owne knight;
 On knees adown before him fell,
 1375 That nigh she loste main and might.
 "Mercy," she cried loud and shrill,
 "Lord, as I ne have aguilte no wight,
 Yif it were thy worthy will
 For my life to take this fight?"
- 1380 "Madame, how may thou to us take¹
 And wot thyself so witterly
 That thou hast Launcelot du Lake
 Brought out of ower company?
 We may sigh and moning make
- 1385 When we see knightes keen in cry;
 By Him that me to man gan shape,
 We are glad that thou it abyel!"
- Then full sore she gan her drede;
 Well she wiste her life was lorn;
 1390 Loude gan she weep and grede,
 And Ector kneeles she beforne:
 "For Him that on the Rood gan spred
 And for us bore the crown of thorn,
 Ector, help now in this need,
- 1395 Or, certes, today my life is lorn!"
- "Madame, how may thou to us take,
 Or how sholde I for thee fight?
 Take thee now Launcelot du Lake,
 That ever has been thine owne knight.
- 1400 My dere brother, for thy sake
 I ne shall him never see with sight!
 Cursed be he that the batail take
 To save thy life again the right!"
- harmed no one
 [I ask] if it
- certainly
- company
 create
 suffer
- fear for herself
 lost
 cry
- Cross; spread
- come to us
 Entrust yourself to
 battle

¹ *Madame, how can you come to us / When you yourself know so well*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- There wolde no man the batail take;
 1405 The queen went to her chamber so;
 So dolefully mone gan she make,
 That nigh her herte brast in two;
 For sorrow gan she shiver and quake,
 And said: "Alas and wele-a-wo!" *moan*
- Why nadde I now Launcelot du Lake?
 1410 All the court nolde me not slo! *do I not have
would not be able to slay me*
- "Ivel have I beset the deed,
 That I have worshipped so many a knight,
 [And I have no man in my need]
 1415 For my love dare take a fight.
 Lord, King of alle thede,
 That all the world shall rede and right,
 Launcelot Thou save and heed,¹
 Sithe I ne shall never him see with sight." *Evvilly (i.e., uselessly); used
honored*
- The queene wept and gave her ill;
 1420 When she saw the fire was yare,
 Then morned she full still. *made herself sick
ready
mourned*
- To Bors de Gawnes went she there,
 Besought him, yif it were his will,
 To help her in her mikel care;
 1425 In swooning she before him fell;
 The wordes might she speke no more.
- When Bors saw the queen so bright,
 Of her he hadde grete pitee;
 In his armes he held her up-right,
 1430 Bade her of good comfort be:
 "Madame, but there come a better knight *unless
battle*
 That wolde the batail take for thee,
 I shall myselfe for thee fight,
 While any life may last in me."

¹ *May You save and care for Launcelot*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 1435 Then was the queene wonder blithe, glad
 That Bors de Gawnes wolde for her fight,
 That ner for joy she swooned swithe,
nearly; promptly
 But as that he her held up-right;
Except that
 To her chamber he led her blithe,
 To ladies and to maidens bright,
 And bade she sholde it no man kithie,
tell no man of it
 Til he were armed an redy dight.
ready
- Bors, that was bold and keen,
 Cleped all his other knighthes,
 1445 And tooken counsel them between,
 The beste that they couthe and might,
knew how; could do
 How that he hath hight the queen
promised
 That ilke day for her to fight
 Against Sir Mador, full of teen,
anger
 1450 To save her life, yif that he might.
- The knightes answerd with wo and wrake
 And said they wiste witterly
 That “She hath Launcelot du Lake
 Brought out of ower company.
our
- 1455 Nis none that nolde this batail take¹
 Ere she had any vilainy,
 But we will not so glad her make,
 Before we ne suffer her to be sorry.”
allow; repent
- Bors and Lionel the knight,
 Ector, that doughty was of deed,
 1460 To the forest then went they right
 Their orisons at the chapel to bede
 To our Lord God, all full of might,
prayers; offer
 That day sholde lene him well to speed,²
 1465 A grace to vanquish the fight;
 Of Sir Mador they had grete drede.

¹ *There is not one who would have refused this battle / Before her behavior became criminal*

² *That he might grant him (Bors) success, / Give him the grace to win the battle*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- As they came by the forest side,
 Their orisons for to make,
 The noblest knight then saw they ride
 That ever was in erthe shape;
 His loreme lemed all with pride;
 Steed and armour all was blake;
 His name is nought to hele and hide:
 He hight Sir Launcelot du Lake!
- prayers
- 1470 created
 reins gleamed
- conceal
- 1475 What wonder was though they were blithe,
 When they their master see with sight!
 On knees fell they as swithe,
 And thanked all to God All-might.
 Joy it was to here and lithe
 The meeting of the noble knight;
- hear; listen to
- 1480 And after he asked also swithe:
 "How now fares my lady bright?"
- Bors then told him all the right,
 It was no lenger for to hide,
 How there died a Scottish knight,
 At the mete the queen beside:
 "Today, sir, is her deth all dight,
 It may no lenger be to bide,
 And I for her have take the fight.
- meal
 prepared
 wait
- 1485 "Sir Mador, strong though that he be,
 I hope he shall well prove his might."
 "To the court now wend ye three
 And recomfort my lady bright;
 But look ye speke no word of me;
 I will come as a strange knight."
- expect
- comfort
- foreign
- 1490 Launcelot, that was mikel of might,
 Abides in the forest green;
 To the courte went these other knighthes
 For to recomfort the queen.
- comfort
- 1495 To make her glad with all their might
 Grete joy they made them between;
 For-why she ne sholde drede no wight,
 Of good comfort they bade her ben.
- So that; nothing
 be
- 1500 Bordes were set and clothes spredde;
 The king himself is gone to sit;
- Tables

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- The queen is to the table led,
 With cheeke that were wan and wet;
 Of sorrow were they never unsad;
 Might they neither drink ne ete;
- 1510 The queen of dethe was sore adredde,
 That grimly teres gan she let.
- And as they were at the thridde mese,
 The king and all the court bydene,
 Sir Mador all redy was,
- 1515 With helm and sheld and hauberk sheen;
 Among them all before the dese,
 He bloweth out upon the queen
 To have his right withouten lees,
 As were the covenantes them between.
- 1520 The king looked on all his knights;
 Was he never yet so wo;
 Saw he never on him dight
 Against Sir Mador for to go.
 Sir Mador swore by Goddes might,
- 1525 As he was man of herte thro,
 But yif he hastily have his right
 Among them all he sholde her slo.
- Then spake the king of mikel might,
 That ay was courtais and hende:
- 1530 "Sir, let us ete and sithen us dight;
 This day nis not yet gone to the end.
 Yet might there come such a knight,
 Yif Goddes will were him to send,
 To finde thee thy fill of fight
- 1535 Ere the sun to grounde wend.
- Bors then lough on Lionel;
 Wiste no man of their hertes word;
 His chamber anon he wendes til,
 Withoute any other word,
- 1540 Armed him at all his will,
 With helm and hauberk, spere and sword;
 Again then comes he full still
 And set him down to the bord.
- The teres ran on the kinges knee
- afraid
- third course
as well
- shining
dais (raised platform)
raises an outcry against
- agreements
- anyone prepare himself
- fierce
- slay
- laughed
- speare
- tears

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 1545 For joy that he saw Bors adight;
 Up he rose with herte free *prepared*
 And Bors in armes clippes right,
 And said: "Bors, God foryeld it thee,
 In this need that thou wolde fight;
 1550 Well acquitest thou it me *embraces*
 That I have worshipped any knight!" *reward you for it*
- Then as Sir Mador loudest spake
 The queen of tresoun to becall, *accuse*
 Comes Sir Launcelot du Lake,
 Ridand right into the hall. *Riding directly*
- 1555 His steed and armour all was blake,
 His visor over his eyen fall; *eyes; was lowered*
 Many a man began to quake;
 Adrede of him nigh were they all. *Afraid; nearly*
- 1560 Then spake the king, mikel of might,
 That hende was in ich a sithe: *every occasion*
 "Sir, is it your will to light,
 Ete and drink and make you blithe?" *alight*
- 1565 Launcelot spake as a strange knight:
 "Nay, sir," he said as swithe, *foreign*
 "I herde tell here of a fight;
 I come to save a ladyes life. *quickly*
- "Ivel hath the queen beset her deedes
 That she hath worshipped many a knight, *To no effect; employed*
 1570 And she hath no man in her needs
 That for her life dare take a fight.
 Thou that her of tresoun gredes¹
 Hastely that thou be dight;
- 1575 Out of thy wit though that thou wedes,
 Today thou shalt prove all thy might." *run mad*
- Then was Sir Mador also blithe
 As fowl of day after the night; *bird*
 To his steed he went that sithe,
 As man that was of muche might.
- 1580 To the feld then ride they swithe;
 Them followes both king and knight,

¹ You who accuse her of treason, / Quickly see that you are ready to fight

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- The batail for to see and lith;hear
 Saw never no man stronger fight!
- 1585 Unhorsed were bothe knightes keen,met; force
 They metten with so muche main,
 And sithe they fought with swordes keen.
 Both on foot, the sooth to sayn.say
 In all the batailes that Launcelot had been,
 With hard accountres him again,encounters; against
 1590 In pointe had he never been
 So nigh-hand for to have been slain.
- There was so wonder strong a fight,low noon (about ten a.m.)
 O foot nolde nouther flee ne found,¹they give
 From lowe noon til late night,
 But given many a woful wound.
 Launcelot then gave a dint with might;
 Sir Mador falles at last to ground;
 "Mercy!" cries that noble knight,
 For he was seke and sore unsound.
- 1600 Though Launcelot were breme as bore,fierce
 Full sternely he gan up stand;
 O dint wolde he smite no more;A blow
 His sword he threw out of his hand.
 Sir Mador by God then swore:
 1605 "I have fought in many a land,
 With knightes both less and more,
 And never yet ere my match I fand;
- "But, Sir, a prayer I wolde make,
 For thing that ye love most on life,
 1610 And for Our Sweete Lady sake,Lady's (i.e., Virgin Mary's)
 Your name that ye wolde me kithe."tell
 Launcelot gan his visor up take,
 And hendely him shewed that sithe;
 When he saw Sir Launcelot du Lake,
 1615 Was never man on molde so blithe.earth
- "Lord," then said he, "Wele is me,
 Mine avauntement that I may makeboast

¹ *Neither would flee nor advance one foot*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- That I have stande one dint of thee,
 And foughten with Launcelot du Lake;
 stood; blow
 1620 My brothers deth forgiven be
 To the queen for thy sake."
 Launcelot him kist with herte free,
 And in his armes gan him up take.
 kissed
- King Arthur then loude spake
 Among his knightes to the queen:
 "Ya, yonder is Launcelot du Lake,
 Yif I him ever with sight have seen!"
 Yea
 They ridein and ronne then for his sake,
 The king and all his knightes keen;
 run
 1630 In his armes he gan him take;
 The king him kist and court bydene.
 kissed
- Then was the queene glad ynow,
 When she saw Launcelot du Lake,
 That nigh for joy she fell in swough,
 But as the lordes her gan up take.
 swoon
 1635 The knightes alle wept and loughe
 For joy as they togeder spake;
 With Sir Mador, withouten wo,
 Full soon acordement gonne they make.
 Except that
 laughed
 reconciliation
- It was no lenger for to abide
 But to the castle they rode as swithe,
 With trompes and with mikle pride,
 That joy it was to here and lithe;
 Though Sir Mador might not go ne ride,
 To the court is he brought that sithe,
 And knightes upon ich a side
 To make him both glad and blithe.
 trumpeters
 listen to
 walk
 time
- The squiers then were taken all,
 And they are put in harde pain,
 Which that had served in the hall
 When the knight was with poisun slain.
 i.e., tortured
 1650 There he graunted among them all¹
 (It might no lenger be to laine)
 How in an apple he did the gall,
 Those who
 hide
 put the poison

¹ One among all the squires there admitted

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- | | | |
|------|---|--|
| 1655 | And had it thought to Sir Gawain. | <i>intended for</i> |
| | When Sir Mador herde all the right,
That no guilt had the lady sheen,
For sorrow he lost main and might
And on knees fell before the queen. | <i>bright</i> |
| 1660 | Launcelot then him held up right,
For love that was them between;
He kist both king and knight
And sithen all the court bydene. | <i>kissed</i>
<i>then; as well</i> |
| | The squier then was done to shende,
As it was bothe law and right,
Drawen and honged and for-brende,
Before Sir Mador, the noble knight. | <i>squire; put to death</i> |
| 1665 | In the castel they gonne forth lende,
The Joyous Gard then was it hight;
Launcelot, that was so hende,
They honoured him with all their might. | <i>Drawn; hanged; burned</i> |
| | A time befell, sooth to sayn,
The knightes stood in chamber and spake,
Both Gaheriet and Sir Gawain,
And Mordred, that mikel couthe of wrake, | <i>say</i> |
| 1670 | “Alas!” then said Sir Agravain,
“How false men shall we us make?
How long shall we hele and laine
The tresoun of Launcelot du Lake? | <i>castle; remain</i>
<i>called</i>
<i>courteous</i> |
| | “Well we wote, withouten ween,
The king Arthur our eme shold be,
And Launcelot lies by the queen;
Again the king traitour is he, | <i>knew much of trouble-making</i> |
| 1675 | And that wote all the court bydene,
And iche day it here and see;
To the king we sholde it mene,
Yif ye will do by the counsel of me.” | <i>conceal and hide</i> |
| | “Well wote we,” said Sir Gawain,
“That we are of the kinges kin,
And Launcelot is so mikel of main
That suche wordes were better blinne. | <i>know; without doubt</i> |
| 1680 | Well wot thou, brother Agravain,
Thereof sholde we but harmes win; | <i>uncle</i> |
| | | <i>tell</i> |
| 1685 | | <i>great; power</i> |
| | | <i>stopped</i> |
| 1690 | | |

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 1695 Yet were it better to hele and laine
Than war and wrake thus to begin. *hide; conceal*
- 1700 "Well wot thou, brother Agravain,
Launcelot is hardy knight and thro;
King and court had oft been slain
Nadde he been better than we mo,
And sithen might I never sayn
The love that has been between us two;
Launcelot shall I never betrayn,
Behind his back to be his fo. *fierce*
Had he not
betray
- 1705 "Launcelot is kinges son full good,
And thereto hardy knight and bold,
And sithen, and him need bestood,
Many a land wolde with him hold.
Shed there sholde be mikel blood
For this tale, yif it were told;
1710 Sir Agravain, he were full wode,
That such a thing beginne wolde." *And, moreover, if he had need*
i.e., be his ally
insane
- 1715 Then thus-gates as the knighting stood,
Gawain and all the other press,
In come the king with milde mood;
Gawain then said: "Fellowes, pees!"
The king for wrath was nighghe wode
For to wite what it was;
Agravain swore by Cross and Rood:
"I shall it you tell withoute lees." *in this manner*
be still
cross
lies
- 1720 Gawain to his chamber went;
Of this tale nolde he nought here;
Gaheriet and Gaheries of his assent,
With their brother went they there;
Well they wiste that all was shent,
1725 And Sir Gawain by God then swere:
"Here now is made a comsement
That beth not finished many a yere." *would not hear any*
lost
swore
commencement
will not be
- 1730 Agravain told all bydene
To the king with simple cheer,
How Launcelot ligges by the queen,
And so has done full many a yere,
And that wot all the court bydene *innocent expression*
lies

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- And iche day it see and here:
 “And we have false and traitours been
 1735 That we ne wolde never to you diskere.” *reveal*
- “Alas!” then said the kinge there,
 “Certes, that were grete pitee;
 So as man nadde never yet more
 Of beautee ne of bountee,
 1740 Ne man in world was never yet ere
 Of so mikel nobilitee.
 Alas, full grete dole it were
 In him sholde any tresoun be!
- “But sithe it is so, withouten fail,
 1745 Sir Agravain, so God thee rede,
 What were now thy best counsel,
 For to take him with the deed?
 He is man of such apparail,
 Of him I have full mikel drede;
 1750 All the court nolde him assail
 Yif he were armed upon his steed.” *in the act
accomplishments*
- “Sir, ye and all the court bydene
 Wendeth tomorrow on hunting right,
 And sithen send word to the queen
 1755 That ye will dwell without all night,
 And I and other twelve knightes keen
 Full prively we shall us dight;
 We shall him have withouten ween
 Tomorrow ere any day be light.” *outside (the court)*
- On the morrow with all the court bydene
 The king gan on hunting ride,
 And sithen he sent word to the queen
 That he wolde all night out abide.
 Agravain with twelve knightes keen
 1760 Atte home beleft that ilke tide
 Of all the day they were not seen,
 So privily they gonне them hide. *At home remained*
- Tho was the queene wonder blithe
 That the king wolde at the forest dwell;
 1770 To Launcelot she sent as swithe
 And bade that he sholde come her til. *secretly to her*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- Sir Bors de Gawnes began to lithe,
 Though his herte liked ill;
 "Sir," he said, "I wolde you kithe
 1775 A word, yif that it were your will.
listen
it ill-pleased his heart
tell
i.e., if you please
- "Sir, tonight I rede ye dwell;
 I drede there be some tresoun dight
 With Agravain, that is so fell,
 That waites you both day and night.
 1780 Of all that ye have gone her til,¹
 Ne greved me never yet no wight,
 Ne never yet gave mine herte to ill,
 So mikel as it doth tonight."
remain (here)
By; fierce
- "Bors," he said, "holde still;
 1785 Such wordes are not to kithe;
 I will wend my lady til,
 Some new tithandes for to lithe;
 I ne shall nought but wite her will;
 Look ye make you glad and blithe;
 1790 Certainly I nill not dwell,
 But come again to you all swithe."
make known
know what she wants
will not remain
- For-why he wend have comen soon
 For to dwell had he not thought,
 None armour he did him upon
 1795 But a robe all single wrought;
 In his hand a sword he fone,
 Of tresoun dredde he him right nought;²
 There was no man under the moon
 He wend with harm durst him have sought.
Because; return immediately
put upon himself
uniquely made
grasped
- When he come to the lady sheen
 He kist and clipped that sweete wight;
 For sooth, they never wolde ween
 That any tresoun was there dight;
 So mikel love was them between
 1800 That they not departe might;
kissed; embraced; creature
expect
- 1805 That they not departe might;

¹ *Of all the nights that you have gone to her, / None ever bothered me in any way / Or made my heart so sick / As this one does tonight*

² *He had absolutely no fear of treason (betrayal); / He supposed there was no man on earth / Who would dare attempt to do him harm*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

To bed he goeth with the queen,
And there he thought to dwell all night.

- | | | |
|------|--|---|
| 1810 | <p>He was not busked in his bed,
Launcelot in the queenes bowr,
Come Agravain and Sir Mordred,
With twelve knightes stiff in stour;
Launcelot of tresoun they begredder,
Calld him false and kinges traitour,
And he so strongly was bestedde,
There-in he had none armour.</p> | <p><i>He had hardly gotten in his bed
bower (bedroom)</i></p> <p><i>bold in battle
accused</i></p> <p><i>set upon</i></p> |
| 1815 | | |
| 1820 | <p>“Wele-away,” then said the queen,
“Launcelot, what shall worthe of us two?
The love that hath been us between,
To such ending that it sholde go!
With Agravain, that is so keen,
That night and day hath been our foe,
Now I wot, withouten ween,
That all our wele is turned to wo!”</p> | <p><i>become</i></p> |
| 1825 | <p>“Lady,” he said, “thou must blinne;
Wide I wot these wordes beth rife;¹
But is here any armour in
That I may have to save my life?”
“Certes, nay,” she said then,
“This auuter is so wonder strife</p> | <p><i>stop</i></p> |
| 1830 | <p>That I ne may to none armour win
Helm ne hauberk, sword ne knife.”</p> | <p><i>circumstance; very bad
obtain
(see note)</i></p> |
| 1835 | <p>Ever Agravain and Sir Mordred
Calld him recreant false knight,
Bade him rise out of his bed,
For he moste needes with them fight.
In his robe then he him cledde,</p> | <p><i>perjured</i></p> |
| | <p>Though he none armour gette might;
Wrothly out his sword he gredde;
The chamber door he set up right.</p> | <p><i>must; by necessity
clad</i></p> |
| 1840 | <p>An armed knight before in went
And wend Launcelot well to slo,</p> | <p><i>Fiercely; drew
stood close to</i></p> <p><i>thought; slay</i></p> |

¹ *I know that this news will be widely told*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- But Launcelot gave him such a dint,
 That to the grounde gan he go;
 The other all again then stent;
 After him durste follow no mo;
 To the chamber door he sprent
 And clasped it with barres two.
- stopped
dared
leaped
locked; two bars
- The knight that Launcelot has slain,
 His armour fand he fair and bright;
 Haste he hath them off-drayn
 And there-in himselfe digit.
 "Now know thou well, Sir Agravain,
 Thou prisouns me no more tonight!"
 Out then sprang he with mikel main,
 Himself against them all to fight.
- the armor drawn off*
- Launcelot then smote with herte good;
 Wite ye well, withouten lees,
 Sir Agravain to dethe yode,
 And sithen all the other press;
 Was none so strong that him withstood,
 By he had made a little rese,
 But Mordred fled as he were wode,
 To save his life full fain he was.
- went
then the rest of the gang
By the time; attack
eager
- Launcelot to his chamber yode,
 To Bors and to his other knighthes;
 Bors, armed, before him stood;
 To bedde yet was he not digit.
 The knighthes for fere was nighg wode,
 So were they dreched all that night;
 But blithe waxed they in their mood
 When they their master saw with sight.
- went*
bed
fear
disturbed by dreams
- "Sir," said Bors, the hardy knight,
 "After you have we thought full long;
 To bedde durst I me not digit,
 For drede ye had some aunter strong;
 Our knighthes have be dreched tonight
 That some naked out of bedde spong,
 For-thy we were full sore affright,
 Lest some tresoun were us among."
- fierce encounter*
disturbed by dreams
- 1880 "Ya, Bors, drede thee no wight,

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- But beth of herte good and bold,
And swithe awaken up all my knighthes
 And look which wille with us hold;
Look they be armed and redy dight,
 For it is sooth that thou me told;
1885 We have begonne this ilke night
 That shall bring many a man full cold.”
- Bors then spake with dreary mood:
 “Sir,” he said, “sithe it is so,
1890 We shall be of hertes good,
 After the wele to take the wo.”
The knights sprengt as they were wode,
 And to their harness gonnew they go;
At the morrow armed before him stood
 A hundred knightes and squiers mo.
- When they were armed and redy dight,
 A softe pas forth gonnew they ride,
As men that were of mikel might,
 To a forest there beside.
1900 Launcelot arrayes all his knightes,
 And there they lodgen them to bide.
Til they herde of the lady bright,
 What auunter of her sholde betide.
- Mordred then took a way full gain,
 And to the forest went he right,
His aunters told, for sooth to sayn,
 That were befallen that ilke night.
“Mordred, have ye that traitour slain,
 Or how have ye with him dight?”
1910 “Nay, sir, but dede is Agravain,
 And so are all our other knightes.”
- When it herde Sir Gawain,
 That was so hardy knight and bold:
“Alas! Is my brother slain?”
 Sore his herte began to colde:
1915 “I warned well Sir Agravain,
 Ere ever yet this tale was told,
Launcelot was so much of main
 Against him was strong to hold.”

begun

dreary

leaped

harness (equipment)

hundred

At a gentle pace

arranges in formation

lodge

chance

direct

adventures

grow cold

i.e., difficult

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 1920 It was no lenger for to bide;
 King and all his knighthes keen
 Took their counsel in that tide,
 What was best do with the queen. *to do*
- 1925 It was no lenger for to bide;
 That day forbrent sholde she ben. *burned to death*
- The fire then made they in the feld;
 There-to they brought that lady free;
 All that ever might wepen weld *weapon*
 About her armed for to be.
- 1930 Gawain, that stiff was under shield,
 Gaheriet, ne Gaheries ne wolde not see;
 In their chamber they them held;
 Of her they hadde grete pitee.
- 1935 The king Arthur that ilke tide
 Gawain and Gaheries for sent;
 Their answers were not for to hide;
 They ne wolde not be of his assent;
 Gawain wolde never be ner beside
 There any woman sholde be brent; *burned*
- 1940 Gaheriet and Gaheries with little pride,
 All unarmed thider they went.
- A squier gan tho tithandes lithe,
 That Launcelot to court hath sent; *heard the news*
 To the forest he went as swithe,
 There Launcelot and his folk was lente, *Whom*
- 1945 Bade them come and haste blithe:
 “The queen is ledde to be brent!”
 And they to horse and armes swithe,
 And ich one before other sprent. *stayed* *hasten quickly*
- 1950 The queen by the fire stood,
 And in her smok all redy was; *(see note)*
 Lordinges was there many and good,
 And grete power, withouten lees;
- 1955 Launcelot sprent as he were wode;
 Full soone parted he the press;
 Was none so stiff before him stood
 By he had made a little rese. *leaped* *By the time; attack*
- There was no steel stood them again,

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1960 | Though fought they but a little stound;
Lordinges that were much of main,
Many good were brought to ground;
Gaheriet and Gaheries both were slain
With many a doleful dethes wound; | <i>time</i> |
| 1965 | The queen they took withoute laine,
And to the forest gonne they found. | <i>without doubt go</i> |
| The tithinges is to the kinge brought,
How Launcelot has tan away the queen:
“Such wo as there is wrought!
Slain are all our knightes keen!” | | |
| 1970 | Down he fell and swooned oft;
Grete dole it was to here and seen;
So ner his herte the sorrow sought,
Almost his life wolde no man ween. | <i>taken see</i> |
| “Jesu Crist! What may I say?
In erthe was never man so wo;
Such knightes as there are slain,
In all this world there is no mo.
Let no man telle Sir Gawain
Gaheriet his brother is dede him fro, | | |
| 1975 | But wele-away, the rewful reyne,
That ever Launcelot was my fo!” | <i>Almost no one expected him to live</i> |
| 1980 Gawain gan in his chamber him hold;
Of all the day he nolde not out go;
A squier then the tithandes told;
1985 What wonder though his herte were wo?
“Alas,” he said, “My brother bold,
Were Gaheriet be dede me fro?” ¹
So sore his herte began to colde,
Almost he wolde himselfe slo. | | |
| 1990 The squier spake with drery mood
To recomfort Sir Gawain:
“Gaheriet ailes nought but good; ²
He will soon come again.”
Gawain sprengt as he were wode | | |

¹ *Can it be that Gaheriet is dead and away from me?*

² *Nothing but good ails Gaheriet (he is all right)*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 1995 To the chamber there they lay slain;
 The chamber floor all ran on blood
 And clothes of gold were over them drayn. *with drawn*
- 2000 A cloth he heves then upon height;
 What wonder though his herte were sore,
 So dolefully to see them dight,
 That ere so doughty knighting were!
 When he his brother saw with sight,
 A word might he speke no more;
 There he lost both main and might
 And over him fell in swooning there. *lifts; up high*
- 2005 Of swooning when he might awake,
 The hardy knight, Sir Gawain,
 By God he swore and loude spake,
 As man that muche was of main:
 "Betwix me and Launcelot du Lake,
 Nis man on erthe, for sooth to sayn,
 Shall trewes set and pees make
 Ere either of us have other slain!" *There is no man truce*
- 2010 A squier that Launcelot to court had sent
 Of the tithandes gan he lithie;
 To the forest is he went
 And told Launcelot also swithe
 How lordinges that were rich of rent,
 Fele good had lost their life, *property Many*
- 2015 Gaheriet and Gaheries sought their end;
 But then was Launcelot nothing blithe.
 "Lord," he said, "What may this ben?" *be*
 Jesu Crist! What may I sayn?
 The love that hath betwixt us been!
 That ever Gaheriet me was again! *was against me*
- 2020 Now I wot for all bydene
 A sorry man is Sir Gawain;
 Accordement thar me never ween
 Til either of us have other slain." *I may never expect reconciliation*
- 2030 Launcelot gan with his folk forth wend,
 With sorry herte and dryre mood.
 To queenes and countesses fele he send
 And grete ladies of gentle blood, *many*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- That he had oft their landes defend
 2035 And foughten when them need bestood.
 Ichon her power him lend *Each one; granted*
 And made his party stiff and good.
- Queenes and countesses that riche were
 2040 Send him erles with grete meyne;
 Other ladies that might no more *company*
 Sent him barons or knighthes free. *could (send)*
 So mikel folk to him gan fare
 Hideous it was his host to see; *Hideous (frightening)*
 To the Joyous Gard went he there
 2045 And held him in that strong citee.
- Launcelotes herte was full sore
 For the lady fair and bright;
 A damesel he did be yare, *commanded to be ready*
 In rich apparail was she dight,
 2050 Hastely in message for to fare
 To the king of mikel might,
 To prove it false — what might he more? — *prove [the accusation] false*
 But profferes him therefore to fight.
- The maiden is redy for to ride,
 2055 In a full rich apparailment
 Of samite green, with mikel pride, *silk*
 That wrought was in the Orient;
 A dwarf sholde wende by her side; *travel*
 Such was Launcelotes commaundement; *command*
 2060 So were the manneres in that tide, *customs, time*
 When a maid on message went. *as a messenger*
- To the castle when she come,
 In the palais gan she light; *palace*
 To the king her errand she saide soon
 2065 (By him sat Sir Gawain the knight), *message*
 Said that lies were said him upon;
 Trew they were by day and night; *they (Lancelot and Guinevere)*
 To prove it as a knight sholde don *do*
 Launcelot profferes him to fight.
- 2070 The king Arthur spekes there
 Wordes that were keen and thro: *bold*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 2075 “He ne might prove it never more,¹
 But of my men that he wolde slo.
 By Jesu Crist,” the king swore
 And Sir Gawain then also,
 “His deeds shall be bought full sore,
 dearly
 But yif no steel nill in him go!”²
- 2080 The maiden hath her answer;
 To the Joyous Gard gan she ride;
 Such as the kinges wordes were
 She told Launcelot in that tide.
 Launcelot sighed wonder sore,
 Teres from his eyen gan glide.
 Bors de Gawnes by God then swore:
 “In middes the feld we shall them bide!”
- 2085 Arthur wolde no lenger abide,
 But hastes him with all his might.
 Messengeres did he go and ride,
 That they ne sholde let for day ne night,
 Throughout Yngland by ich a side,
 To erle, baron, and to knight,
 Bade them come that ilke tide,
 With horse strong and armour bright.
- 2090 commanded to walk and ride
 stop
 on every side
- 2095 Though the knight that were dede them fro,³
 Thereof was all their mikel care,
 Three hundred they made mo,
 Out of castle ere they wolde fare,
 Of Yngland and Ireland also,
 Of Wales and Scottes that beste were,
 Launcelot and his folkes to slo
 With hertes breme as any bore.
- 2100 When this host was all boun,
 It was no lenger for to bide,
 Raises spere and gonfanoun,
 As men that were of mikel pride;
- 2105 *ready*
 banner

¹ Even if he could not prove it, he would slay some of my men

² Unless no steel (sword) will go in him

³ Although their great sorrow was for the knight that was dead and away from them

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- With helm and shield and hauberk brown, shining
 Gawain himself before gan ride
 To the Joyous Gard, that riche town, fortified place
 And set a sege on ech a side. siege
- 2110 About the Joyous Gard they lay
 Seventeen weekes and well more,
 Til fell upon a day
 Launcelot home bade them fare:
 “Brek your sege! Wendes away!” Break; Turn
 2115 You to slay grete pitee it were.”
 He said: “Alas and wele-away,
 That ever began this sorrow sore!”
- Ever the king and Sir Gawain
 Calld him false recreant knight, perjured
 2120 And said he had his brethern slain,
 And traitour was by day and night,
 Bade him come and prove his main
 In the feld with them to fight.
 Launcelot sighed, for sooth to sayn;
 2125 Grete dole it was to see with sight.
- So loud they Launcelot gonne ascry, call at
 With vois and hidous hornes bere,
 Bors de Gawnnes standes him by,
 And Launcelot makes ivel cheer. braying of horns
 2130 “Sir,” he said, “wherefore and why
 Sholde we these proude wordes here?
 Me think ye fare as cowardly
 As we ne durst no man nigher ner. a sour face
- “Dight we us in rich array, dress
 2135 Both with spere and with shield,
 As swithe as ever that we may,
 And ride we out into the feld.
 While my life laste may,
 This day I ne shall my wepen yeld; weapon; surrender
 2140 Therefore my life I dare well lay wager
 We two shall make them all to held.” withdraw
- “Alas,” quod Launcelot, “Wo is me, said
 That ever sholde I see with sight
 Again my lord for to be,

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 2145 The noble king that made me knight!
 Sir Gawain, I beseeche thee,
 As thou art man of muche might,
 In the feld let not my lord be,¹
 Ne that thyself with me not fight."
- 2150 It may no lenger for to bide,
 But busked them and made all boun;
 When they were redy for to ride,
 They raised spere and gonfanoun;
 When these hostes gan samen glide,
 With vois and hidous hornes soun,
 Grete pitee was on either side,
 So fele good there were laid down.
- 2155 Sir Lionel with muche main,
 With a spere before gan found;
 2160 Sir Gawain rides him again,
 Horse and man he bore to ground,
 That all men wend he had been slain;
 Sir Lionel had such a wound
 Out of the feld was he drayn,
 2165 For he was seke and sore unsound.
- 2170 In all the feld that ilke tide
 Might no man stand Launcelot again,
 And sithen as fast as he might ride²
 To save that no man sholde be slain.
 The king was ever ner beside
 And hew on him with all his main,
 And he so courtais was that tide
 O dint that he nolde smite again.
- 2175 Bors de Gawnes saw at last,
 And to the king then gan he ride,
 And on his helm he hit so fast
 That ner he lost all his pride;
 The stede rigge under him brast,
 That he to grounde fell that tide;
- 2180 And sithen wordes loud he cast,
- hastened; ready*
banner
together
voice; hideous; sound
many; slain
strength
thought
drawn
hewed
would not strike in return
he (Arthur)
steed's backbone
he (Bors)

¹ Let not my lord (Arthur) be in the field of battle / And see that you yourself do not fight with me

² And yet he rode about as fast as he could / To see that no man should be slain

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

With Sir Launcelot to chide:

- “Sir, shalou all day suffer so
 That the king thee assail,
 And sithe his herte is so thro,
 2185 Thy courtaisy may not avail?
 Batailes shall there never be mo,
 And thou wilt do by my counsel:
 Giveth us leve them all to slo,
 For thou hast vanquished this batail.”
- shalt thou; allow*
fierce
If
slay
- 2190 “Alas,” quod Launcelot, “Wo is me,
 That ever sholde I see with sight
 Before me him unhorsed be,
 The noble king that made me knight!”
 He was then so courtais and free
 2195 That down of his steed he light;
 The king there-on then horses he,
 And bade him flee, yif that he might.
- said*
alighted
puts Arthur back on a horse
- When the king was horsed there,
 Launcelot lookes he upon,
 2200 How courtaisy was in him more
 Than ever was in any man.
 He thought on thinges that had been ere;
 The teres from his eyen ran;
 He said, “Alas,” with sighing sore,
 2205 “That ever yet this war began!”
- courtesy*
- The parties arn withdrawen away,
 Of knighting were they wexen thin;
 On morrow on that other day
 Sholde the batail eft begin;
 2210 They dight them on a rich array
 And parted their hostes both in twinne;
 He that began this wretched play,
 What wonder though he had grete sin?
- are*
grown
again
in two
- Bors was breme as any bore,
 And out he rode to Sir Gawain;
 For Lionel was wounded sore,
 Venge his brother he wolde full fain.
 2215 Sir Gawain gan again him fare,
 As man that muche was of main;
- fierce; boar*
Avenge; eagerly desired

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 2220 Either through other body bore
 That well ner were they bothe slain.
 Both to ground they fell in fere;
 Therefore were fele folk full wo. *together*
- 2225 The kinges party redy were
 Away to take them bothe two.
 Launcelot himself come ner,
 Bors rescues he them fro;
 Out of the feld men him bere;
 So were they wounded bothe two.
- 2230 Of this batail were to tell
 A man that it well understood,
 How knightes under saddles fell
 And sitten down with sorry mood;
 Steedes that were bold and snell *fast*
 2235 Among them waden in the blood; *wade*
 But by the time of even-bell
 Launcelot party the better stood. *vespers (6 p.m.)*
- Of this batail was no more,
 But thus departen they that day;
 2240 Folk their frendes home led and bore,
 That slain in the feldes lay.
 Launcelot gan to his castle fare,
 The batail vanquished, for sooth to say;
 There was dole and weeping sore;
 2245 Among them was no childe play.
- Into all landes north and south
 Of this war the word spong,
 And yet at Rome it was full couthe *well known*
 In Yngland was such sorrow strong;
- 2250 There-of the Pope had grete rewth; *pity*
 A letter he sealed with his hand:
 But they accorded well in trewth *sealed*
 Enterdite he wolde the land.¹ *Unless; truth*
- Then was a bishop at Rome,
 2255 Of Rochester, withouten lees;

¹ *He would place the land under interdict*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- | | | |
|------|--|--|
| | Til Yngland he, the message, come,
To Carlisle there the king was;
The Popes letter out he nome,
In the palais, before the dese,
And bade them do the Popes doom
And hold Yngland in rest and pees. | <i>messenger</i> |
| 2260 | | <i>took</i>
<i>palace; dais</i>
<i>decree</i> |
| | Redde it was before all bydene,
The letter that the Pope gan make,
How he must have again the queen
And accord with Launcelot du Lake,
Make a pees them between
For ever more, and trewes make,
Or Yngland enterditid sholde ben
And turn to sorrow for their sake. | <i>Read; everyone</i> |
| 2265 | | <i>he (Arthur)</i> |
| | The king again it wolde not ben,
To do the Popes commaundement,
Blithely again to have the queen;
Wolde he not that Yngland were shent;
But Gawain was of herte so keen | <i>against</i>
<i>command</i> |
| 2270 | | <i>destroyed</i> |
| 2275 | That to him wolde he never assent
To make accord them between
While any life were in him lente. | <i>remained</i> |
| | Through the sent of all bydene,
Gan the king a letter make; | <i>assent</i> |
| 2280 | The bishop in message yede between
To Sir Launcelot du Lake,
And asked if he wolde the queen
Courtaily to him betake,
Or Yngland enterdite sholde ben | <i>as a messenger went</i> |
| 2285 | And turn to sorrow for their sake. | <i>entrust</i>
<i>interdicted</i> |
| | Launcelot answerd with grete favour,
As knight that hardy was and keen:
“Sir, I have stand in many a stour,
Both for the king and for the queen; | <i>stood; battle</i> |
| 2290 | Full cold had been his beste towr
Yif that I nadde myselfe been;
He quites me with little honour,
That I have served him all bydene.” | <i>Destroyed; castle</i>
<i>If I had not been there</i>
<i>repays</i>
<i>completely</i> |
| | The bishop spake withoute fail, | |

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 2295 Though he were nothing afrought:afraid
 "Sir, think that ye have vanquished many a batail,
 Through grace that God hath for you wrought;
 Ye shall do now by my counsel;
 Think on Him that you dere bought;
- 2300 Women are frele of their entail;frail; character
 Sir, lettes not Yngland go to nought!"
- 2305 "Sir Bishop, castelles for to hold,castles
 Wite you well, I have no need;
 I might be king, yif that I wolde,
 Of all Benwick, that riche thede,nation
 Ride into my landes bold,
 With my knightes stiff on steed;
 The queen, yif that I to them yolde,yield
 Of her life I have grete drede."
- 2310 "Sir, by Mary, that is maiden florw,flower of maidens
 And by God that all shall rede and right,
 She ne shall have no dishonour;
 There-to my trowth I shall you plight,teach; guide
 But boldly brought into her bowr,
 To ladies and to maidens bright,
 And holden in well more honour
 Than ever she was by day or night."
- 2315 "Now, yif I graunt such a thingword; pledge
 That I deliver shall the queen,
 Sir Bishop, say my lord, the king,
 Sir Gawain and them all bydene,
 That they shall make me a sekering,give me assurance
 A trews to holde us between."truce
- 2320 Then was the bishop wonder blithe
 That Launcelot gave him this answer;
 Til his palfrey he went as swithe,
 And til Carlisle gan he fare.
 Tithandes soon were done to lithe,Tidings; proclaimed
 Which that Launcelotes wordes were;
- 2325 The king and court was all full blithe;
 A trews they set and sekered there.truce; pledged themselves to it
- 2330 Through the assent of all bydene
 A seker trews there they wrought;sure truce

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 2335 Though Gawain were of herte keen,
 There-against was he nought,
 To hold a trewes them between
 While Launcelot the queen home brought;
 But cordement thar him never ween
 Ere either other herte have sought.¹ *reconciliation; expected*
- 2340 A seker trews gonne they make *sure truce*
 And with their seles they it band; *seals; bound*
 There-to they three bishoppes gonне take,
 The wisest that were in all the land,
 And sent to Launcelot du Lake;
- 2345 At Joyous Gard then they him fand; *found*
 The lettres there they him betake, *deliver*
 And there-to Launcelot held his hand. *pledged himself*
- 2350 The bishoppes then went on their way,
 To Carlisle there the king was;
 Launcelot shall come that other day, *the next day*
 With the lady proud in press. *amidst the company*
- 2355 He digit him in a rich array, *Know*
 Wite ye well, withouten lees;
 An hundred knightes, for sooth to say,
 The best of all his host he chese. *chose*
- 2360 Launcelot and the queen were cledde *clad*
 In robes of a riche weed, *material*
 Of samite white, with silver shredde,
 Ivory saddle and white steed, *silk; trimmed*
- 2365 Sambues of the same thred,
 That wrought was in the hethen thede; *Saddle-clothes; thread*
 Launcelot her bridle led,
 In the romaunce as we rede. *heathen lands*
- 2370 The other knightes everychone, *romance (French book)*
 In samite green of hethen land,
 And in their kirtels ride alone,
 And iche knight a green garland;
 Saddles set with riche stone;
 Ichon a braunch of olive in hand;
 All the feld about them shone; *every one*
 silk; heathen
 gowns (i.e., without armor)

¹ Until one has sought (with a sword) the other's heart

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- The knightes rode full loud singand. *singing*
- To the castle when they come
 In the palais gonne they light; *alight*
 Launcelot the queen off her palfrey nome; *took*
 2375 They said it was a seemly sight.
 The king then salues he full soon, *salutes*
 As man that was of muche might;
 Fair wordes were there fone, *few*
 But weeping stood there many a knight.
- 2380 Launcelot spake, as I you mene, *tell*
 To the king of mikel might:
 “Sir, I have thee brought thy queen,
 And saved her life with the right,
 As lady that is fair and sheen
 2385 And trew is both day and night;
 If any man sayes she is not clene, *pure*
 I proffer me therefore to fight.”
- The king Arthur answeres there
 Wordes that were keen and thro: *fierce*
 2390 “Launcelot, I ne wend never more *supposed*
 That thou wolde me have wrought this wo;
 So dere as we samen were, *were to each other*
 There-under that thou was my fo; *I.e., despite this*
 But nought-for-thy me rewes sore *nevertheless it sorely pains me*
 2395 That ever was war betwixt us two.”
- Launcelot then answerd he,
 When he had listened long:
 “Sir, thy wo thou witest me, *your troubles you blame on me*
 And well thou wost it is with wrong; *you know well you do wrongly*
 2400 I was never fer from thee *far*
 When thou had any sorrow strong;
 But liers listenes thou to lie, *you listen to lying liars*
 Of whom all this word out spong.”
- Then bespake him Sir Gawain,
 That was hardy knight and free:
 “Launcelot, thou may it not withsayn *deny*
 That thou hast slain my brethern three;
 For-thy shall we prove our main

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- In feld whether shall have the gree.¹
- 2410 Ere either of us shall other slayn,slay
 Blithe shall I never be.”
- Launcelot answerd with herte sore,afraid
 Though he were nothing afrought:
 “Gawain,” he said, “Though I were there,
 2415 Myself thy brethern slogh I nought;slew
 Other knightes fele there were
 That sithen this war dere han bought.”many
have
 Launcelot sighed wonder sore;ran from his eyes
 The teres of his eyen sought.
- Launcelot spake, as I you mene,reconciliation
 To the king and Sir Gawain:
 “Sir, shall I never of cordement ween,
 That we might frendes be again?”
 2425 Gawain spake with herte keen
 As man that muche was of main:
 “Nay, cordement thar thee never ween²
 Til one of us have other slain!”
- “Sithe it never may betide
 That pees may be us between,
 2430 May I into my landes ride,see
 Safely with my knightes keen?
 Then will I here no lenger bide,
 But take leve of you all bydene;
 Where I wend in worlde wide,
 2435 Yngland will I never sen.”
- The king Arthur answerd there —
 The teres from his eyen ran —
 “By Jesu Crist,” he there swore,
 “That all this world wrought and won,
 2440 Into thy landes when thou wilt fare,No living man shall stop you
 Thee shall let no livand man.”
 He said, “Alas!” with sighing sore,
 “That ever yet this war began!”

¹ [To see] on the field [of battle] who should have the prize

² Nay, you may never expect reconciliation

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 2445 “Sithe that I shall wend away,
 And in mine owne landes wonne,
 May I safely wonne there ay,
 That ye with war not come me on?”
 Sir Gawain then said: “Nay,
 By Him that made sun and moon,
 Dight thee well as ever thou may,
 For we shall after come full soon.”
- 2450 *dwell*
 Prepare yourself
- 2455 Launcelot his leve hath taken there;
 It was no lenger for to bide;
 His palfrey fand he redy yare,
 Made him redy for to ride;
 Out of the castel gonne they fare;
 Grimly teres let they glide;
 There was dole and weeping sore;
 At the parting was little pride.
- 2460 *quickly*
 castle
- 2465 To the Joyous Gard, the riche town,
 Rode Launcelot, the noble knight;
 Busked them and made all boun,
 As men that were of muche might.
 With spere in hand and gonfanoun
 (Let they neither day ne night)
 To an haven hight Kerlioun;
 Rich galleys there they fande dight.
- 2470 *fortified place*
 Hastened; ready
 banner
 Delayed
 named Caerleon
 found prepared
- 2475 Now are they shipped on the flood,
 Launcelot and his knighthes hende;
 Wederes had they fair and good
 Where their will was for to wend,
 To an haven there it stood,
 As men were levest for to lende;¹
 Of Benwick blithe was their mood,
 When Jesu Crist them thider send.
- 2480 *Weathers (winds)*
 glad; mind
 sent
- 2485 Now are they arrived on the strand;
 Of them was fele folk full blithe;
 Grete lordes of the land,
 Again him they come as swithe,
- 2490 *quickly*

¹ *Where the men were most eager to stay*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 2480 And fellen him to foot and hand;¹
 For their lord they gonне him kithe,
 At his doomes for to stand,
 And at his lawes for to lithe.
- 2485 Bors made he king of Gawnes,
 As it was both law and right;
 Lionel made king of Fraunce,
 By olde time Gawle hight;
 All his folk he gan avaunce
 And landes gave to ich a knight,
 2490 And stored his casteles for all chaunce,
 For mikel he hoped more to fight.
- 2495 Ector he crownes with his hand,
 So says the book, withouten lees,
 Made him king of his fader land,
 And prince of all the riche press,
 Bade nothing him sholde withstand,
 But hold him king, as worthy was,
 For there no more himself wolde fonde
 Til he wiste to live in pees.
- 2500 Arthur will he no lenger abide;
 Night and day his herte was sore.
 Messengeres did he go and ride,
 Throughout Yngland to fare,
 To erles and barons on ich a side,
 2505 Bade them busk and make all yare,
 On Launcelot landes for to ride,
 To bren and slee and make all bare.
- 2510 At his knighting all bydene
 The king gan his counsel take,
 And bade them ordain them between
 Who beste steward were for to make,
 The reme for to save and yeme,
 2515 And beste were for Britaines sake;
 Full mikel they drede them all bydene,
 That aliens the land wolde take.

¹ *And knelt and kissed Launcelot's foot and hand / And acknowledged him to be their lord, / And (promised) to obey his decrees / And to heed his laws*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- The knightes answerd, withoute lees,
 And said, for sooth, that so them thought
 That Sir Mordred the sekerest was *most trustworthy*
 Though men the reme throughoute sought,
 To save the reme in trews and pees.
 Was a book before him brought;
 Sir Mordred they to steward chese; *as*
 That many a bold sithen abought. *For that, many a bold one later paid*
- It was no lenger for to bide,
 But buskes them and made all boun; *they bustle about*
 When they were redy for to ride,
 They raised spere and gonfanour; *banner*
 Forth they went with mikel pride
 Til an haven hight Kerlioun, *Caerleon*
 And graithes by the lande side *prepare*
 Galleys grete of fele fasoun. *many fashions*
- Now are they shippid on the se
 And wenden over the water wide;
 Of Benwick when they mighte see,
 With grete rout they gonne up ride; *company*
 Withstood them neither stone ne tree,
 But brent and slogh on ich a side; *burned; slew; every*
 Launcelot is in his best citee;
 There he batail will abide.
- Launcelot clepes his knightes keen,
 His erles and his barons bold; *calls*
 Bade them ordain them between,
 To wite their will, what they wolde, *draw battle lines*
 To ride again them all bydene *together*
 Or their worthy walles hold,
 For well they wiste, withouten ween, *doubt*
 For no fantysé Arthur nolde fold.¹
- Bors de Gawnes, the noble knight,
 Sternly spekes in that stound: *time*
 “Doughty men, that ye be dight,
 Foundes your worship for to fonde *(see) that*
 With spere and sheld and armes bright, *Prepare; test*

¹ *Arthur would not submit for lack of courage*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- | | | |
|------|--|--|
| 2555 | Again your fomen for to founde;
King and duke, erl and knight,
We shall them bete and bring to ground!" | <i>go</i>
<i>beat</i> |
| 2560 | Lionel spekes in that tide,
That was of warre wise and bold:
"Lordinges, yet I rede we bide
And our worthy walles hold;
Let them prik with all their pride,
Til they have caught both hunger and cold;
Then shall we out upon them ride,
And shred them down as sheep in fold." | <i>war</i>
<i>spur</i>
<i>cut</i> |
| 2565 | Sir Bangdemagew, that bolde king,
To Launcelot spekes in that tide:
"Sir, courtaisay and your suffering
Has wakend us wo full wide;
Avise you well upon this thing;
Yif that they over our landes ride,
All to nought they might us bring,
While we in holes here us hide." | <i>brought us great woe</i> |
| 2570 | Galyhod, that ay was good,
To Launcelot he spekes there:
"Sir, here are knightinges of kinges blood,
That long will not droop and dare;
Give me leve, for Cross on Rood,
With my men to them to fare;
Though they be worse than outlawes wode,
I shall them slee and make full bare." | <i>crouch from fear</i>
<i>Body (?); Cross</i>
<i>slay and plunder</i> |
| 2575 | Of North-Gales were brethern seven,
Ferly mikel of strength and pride;
Not full fele that men coude neven
Better durst in bataill bide;
And they said with one steven:
"Lordinges, how long will ye chide?
Launcelot, for Goddes love in Heven,
With Galyhod forth let us ride!" | <i>North Wales</i>
<i>Wondrously great</i>
<i>very many; name</i>
<i>dare</i>
<i>voice</i>
<i>wrangle</i> |
| 2580 | Then spake the lord that was so hende,
Himself, Sir Launcelot du Lake:
"Lordinges, a while I rede we lende
And our worthy walles wake; | <i>advise; remain</i>
<i>watch</i> |

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- A message will I to them send,
 A trews between us for to take;
 My lord is so courtais and hende
 That yet I hope a pees to make.
- “Though we might with worship win,
 Of a thing mine herte is sore:
 This land is full of folk full thin,
 Batailes have made it full bare;
- 2595 2600 2605 2610 2615 2620 2625
- Wite ye well it were grete sin
 Cristen folk to slee thus more;
 With mildeness we shall begin
 And God shall wisse us well to fare.”
- And at this assent all they were,
 And set a watch for to wake,
 Knights breme as any bore
 And derf of drede as is the drake;
- 2605 2610 2615 2620 2625
- A damesel they did be yare,
 And hastily gonue her lettres make;
 A maid sholde on the message fare,
 A trews between them for to take.
- The maid was full sheen to shew,
 Upon her steed when she was set;
 Her parail all of one hew,
 Of a green velvet;
- 2615 2620 2625
- In her hand a braunch new,
 For-why that no man sholde her let;
 There-by men messengers knew,
 In hostes when that men them met.
- The king was loked in a feld,
 By a river brode and dregh;
 A while she hoved and beheld,
 Paviliouns that were pight on high;
- 2620 2625
- She saw there many comely telde,
 With pommels bright as goldes bee;¹
 On one hung the kinges sheld;
 That pavilioun she drew her nigh.
- truce; offer
 honor
 one
 i.e., starving
 slay
 direct
 guard; watch
 fearsome as the dragon
 prepare
 travel
 offer
 be seen
 apparel
 branch; i.e., green
 stop
 By that (i.e., green branch)
 lodged
 wide
 paused
 pavilions; pitched
 tents

¹ *With knobs on the tent poles bright as golden rings*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- The kinges banner out was set;
 That pavilioun she drew her ner; nearer
 2630 With a knight full soon she met,
 Hight Sir Lucan de Botteler;
 She hailsed him and he her grette,
 The maid with full mild cheer;
 Her errand was not for to let;
 2635 He wiste she was a messenger.
- Sir Lucan down gan her take
 And in his armes forth gan lede;
 Hendely to her he spake,
 As knight that wise was under weed:¹
 2640 "Thou comest from Launcelot du Lake,
 The best that ever strode on steed;
 Jesu, for his Moderes sake,
 Give thee grace well to speed!" Mother's
- Fair was pight upon a plain
 The pavilioun in rich apparail; pitched
 2645 The king himself and Sir Gawain
 Comely sitten in the hall;
 The maiden kneeled the king again,
 So low to grounde gan she fall;
 2650 Her lettres were not for to laine;
 They were yredde among them all. read
- Hendely and fair the maiden spake,
 Full fain of speche she wolde be speed:²
 "Sir, God save you all from wo and wrake,
 2655 And all your knighthes in riche weed;
 You greetes well Sir Launcelot du Lake,
 That with you hath been ever at need;
 A twelve-month trews he wolde take,
 To live upon his owne lede, country
- 2660 "And sithen, yif ye make an hest,
 He will it hold with his hand
 Between you for to make pees,
 Stably ever for to stand; promise
i.e., swear

¹ Like a knight who was wise in his armor

² She was very eager to succeed by (means of) her speech

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- | | | |
|------|---|---|
| 2665 | He will rap him on a rese
Mildly to the Holy Land,
There to live, withouten lees,
While he is man livand." | <i>hasten in a rush</i> |
| 2670 | The king then cleped his counsel,
His doughty knightes all bydene;
First he said, withouten fail:
"Me think it were best to sen;
He were a fool, withouten fail,
So fair forwardes for to fleme." | <i>see (about this)</i> |
| 2675 | The king the messenger thus did assail:
"It were pity to set war us between." | <i>To flee (reject) such fair offers</i>
<i>i.e., address</i> |
| 2680 | "Certes, nay!" said Sir Gawain,
"He hath wrought me wo ynow,
So traitourly he hath my brethern slain,
All for your love, sir; that is trouth!" | <i>truth</i> |
| 2685 | To Yngland will I not turn again
Til he be hanged on a bough;
While me lasteth might or main,
There-to I shall find peple ynow." | <i>people</i> |
| 2690 | The king himself, withouten lees,
And ich a lord, is not to laine,
All they spake to have pees,
But himselfe, Sir Gawain;
To batail hath he made his hest,
Or elles never to turn again.
They made them redy to that rese;
Therefore was fele folk unfain. | <i>doubt</i>
<i>promise</i>
<i>return</i>
<i>for that attack</i>
<i>unhappy</i> |
| 2695 | The king is comen into the hall,
And in his royal see him set;
He made a knight the maiden call,
Sir Lucan de Botteler, withouten let:
"Say to Sir Launcelot and his knightes all,
Such an hest I have him hette,
That we shall wend for no wall, ¹
Til we with mightes ones have met." | <i>seat (i.e., throne)</i>
<i>delay</i>
<i>promise; promised</i> |

¹ *That we shall turn aside for no obstacle*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 2700 The maid had her answer;
 With dryre herte she gan her dight;
 Her fair palfrey fand she yare,
 And Sir Lucan led her thider right. *prepare
found; ready*
- 2705 So through a forest gan she fare
 And hasted her with all her might,
 There Launcelot and his knighthes were,
 In Benwick the brough with bemys bright. *castle; trumpets brilliant*
- Now is she went within the wall,
 The worthy damesel fair in weed;
2710 Hendely she came into that hall;
 A knight her took down off her steed.
 Among the princes proud in palle *costly cloth
offered*
 She took her lettres for to rede;
 There was no counsel for to call,
2715 But redyly buskes them to that deed.
- As folkes that preste were to fight, *eager*
 From felde wolde they never flee;
 But by the morrow that day was light,
 About beseged was all their fee; *All their holdings were besieged*
2720 Ichon them rayed in all rightes;¹
 Neither party thought to flee.
- Erly as the day gan spring,
 The trompets upon the walles went; *trumpeters*
 There might they see a wonder thing,
2725 Of teldes rich and many a tent. *rich dwellings (tents)*
 Sir Arthur then, the comely king,
 With his folkes there was lente, *staying*
 To give assaут, without leesing,
 With alblasters and bowes bent. *cross-bows*
- 2730 Launcelot all forwondered was *amazed*
 Of the folk before the wall;
 But he had rather knownen that rese²
 Out had run his knighthes all.
 He said: "Princes, beth in pees,
2735 For follies fele that might befall; *be still
many*

¹ Each one arranged himself correctly (for battle)

² But he had no sooner realized that attack, / Than out all his knights rushed

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- Yif they will not their sege sese,
 Full sore I hope forthink them shall.” cease
I suppose they will regret it sorely
- Then Gawain, that was good at every need,
 Graithed him in his good armour,
 And stiffly stert upon a steed,
 That seker was in ilk a stour;
 Forth he sprang as spark on glede,
 Before the gates again the towr;
 He bade a knight come kithe main,
 A course of war for his honour.
- Prepared
 leaped
 every battle
 live coal
 next to
 prove his strength
 joust
- Bors de Gawnes buskes him boun,
 Upon a steed that sholde him bere,
 With helme, sheld, and hauberk brown,
 And in his hand a full good spere;
 Out he rode a grete randoun;
 Gawain kydde he coude of war;
 Horse and man both bore he down,
 Such a dint he gave him there.
- makes himself ready
 shining
 at a rapid pace
 proved he knew of war
- Sir Lionel was all redy then,
 And for his brother was wonder wo;
 Redyly with his steed out ran,
 And wend Gawain for to slo.
 Gawain him kept as he well can.¹
 As he that ay was keen and thro.
 Down he bore both horse and man,
 And every day some served he so.
- went
 bold
- And so more than half a yere,
 As long as they there layn,
 Every day men might see there
 Men wounded and some slain;
 But how that ever in world it were,
 Such grace had Sir Gawain,
 Ever he passed hole and clere;
 There might no man stand him again.
- lay (remained)
 whole; clear (of any wound)
- Then it befell upon a tide,
 Sir Gawain, that was hende and free,

¹ *Gawain protected himself as he well knows how*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- He made him redy for to ride,
Before the gates of the citee;
Launcelot of tresoun he becrid,
2775 *accused*
That he had slain his brethorn three;
That Launcelot might no lenger abide,
But he ever a coward sholde be. *Unless*
- The lord that grete was of honour,
Himself, Sir Launcelot du Lake,
2780 *comely*
Above the gates upon the towr,
Comely to the king he spake:
“My lord, God save your honour!
Me is wo now for your sake,
Against thy kin to stand in stour,
2785 *must by necessity*
But needes I moste this batail take.”
- Launcelot armed him full well,
For sooth, had full grete need,
Helme, hauberk, and all of steel,
And stiffly stert upon a steed;
2790 *quickly leapt*
His harnes lacked he never a dele;¹
To warre wanted him no weed,
Ne wepen with all to dele; *deal*
Forth he sprang as spark on glede, *live coal*
- Then it was warned fast on high,
2795 *proclaimed emphatically*
How in world that it sholde fare,
That no man sholde come them nigh,
Til the tone dede or yolden were.²
Folk withdrew them then by;
Upon the feld, was brode and bare,
2800 *saw*
The knighting met, as men it sigh
How they set their dintes sore.

Then had Sir Gawain such a grace —

¹ *He lacked not a bit of equipment; / He lacked no garment (armor) for war*

² *Until one of them was dead or had surrendered*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- | | | |
|------|---|---|
| | An holy man had boddern that boon —
When he were in any place
There he sholde batail don,
His strength sholde wax in such a space,
From the under-time til noon,
And Launcelot forbore for that case;
Again twenty strokes he gave not one. | <i>granted that gift</i>
<i>grow; space of time</i>
<i>about 9 a.m. until</i> |
| 2805 | | |
| | Launcelot saw there was no succour;
Needes moste he his venture abide;
Many a dint he gan well endure
Til it drew near the noone tide;
Then he straught in that stour
And gave Gawain a wounde wide; | <i>By necessity he had to wait his chance</i>
<i>straightened up; battle</i> |
| 2810 | | |
| 2815 | Many a dint he gan well endure
Til it drew near the noone tide;
Then he straught in that stour
And gave Gawain a wounde wide;
The blood all covered his colour
And he fell down upon his side. | <i>complexion (face)</i> |
| | | |
| | Thorough the helm into the hede
Was hardy Gawain wounded so | <i>Through</i> |
| 2820 | That unnethe was him life leved;
On foot might he no ferther go;
But wightly his sword about he waved,
For ever he was both keen and thro.
Launcelot then him lyand leved; | <i>That life was hardly left to him</i>
<i>stoutly</i> |
| 2825 | For all the world he nolde him slo. | <i>left him lying (there)</i>
<i>would not slay him</i> |
| | | |
| | Launcelot then him drew on dryghe,
His sword in his hande drayn,
And Sir Gawain cried loud on high:
“Traitor and coward, come again; | <i>back</i>
<i>drawn</i> |
| 2830 | When I am hole and going on high;
Then will I prove with might and main;
And yet a thou woldest nighe me nigh, ¹
Thou shalt well wite I am not slain!” | |
| | | |
| | “Gawain, while thou mightest stiffly stand, | |

¹ *And yet, if you would come near me*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 2835 Many a stroke today of thee I stood,
 And I forbore thee in every land,
 For love and for the kinges blood;¹
 When thou art hole in herte and hand,
 I rede thee turn and change thy mood;
 While I am Launcelot and man livand,
 God shelde me from workes wode!"
- whole
advise you; mind
mad deeds
- "But have good day, my lord the king,
 And your doughty knightes all;
 Wendeth home and leve your warring;
 Ye win no worship at this wall;
 And I wolde my knightes oute bring,
 I wot full sore rew it ye shall;
 My lord, therefore think on such thing,
 How fele folk therefore might fall."
- 2845 2850 Launcelot, that was much of main,
 Boldly to his citee went;
 His goode knightes there-of were fain
 And hendely him in armes hent.
 The tother party tho took Sir Gawain;
 They wesh his woundes in his tent;
 Ere ever he covered might or main,
 Unnethe was him the life lente.²
- took
other
washed
recovered
- A fourtenight, the sooth to say,
 Full passing seke and unsound
- 2860 There Sir Gawain on leching lay
 Ere he were hole all of his wound.
 Then it befell upon a day,
 He made him redy for to wonde;
 Before the gate he took the way,
 And asked batail in that stound:
- fortnight
in medical care
healed
go
time

¹ Because of love (for you) and because you are the king's kinsman

² Hardly any life remained in him

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- “Come forth, Launcelot, and prove thy main,
Thou traitour that hast tresoun wrought;
My three brethern thou hast slain
And falsely them to grounde brought;
2870 While me lasteth might or main,
This quarrel leve will I nought,
Ne pees shall there never be seen,
Ere thy sides be thorough sought.” *pierced through*
- Then Launcelot thought it nothing good,
2875 And for these wordes he was full wo;
Above the gates then he yode,
And to the king he saide so:
“Sir, me rewes in my mood *I grieve; mind*
That Gawain is in herte so thro; *severe*
2880 Who may me wite, for Cors on Rood, *blame, by the Body on the Cross*
Though I him in batail slo?”
- Launcelot busked and made him boun;
He will boldly the batail abide,
With helme, sheld, and hauberk brown, *shining*
2885 None better in all this worlde wide,
With spere in hand and gonfanoun, *banner*
His noble sworde by his side;
Out he rode a grete randoun, *at a rapid pace*
When he was redy for to ride.
- 2890 Gawain gripes a full good spere,
And in he glides glad and gay;
Launcelot kydde he coude of war,¹
And even to him he takes the way;
So stoutly they gan togeder bere
2895 That marvel it was, sooth to say;
With dintes sore gan they dere, *blows severe; harm*
And deepe woundes delten they. *dealt*

¹ *Launcelot proved he knew about war*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- | | | |
|------|--|---|
| | When it was nighed ner-hand noon | <i>was nearly noon</i> |
| | Gawaines strength gan to increase; | <i>increase</i> |
| 2900 | So bitterly he hewed him upon,
That Launcelot all for-wery was; | <i>tired out</i> |
| | Then to his sword he grippes anon,
And sithe that Gawain will not sese, | <i>since; cease</i> |
| | Such a dint he gave him one,
That many a riche rewed that rese. | <i>blow</i>
<i>nobleman rued that attack</i> |
| | Launcelot stert forth in that stound,
And sithe that Gawain will not sese, | <i>moment</i>
<i>cease</i> |
| | The helm, that was rich and round,
The noble sword rove that rese; | |
| 2910 | He hit him upon the olde wound
That over the saddle down he went, | <i>pierced; rash onslaught</i> |
| | And grisly groned upon the ground,
And there was good Gawain shent. | <i>pitifully</i>
<i>put to shame</i> |
| | Yet Gawain, swooning there as he lay,
Gripped to him both sword and shield; | |
| 2915 | “Launcelot,” he said, “soothly to say,
And by Him that all this world shall weld, | <i>wield (control)</i> |
| | While me lasteth life today,
To thee me shall I never yeld; | |
| 2920 | But do the worst that ever thou may,
I shall defend me in the feld.” | |
| | Launcelot then full stille stood,
As man that was much of might: | |
| | “Gawain, me rewes in my mood | <i>mind</i> |
| 2925 | Men hold thee so noble a knight.
Wenestou I were so wode | |
| | Against a feeble man to fight? | <i>Do you think</i> |
| | I will not now, by Cross on Rood,
Nor never yet did by day or night. | |
| 2930 | “But have good day, my lord the king,
And all your doughty knightes bydene; | |
| | Wendeth home and leve your warring, | |

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- For here ye shall no worship win.
Yif I wolde my knightes oute bring,
2935 I hope full soon it sholde be seen;
But, good lord, think upon a thing,
The love that hath us be between.” *been between us*
- After was it monthes two,
As freely folk it understand, *noble*
2940 Ere ever Gawain might ride or go,
Or had foot upon erthe to stand.
The thirde time he was full thro *bold*
To do batail with herte and hand;
But then was word comen them to
2945 That they moste home to Yngland.
- Such message was them brought,
There was no man that thought it good.
The king himself full soon it thought —
Full muche morned he in his mood *mind*
2950 That such tresoun in Yngland sholde be wrought —
That he moste needes over the flood. *cross over the sea*
They broke sege and homeward sought; *went*
And after they had much angry mood.
- That false traitour, Sir Mordred,
The kinges soster son he was *king's sister's son*
2955 And eek his own son, as I rede *also*
(Therefore men him for steward chese),
So falsely hath he Yngland led,
Wite you well, withouten lees,
2960 His emes wife wolde he wed, *uncle's*
That many a man rewed that rese. *course of action*
- Festes made he many and fele,
And grete giftes he gave also;
They said with him was joy and wele,
2965 And in Arthurs time but sorrow and wo;
And thus gan right to wronge go;
All the counsel, is not to hele, *hide*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- Thus it was, withouten mo,
To hold with Mordred in land with wele.
- 2970 False lettres he made be wrought,
And caused messengeres them to bring,
That Arthur was to grounde brought
And chese they moste another king.
All they said as them thought:
- 2975 "Arthur loved nought but warring
And such thing as himselfe sought;
Right so he took his ending."
- Mordred let cry a parlement; *called*
The peple gan thider to come, *people*
2980 And holly through their assent *wholly*
They made Mordred king with crown.
At Canterbury, fer in Kent, *afar*
A fourtenight held the feste in town, *fortnight; feast*
And after that to Winchester he went;
2985 A riche bride-ale he let make boun. *bridal feast; had prepared*
- In sommer, when it was fair and bright,
His faders wife then wolde he wed
And her hold with main and might,
And so her bring as bride to bed.
- 2990 She prayd him of leve a fourtenight — *delay; fortnight*
The lady was full hard bestedde — *hard pressed*
So to London she her dight, *went*
That she and her maidens might be cledde.¹
- The queen, white as lily flowr,
2995 With knightes fele of her kin, *many*
She went to London to the towr
And sperred the gates and dwelled therein. *barred the gates*
Mordred changed all his colour;
- 3000 Thider he went and wolde not blinne; *stop*
There-to he made many a showr, *shower (of arrows)*

¹ So that she and her maidens could be clad [in new clothes for the wedding]

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

But the walles might he never win.

- | | | |
|------|--|---------------------------------|
| | The Archebishop of Canterbury thider yode
And his cross before him brought; | <i>went</i> |
| | He said: "Sir, for Crist on Rood, | |
| 3005 | What have ye now in all your thought?
Thy faders wife, whether thou be wode,
To wed her now mayst thou nought. | <i>even if you are crazy</i> |
| | Come Arthur ever over the flood, | <i>If Arthur comes</i> |
| | Thou mayst be bold, it will be bought!" ¹ | |
| 3010 | "A, nice clerk," then Mordred said,
"Trowest thou to warn me of my will?" ² | <i>foolish clergyman</i> |
| | By Him that for us suffred pain,
These wordes shalt thou like full ill! | |
| | With wilde horse thou shalt be drayn
And hanged high upon a hill!" | <i>drawn apart</i> |
| 3015 | The bishop to flee then was fain,
An suffred him his follies to fulfill. | <i>eager
allowed</i> |
| | Then he him cursed with book and bell
At Canterbury, fer in Kent. | <i>excommunicated him</i> |
| 3020 | Soon, when Mordred herde thereof tell,
To seech the bishop hath he sent;
The bishop durst no lenger dwell, | <i>seek</i> |
| | But gold and silver he hath hent; | <i>seized</i> |
| | There was no lenger for to spell, | <i>talk</i> |
| 3025 | But to a wildernesse he is went. | |
| | The worldes wele there he will forsake;
Of joy keepeth he never more, | <i>He cares no more for joy</i> |
| | But a chapel he lette make
Between two highe holtes hore; | <i>commanded to be built</i> |
| 3030 | Therein wered he the clothes black,
In wood as he an ermite were; | <i>grey woods</i> |
| | Often gan he weep and wake | <i>wore
hermit</i> |

¹ You can be sure it will be paid for

² Do you expect to forbid me my desire?

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

For Yngland that had such sorrows sore.

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| 3035 | Mordred had then lien full long,
But the towr might he never win,
With strengthe ne with stoure strong
Ne with none other kinnes gin;
His fader dredde he ever among;
Therefore his bale he nill not blinne; ¹ | <i>lain (in siege)</i>
<i>sort of trick</i>
<i>dreaded</i> |
| 3040 | He wend to warn them all with wrong
The kingdom that he was crowned in. | <i>expected to deny them</i> |
| Forth to Dover gan he ride,
All the costes well he kend;
To erles and to barons on ilk a side
Grete giftes he gave and lettres sent
And forset the se on ilk a side
With bolde men and bowes bent;
Fro Yngland, that is brode and wide,
His owne fader he wolde defend. | | |
| 3045 | | <i>coasts; knew</i>
<i>blockaded</i>
<i>deny (entry)</i> |
| 3050 | Arthur, that was mikel of might,
With his folk come over the flood,
An hundredth galleys that were well dight
With barons bold and high of blood;
He wend to have landed, as it was right, | |
| 3055 | At Dover, there him thought full good,
And there he fand many an hardy knight
That stiff in stour again him stood. | <i>found</i>
<i>strong in battle</i> |
| Arthur soon hath take the land
That him was levest in to lende; ² | | |
| 3060 | His fele fomen that he there fand
He wend before had been his frend;
The king was wroth and well-nigh wode,
And with his men he gan up wend;
So strong a stour was upon that strand | <i>many enemies; found</i>
<i>friends</i> |

¹ *Therefore he will not stop his evil deeds*

² *Which he liked best to dwell in*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 3065 That many a man there had his end.
- Sir Gawain armed him in that stound;
 Alas! Too long his hede was bare;
 He was seke and sore unsound;
 His woundes greved him full sore.
- 3070 One hit him upon the olde wound
 With a tronchon of an ore; *handle; oar*
 There is good Gawain gone to ground,
 That speche spake he never more.
- Bolde men, with bowes bent,
 Boldly up in botes yode, *went*
 And rich hauberkes they rive and rent *cut; tear*
 That through-out brast the redde blood. *red*
 Grounden glaives through them went; *Sharpened spears*
 Tho games thought them nothing good; *Those*

3080 But by that the stronge stour was stent,¹ *rushing*
 The stronge stremes ran all on blood.

Arthur was so much of might
 Was there none that him withstood;
 He hewed on their helmes bright
 That through their brestes ran the blood. *breasts*

3085 By then ended was the fight;
 The false were feld and some were fled *struck down*
 To Canterbury all that night
 To warn their master, Sir Mordred.

3090 Mordred then made him boun, *ready*
 And boldly he will batail abide
 With helme, sheld, and hauberk brown; *shining*
 So all his rout gan forthe ride; *troop*
 They them met upon Barendown, *Barlam Down (Kent)*

3095 Full erly in the morrow tide; *early*
 With glaives grete and gonfanoun, *spears*

¹ *But by the time that perilous battle was ended*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

Grimly they gonне togeder ride.

Arthur was of rich array

And hornes blewe loud on hight,

on high

- 3100 And Mordred cometh glad and gay,
As traitour that was false in fight.
They fought all that longe day
Til the night was nighed nigh;
Who had it seen well might say
3105 That such a stour never he sigh.

saw

Arthur then fought with herte good;

A nobler knight was never none.

Through helmes into hede it yode
And sterred knighting both blood and bone.¹

*i.e., a sword (*Excalibur*)*

- 3110 Mordred for wrath was nighg wode,
Called his folk and said to them one:
“Releve you, for Cross on Rood!
Alas! This day so soon is gone!”

alone

Recover yourselves

Fele men lieth on bankes bare,

- 3115 With brighte brandes through-oute borne;²
Many a doughty dede was there,
And many a lord his life hath lorne.
Mordred was full of sorrow and care;
At Canterbury was he upon the morn;
3120 And Arthur all night he dwelled there;
His freely folk lay him beforne.

lost

noble; before him

Erly on the morrow tide

Early

Arthur bade his hornes blow,

And called folk on every side,

- 3125 And many a dede buried on a row,
In pittes that was deep and wide;

¹ *And stirred the blood and bones of knights*

² *Driven through with bright swords*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

On ich an hepe they laid them low,¹
So all that ever gon and ride
Some by their markes men might know.

- 3130 Arthur went to his dinner then,
 His freely folk him followed fast,
 But when he fand Sir Gawain *found*
 In a ship lay dede by a mast,
 Ere ever he covered might or main, *recovered*
 An hundred times his herte nigh brast. *nearly broke*
- They laid Sir Gawain upon a bere, *bier*
 And to a castle they him bore,
 And in a chapel amid the quere *choir*
 That bold baron they buried there.
- 3140 Arthur then changed all his cheer;
 What wonder though his herte was sore!
 His soster son, that was him dere, *sister's son*
 Of him sholde he here never more.
- Sir Arthur he wolde no lenger abide;
3145 Then had he all manner of ivil rest;
 He sought ay forth the southe side,² *Pentecost*
 And toward Wales went he west.
 At Salisbury he thought to bide,
 At that time he thought was best,
3150 And call to him at Whitsuntide *eager*
 Barons bold to battail prest.
- Unto him came many a doughty knight,
 For wide in world these wordes spong,
 That Sir Arthur had all the right,
 And Mordred warred on him with wrong.
 Hidous it was to see with sight;

¹ *They made a mound over each body, / So that all that ever walk or ride by / Might know some of them by their markers (on the mounds)*

² *He went ever forth by the south side (of England)*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

Arthures host was brode and long,
And Mordred, that mikel was of might,
With grete giftes made him strong.

- 3160 Soon after the feste of the Trinitie,
Was a batail between them set,
That a stern batail there sholde be;
For no lede wolde they it let; man
And Sir Arthur maketh game and glee,
- 3165 For mirth that they sholde be met;
And Sir Mordred came to the countree
With fele folk that fer was fette.
should meet [in battle]
were fetched from afar
- At night when Arthur was brought in bed
(He sholde have batail upon the morrow),
3170 In stronge swevenes he was bestedde,
That many a man that day sholde have sorrow,
Him thought he sat in gold all cledde,
As he was comely king with crown,
Upon a wheel that full wide spredde,
3175 And all his knightes to him boun.
By painful dreams; beset
clad
spread
stood [ready] by him
- The wheel was ferly rich and round;
In world was never none half so high;
Thereon he sat richly crowned,
With may a besaunt, brooch, and bee;
3180 He looked down upon the ground;
A black water there under him he see,
With dragons fele there lay unbound,
That no man durst them nighg nigh.
wondrouslly
Byzantine coin; ring
saw
come near them
- He was wonder ferde to fall
Among the fenes there that fought.
The wheel over-turned there with-all
And everich by a limm him caught.¹
3185 The king gan loude cry and call,
strangely afraid of falling
fiends
The wheel then turned

¹ *And each (of the fiends) caught him by a limb*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- As marred man of wit unsaught;¹
 3190 His chamberlains waked him there with-all,
 And wodely out of his sleep he raught. *madly; roused*
- All nighte gan he wake and weep,
 With drery herte and sorrowful steven,
 And against the day he fell on sleep. *voice
near day (-light)*
- 3195 About him was set tapers seven.
 Him thought Sir Gawain him did keep,
 With mo folk than men can neven,
 By a river that was brode and deep;
 All seemed angeles come from heven. *candles
await
name*
- 3200 The king was never yet so fain,
 His soster son when that he sigh:
 “Welcome,” he said, “Sir Gawain,
 And thou might live, well were me.
 Now, leve frend, withouten laine, *glad
sister's son; saw*
- 3205 What are tho folk that follow thee?”
 “Certes, sir,” he said again,
 “They bide in bliss there I mot be. *If
dear; deceit
where I must be*
- “Lordes they were, and ladies hende
 This worldes life that han forlorn;
 3210 While I was man on life to lende,
 Against their fon I fought them forn;
 Now find I them my moste frend;
 They bless the time that I was born;
 They asked leve with me to wend,
 To meet with you upon this morn. *remain
foes; for them
greatest friends*
- 3215 “A monthe-day of trewes moste ye take
 And then to batail be ye bain;
 You cometh to help Launcelot du Lake,
 With many a man mikel of main;
 3220 To-morn the batail ye moste forsake,
 Or elles, certes, ye shall be slain.” *month's truce
ready
Launcelot is coming to help you*

¹ Like a troubled man with a disturbed mind

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

The king gan woefully weep and wake,
 And said, "Alas, this rewful regne!"

pitiful kingdom

3225 Hastely his clothes on him he did,
 And to his lordes gan he sayn:
 "In stronge swevenes I have been stedde,¹
 That glad I may not for no games gay.
 We moste unto Sir Mordred send
 And fonde to take another day,²
 3230 Or trewly this day I mon be shend;
 This know I in bed as I lay."

"Go thou, Sir Lucan de Botteler,
 That wise wordes hast in wold,
 And look that thou take with thee here
 3235 Bishoppes fele and barons bold;
 Forth they went all in a fere,
 In trewe booke as it is told,
 To Sir Mordred and his lordes, there they were,
 And an hundred knightes all untold.

in (your) power

all together

beyond counting

3240 The knightes that were of grete valour,
 Before Sir Mordred as they stood,
 They greeten him with grete honour,
 As barons bold and high of blood:
 "Right well thee greetes King Arthur,
 3245 And prayeth thee with milde mood,
 A monthe-day to stint this stour,
 For His love that died on Rood."

To delay this battle for a month

3250 Mordred, that was both keen and bold,
 Made him breme as any bore at bay,
 And swore by Judas that Jesus sold:
 "Such sawes are not now to say;
 That he hath hight he shall it hold;

speeches

What; promised

¹ *I have been beset by strong (painful) dreams*

² *And try to set another day (for the battle), / Or truly this day I must be put to shame*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- The tone of us shall die this day;
 And tell him trewly that I told:
 3255 I shall him mar, yif that I may.” *The one
injure*
- “Sir,” they said, “withouten lees,
 Though thou and he to batail boun,
 Many a rich shall rew that rese,
 By all be delt upon this down,¹
 3260 Yet were it better for to sese,
 And let him be king and bere the crown,
 And after his dayes, full dreedelss,
 Ye to welde all Yngland, towr and town.” *for battle prepare
powerful knight; rue; attack
cease
him (Arthur)
without doubt
You would rule*
- Mordred tho stood still a while,
 3265 And wrothly up his eyen there went,
 And said: “Wiste I it were his will
 To give me Cornwall and Kent!
 Let us meet upon yonder hill
 And talk togeder with good entent;
 3270 Such forwardes to fulfill *intent
agreements*
 There-to shall I me soon assent.
- “And yif we may with speches speed,
 With trewe trouthes of entail,
 Hold the bode-word that we bede,
 To give me Kent and Cornwall,
 3275 Trewe love shall there leng and lende,
 And certes, forwardes yif we fail,²
 Arthur to stert upon a steed
 Stiffly for to do batail.” *good character
Keep; agreements; made
stay and reside*
- 3280 “Sir, will ye come in such manner,
 With twelve knighting or fourteen,
 Or elles all your strength in fere,
 With helmes bright and hauberkes sheen?” *together*

¹ *By the time all (blows) are dealt on this down*

² *And certainly, if we fail to keep our promises, / Let Arthur leap upon a steed*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 3285 “Certes, nay,” then said he there,
 “Other work thou thar not ween,
But both our hostes shall nigher ner,
And we shall talke them between.”
- need not expect
armies; approach near
- 3290 They took their leve, withouten lees,
 And wightly upon their way they went;
3290 To King Arthur the way they chese,
 There that he sat, within his tent:
“Sir, we have proffered pees,
Yif ye will there-to assent;
Give him your crown after your dayes
3295 And in your life Cornwall and Kent.
- staunchly
- 3300 “To his behest yif ye will hold
 And your trouth trewly there-to plight,
Maketh all redy your men bold,
With helme, sword, and hauberk bright;
3300 Ye shall meet upon yon molde,
- ground
- That either host may see with sight,
And yif your forward fail to hold,
There is no boot but for to fight.”
- agreement
remedy
- 3305 But when Arthur herde this neven,
 Trewly there-to he hath sworn,
And arrayed him with batailes seven,
With brode banners before him borne;
They lemed bright as any leven
- said
- When they sholde meet upon the morn.
- 3310 There lives no man under heven
 A fairer sight hath seen beforne.
- gleamed; flash of lighting
- 3315 But Mordred many men had mo;
 So Mordred, that was mikel of main,
He had ever twelve against him two,
Of barons bold to batail bain.
Arthur and Mordred — both were thro —
- ready
bold
- Sholde meeete both upon a plain;
The wise sholde come to and fro,

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

To make accord, the sooth to sayn.

- 3320 Arthur in his herte hath cast,
And to his lordes gan he say:
“To yonder traitour have I no trust,
But that he will us falsely betray;
Yif we may not our forwardes faste,
3325 And ye see any wepen drayn,
Presseth forth as princes preste,
That he and all his host be slain.
- Mordred, that was keen and thro,
His freely folk he said toforn:
3330 “I wot that Arthur is full wo
That he hath thus his landes lorn;
With fourteen knightes and no mo
Shall we meet at yonder thorn;
Yif any tresoun between us go,
3335 That brode banners forth be borne.”¹
- Arthur with knightes fully fourteen
To that thorn on foot they founde,
With helme, sheld, and hauberk sheen;
Right so they trotted upon the ground.
3340 But as they accorded sholde have been,
An adder glode forth upon the ground;
He stang a knight, that men might sen
That he was seke and full unsound.
- Out he brayed with sworde bright;
3345 To kill the adder had he thought.
When Arthur party saw that sight,
Freely they togeder sought;
There was no thing withstand them might;
They wend that tresoun had been wrought;
3350 That day died many a doughty knight,

considered

i.e., *agree on our terms*

And if; drawn

eager

lost

hawthorn tree

glided

stung; see

drew

Instantly; charged

thought

¹ Let broad banners be brought forth (as a signal to attack)

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

And many a bold man was brought to nought.

- | | | |
|------|--|--|
| | Arthur stert upon his steed; | <i>angrily; leaped</i> |
| | He saw no thing him withstand might; | |
| | Mordred out of wit ner yede, | <i>nearly went</i> |
| 3355 | And wrothly into his saddle he light; | <i>leaped</i> |
| | Of accord was nothing to bede, | <i>No peace was offered</i> |
| | But fewtered speres and togeder sprent; | <i>But they lowered their spears; rushed</i> |
| | Full many a doughty man of deed | |
| | Soon there was laid upon the bente. | <i>ground</i> |
| 3360 | Mordred ymarred many a man, | <i>injured</i> |
| | And boldly he gan his batail abide; | |
| | So sternly out his steede ran, | |
| | Many a rout he gan through ride. | <i>company</i> |
| | Arthur of batail never blanne | <i>ceased</i> |
| 3365 | To dele woundes wicke and wide, | <i>wicked</i> |
| | For the morrow that it began | |
| | Til it was ner the nightes tide. | |
| | There was many a spere sprent, | <i>splintered</i> |
| | And many a thro word they spake; | <i>fierce</i> |
| 3370 | Many a brand was bowed and bent, | <i>sword</i> |
| | And many a knightes helm they brake; | |
| | Riche helmes they rove and rente; | <i>cut; tore</i> |
| | The riche routes gan togeder raike, | <i>powerful companies; rush</i> |
| | An hundredth thousand upon the bente; | <i>ground</i> |
| 3375 | The boldes ere even was made right meek. | <i>before evening</i> |
| | Sithe Brutus out of Troy was sought | <i>Since; came</i> |
| | And made in Britain his owne wonne, | <i>dwelling</i> |
| | Such wonders never ere was wrought, | |
| | Never yet under the sun. | |
| 3380 | By even leved was there nought | <i>left</i> |
| | That ever sterred with blood or bone, | <i>stirred</i> |
| | But Arthur and two that he thider brought, | |
| | And Mordred was leved alone. | |
| | The tone was Lucan de Botteler, | <i>one</i> |

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 3385 That bled at many a baleful wound,
And his broder, Sir Bedivere,
Was sely seke and sore unsound. *wondrouslly*
Than spake Arthur these wordes there:
“Shall we not bring this thef to ground?”
- 3390 A spere he gripped with felle cheer, *fierce expression*
And felly they gan togeder founde.¹
- He hit Mordred amid the breste
And out at the backe bone him bore;
There hath Mordred his life lost,
- 3395 That speche spake he never more;
Then keenly up his arm he cast
And gave Arthur a wounde sore,
Into the hede through the helm and crest,
That three times he swooned there.
- 3400 Sir Lucan and Sir Bedivere
Between them two the king upheld;
So forthe went tho three in fere, *together*
And all were slain that lay in feld.
The doughty king that was them dere
- 3405 For sore might not himselfe weld; *pain; wield (move)*
To a chapel they went in fere;
Of boot they saw no better beld. *For a remedy; comfort*
- All night they in the chapel lay,
By the se side, as I you neven, *tell*
3410 To Mary mercy cryand aye,
With drery herte and sorrowful steven, *sound*
And to her leve Son gonue they pray: *dear*
“Jesu, for thy names seven,
Wisse his soul the righte way, *Teach (direct)*
3415 That he lese not the bliss of Heven.” *lose*
- As Sir Lucan de Botteler stood,

¹ *And fiercely they began to test each other*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- He sigh folk upon plaines hie; hasten
 Bolde barons of bone and blood
 They reft them of besaunt, brooch, and bee;¹ sly (wise)
 3420 And to the king again they yode
 Him to warn with wordes slee.
- To the king spake he full still,
 Rewfully as he might then roun: speak
 “Sir, I have been at yon hill,
 3425 There fele folk drawen to the down;
 I not whether they will us good or ill;
 I rede we busk and make us boun,
 Yif it were your worthy will
 That we wende to some town.”
- 3430 “Now, Sir Lucan, as thou redde,
 Lift me up, while I may last.” advised
 Both his armes on him he spredde,
 With all his strength to hold him fast.
 The king was wounded and forbledde,
 3435 And swooning on him his eyen he cast; bled freely
 Sir Lucan was hard bestedde;
 He held the king to his own herte brast.
hard beset
until; burst
- When the king had swooned there,
 By an auter up he stood; altar
 3440 Sir Lucan, that was him dere,
 Lay dede and fomed in the blood. foamed
 His bolde broder, Sir Bedivere,
 Full mikel morned in his mood;
 For sorrow he might not nighg him ner,
 3445 But ever weeped as he were wode.
- The king turned him there he stood,
 To Sir Bedivere with wordes keen:
 “Have Excaliber, my sworde good,

¹ *They robbed them of Byzantine coins, brooches, and rings*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- A better brand was never seen;
3450 Go cast it in the salte flood,
And thou shalt see wonder, as I ween;
Hie thee fast, for Cross on Rood,
And tell me what thou hast there seen.” *hasten*
- The knight was bothe hende and free;
3455 To save that sword he was full glad,
And thought: “Whether I better be,
Yif never man it after had?
And I it cast into the se,
Of molde was never man so mad.” *If
earth*
- 3460 The sword he hid under a tree,
And said: “Sir, I did as ye me bade.”
- “What saw thou there?” then said the king,
“Tell me now, yif thou can.”
“Certes, sir,” he said, “nothing
3465 But watres deep and wawes wan.” *pale waves*
“A, now thou hast broke my bidding!
Why hast thou do so, thou false man?
Another bode thou must me bring.” *message*
Then carefully the knight forth ran,
- 3470 And thought the sword yet he wolde hide
And cast the scauberk in the flood:
“Yif any aventures shall betide,
Thereby shall I see tokenes good.” *scabbard
adventures*
- 3475 Into the se he let the scauberk glide;
A while on the land he there stood;
Then to the king he went that tide
And said: “Sir, it is done, by the Rood.” *Cross*
- “Saw thou any wondres more?”
“Certes, sir, I saw nought.”
3480 “A, false traitour!” he said there,
“Twice thou hast me tresoun wrought;
That shall thou rewe sely sore, *wondrouslly*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- And, be thou bold, it shall be bought.”¹
 The knight then cried, “Lord, thine ore!” mercy
 3485 And to the sworde soon he sought.
- Sir Bedivere saw that boot was best,
 And to the goode sword he went; i.e., keeping his word
 Into the se he it cast;
 Then might he see what that it ment.
- 3490 There came an hand withouten rest,
 Out of the water, and fair it hent, seized
 And braundished as it sholde brast,
 And sithe, as glem, away it glent. shook; break
then, like a gleam; glided
- To the king again went he there
 3495 And said: “Leve sir, I saw an hand; Dear
 Out of the water it came all bare
 And thrice braundished that riche brand.” shook
 “Help me, soon that I were there.”
 He led his lord unto that strand;
- 3500 A riche ship, with mast and ore, oar
 Full of ladies there they fand. found
- The ladies, that were fair and free,
 Courtaisly the king gan they fonge; take
 And one that brightest was of blee complexion
 3505 Weeped sore and handes wrang. wrung
 “Broder,” she said, “wo is me!
 Fro leching hastou be too long,”² I know
 I wot, that gretly greveth me,
 For thy paines are full strong.”
- 3510 The knight cast a reful roun, speech
 There he stood, sore and unsound,
 And said: “Lord, whider are ye boun? whither are you bound?
 Allas! Whider will ye fro me found?”

¹ *And, you can be sure, it must be paid for*

² *You have been too long away from medical attention*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- The king spake with sorry soun:
3515 “I will wend a little stound
 Into the vale of Aveloun,
 A while to hele me of my wound.”
- When the ship from the land was brought,
Sir Bedivere saw of them no more.
3520 Through the forest forth he sought
 On hilles and holtes hore.
 Of his life rought he right nought;
 All night he went weeping sore;
 Against the day he fand there wrought
3525 A chapel between two holtes hore.
- To the chapel he took the way,
There he might see a wonder sight;
Then saw he where an ermite lay,
Before a tomb that was new dight,
3530 And covered it was with marble gray,
 And with riche lettres rayled aright;
 There-on an herse, soothly to say,
 With a hundredth tapers light.
- Unto the ermite went he there
3535 And asked who was buried there.
The ermite answerd swithe yare:
“Thereof can I tell no more;
About midnight were ladies here,
In world ne wiste I what they were;
3540 This body they brought upon a bere
 And buried it with woundes sore.
- “Besauntes offred they here bright,
I hope an hundredth pound and more,
And bade me pray both day and night
3545 For him that is buried in these moldes hore
Unto our Lady both day and night
 That she his soul help sholde.”
The knight redde the lettres aright;
- hoary (gray) forests*
reckoned
Before daybreak
rightly adorned
bier (hearse)
candles
quite readily
bier
Coins
suppose
this hoary ground
read

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- For sorrow he fell unto the folde. *ground*
- 3550 "Ermite," he said, "without leesing,
 Here lieth my lord that I have lorn,
 Bold Arthur, the beste king
 That ever was in Britain born.
 Give me some of thy clothing,
 3555 For Him that bore the crown of thorn,
 And leve that I may with thee lenge,
 While I may live, and pray him forn." *lost*
grant; stay
pray for him
- The holy ermite wolde not wonde; *delay*
 3560 Some time Archebishop he was,
 That Mordred flemed out of land,
 And in the wood his wonning chese;
 He thanked Jesu all of his sound
 That Sir Bedivere was comen in pees;
 He received him with herte and hand,
 3565 Togeder to dwell, withouten lees. *put to flight*
dwelling chose
good fortune
- When Queen Gaynor, the kinges wife,
 Wiste that all was gone to wrake, *ruin*
 Away she went, with ladies five,
 At Aumsbury, a nun her for to make. *Almesbury*
- 3570 There-in she lived an holy life,
 In prayers for to weep and wake;
 Never after she coude be blithe; *could*
 There wered she clothes white and black. *wore; a nun's habit*
- When this tidings was to Launcelot brought,
 3575 What wonder though his herte were sore?
 His men, his frendes, to him sought,
 And all the wise that with him were.
 Their galleys were all redy wrought; *hurried; ready*
- 3580 They busked them and made yare;
 To help Arthur was their thought
 And make Mordred of bliss full bare.
- Launcelot had crowned kinges seven,

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- Erles fele and barons bold;
 The number of knightes I can not neven,
 The squires too fele to be told; tell
 3585 They lemed light as any leven;
 The wind was as themselve wolde; *gleamed as bright as any lightning*
 Through the grace of God of Heven,
 At Dover they took haven and hold. *they desired protection*
- 3590 There herde tell Launcelot in that town,
 In land it is not for to laine, *The news is not to be concealed*
 How they had fought at Barendown
 And how buried was Sir Gawain,
 And how Mordred wolde be king with crown,
 3595 And how either of them had other slain,
 And all that were to batail boun, ready
 At Salisbury lay dede upon the plain.
- Also in lande herde it kithe *he heard it said*
 That made his herte wonder sore:
 3600 Queen Gaynor, the kinges wife,
 Much had lived in sorrow and care;
 Away she went with ladies five,
 In land they wiste not whider where, *knew not where*
 Dolven dede or to be on life; *Whether dead and buried or still living*
 3605 That made his morning much the more. *mourning*
- Launcelot cleped his kinges with crown;
 Sir Bors stood him ner beside;
 He said: "Lordinges, I will wend toforn,
 And by these bankes ye shall abide *before (onward)*
 3610 Unto fifteen dayes at the morn.
 In land whatsoever us betide¹
 To herken what lord his life hath lorn,
 Look ye rappe you not up to ride."

¹ *Whatever may happen to us in this land (as we go) / To hear what lord has lost his life, / See that you do not rush to ride out (to help us)*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- | | | |
|------|---|------------------------------------|
| | There had he neither roo ne rest, | <i>peace</i> |
| 3615 | But forth he went with drery mood, | |
| | And three dayes he went even west | <i>straight</i> |
| | As man that coude neither ivel nor good. ¹ | <i>knew</i> |
| | Then sigh he where a towr by west | <i>on the west</i> |
| | Was bigged by a burnes flood; | <i>built; stream's flood basin</i> |
| 3620 | There he hoped it were best | |
| | For to get him some lives stood. | <i>support for life (food)</i> |
| | As he came through a cloister clere — | |
| | Almost for weeping he was mad — | |
| | He sigh a lady bright of lere, | <i>complexion</i> |
| 3625 | In nunnis clothing was she cledde; | <i>clad</i> |
| | Thrice she swooned swiftly there, | |
| | So stronge paines she was in stedde | <i>places</i> |
| | That many a nun then nighed her ner, | |
| | And to her chamber was she led. | |
| 3630 | “Mercy, madame,” they said all, | |
| | “For Jesu, that is King of bliss, | |
| | Is there any bride in bowr or hall | <i>maiden</i> |
| | Hath wrathed you?” She said: “Nay, iwis.” | <i>angered</i> |
| | Launcelot to her gan they call, | |
| 3635 | The abbess and the other nunnis, iwis, | |
| | They that wonned within the wall. | <i>dwellt</i> |
| | In counsel there then said she thus: | |
| | “Abbess, to you I knowlech here | <i>acknowledge</i> |
| | That through this ilke man and me, | |
| 3640 | For we togeder han loved us dere, | |
| | All this sorrowful war hath be; | |
| | My lord is slain, that hath no peer, | |
| | And many a doughty knight and free; | |
| | Therefore for sorrow I died ner, | |
| 3645 | As soon as I ever gan him see. | |

¹ *Like one who did not know good from evil (in a daze)*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- “When I him see, the sooth to say,
 All my herte began to colde;
 That ever I sholde abide this day,
 To see so many barons bold
 3650 Sholde for us be slain away!
 Our will hath be too sore bought sold;¹
 But God, that all mightes may,
 Now hath me set where I will hold.
- saw
grow cold
abide
- “Yset I am in such a place
 My soule hele I will abide,
 Til God send me some grace,
 Through mercy of his woundes wide,
 That I may do so in this place,
 3660 My sinnes to amend this ilke tide,
 After to have a sight of His face,
 At Doomes-day on His righte side.
- Set
soul's healing; await
Judgment Day
- “Therefore, Sir Launcelot du Lake,
 For my love now I thee pray,
 My company thou ay forsake,
 3665 And to thy kingdom thou take thy way,
 And keep thy reme from war and wrape,
 And take a wife with her to play,
 And love well then thy worldes make;
 God give you joy togeder, I pray!
- realm
worldly mate
- 3670 “Unto God I pray, Allmighty King,
 He give you togeder joy and bliss;
 But I beseech thee in alle thing
 That never in thy life after this
 Ne come to me for no sokering,
 3675 Nor send me sonde, but dwell in bliss;
 I pray to God Everlasting
 To graunt me grace to mend my misse.”
- comfort
message
sins

¹ *Our desire (passion) has been too painfully bought and paid for*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- “Now, sweet madame, that wolde I not do
 To have all the world unto my meed; *as my reward*
 3680 So untrew find ye me never mo;
 It for to do Crist me forbede!
- “Forbede it God that ever I sholde
 Against you work so grete unright,
 Sinne we togeder upon this molde *great a wrong*
 3685 Have led our life by day and night!
 Unto God I give a hest to hold: *promise*
 That same destainy that you is dight *destiny*
 I will receive in some house bold *i.e., receive monkhood*
 To plese hereafter God Allmight. *please*
- 3690 “To plese God all that I may
 I shall hereafter do mine entent, *please*
 And ever for you specially pray, *make my intent*
 While God will me life lente.” *grant*
 “A, wilt thou so,” the queen gan say,
 3695 “Fulfill this forward that thou has ment?” *promise; said*
 Launcelot said: “Yif I said nay,
 I were well worthy to be brent.” *burned (in Hell)*
- “Brent to ben worthy I were,
 Yif I wolde take none such a life,
 3700 To bide in penaunce, as ye do here, *penance*
 And suffer for God sorrow and strife;
 As we in liking lived in fere, *in pleasure; together*
 By Mary, Moder, maid, and wife,
 Til God us depart with dethes dere,
 3705 To penaunce I yeld me here as blithe. *pain*
- “All blyve to penaunce I will me take,
 As I may find any ermite *quickly*
 That will me receive for Goddes sake,
 Me to clothe with black and white.”
- 3710 The sorrow that the tone to the tother gan make *one; other*
 Might none erthely man see it.
 “Madame,” then said Launcelot du Lake,

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

“Kiss me, and I shall wend as-tite.”

go quickly away

“Nay,” said the queen, “that will I not;

- 3715 Launcelot, think on that no more;
 To abstain us we moste have thought¹
 Fro such we have delited in ere.
 Let us think on Him that us hath bought,
 And we shall plese God therefore.
- 3720 Think on this world, how there is nought
 But war and strife and batail sore.”

*redeemed
please*

What helpeth lenger for to spell?

speak

With that they gan depart in twain;

But none erthely man coude tell

3725 The sorrow that there began to ben;
 Wringing their handes and loud they yell,
 As they never more sholde blinne,
 And sithe in swoon both down they fell;

Who saw that sorrow ever might it mene.²

cease

- 3730 But ladies then, with morning cheer,
 Into the chamber the queen they bore,
 And all full busy made them there
 To cover the queen of her care.

mournful face

- 3735 But many also that with Launcelot were,
 They comfort him with rewful care;
 When he was covered he took his gere
 And went from thence withouten more.

recover

gear (equipment)

His herte was hevy as any lede,

lead

And lever he was his life have lorn.

rather he would; lost

- 3740 He said: “Rightuous God, what is my rede?
 Alas, forbore, why was I born?”
 Away he went, as he had fled,
 To a forest that was him beforne;

what shall I do

misbegotten (creature)

¹ We must be determined to abstain / From what we once delighted in

² He who saw that sorrow could tell of it forever

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- His life fain he wolde have leved;
 3745 His rich attire he wolde off-torn. *gladly; departed
have torn off*
- All night gan he weep and wring
 And went about as he were wode;
 Erly, as the day gan spring,
 Tho sigh he where a chapel stood;
 3750 A bell herde he rewfully ring; *wring his hands
Then saw*
 He hied him then and thider yode;
 A prest was redy for to sing,
 And mass he herde with drery mood.
- The Archebishop was ermite there,
 3755 That flemed was for his workes trew; *banished; loyal deeds*
 The mass he sang with sighing sore,
 And oft he changed hide and hew;
 Sir Bedivere had sorrow and care
 And oft morned for tho workes new;
 3760 After mass was morning more, *complexion; hue
those recent events
more mourning*
 When ech of them other knew.
- When the sorrow was to the end,
 The bishop took his habit there
 And welcomed Launcelot as the hende,
 3765 And on his knees down gan he fare:
 "Sir, ye be welcome as our frend,
 Unto this bigging in bankes bare;
 Were it your will with us to lende
 This one night, yif ye may no more!" *as a courteous person should
building*
- 3770 When they knew him at the last,
 Fair in armes they gan him fold,
 And sithe he asked freely fast
 Of Arthur and of other bold;
 An hundred times his herte ner brast,
 3775 While Sir Bedivere the tale told.
 To Arthures tomb he cast; *went*
 His careful corage waxed all cold. *sorrowful heart*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- He threw his armes to the walle,
 That riche were and bright of blee;
 walls
 3780 Before the ermite he gan down fall
 And comely kneeled upon his knee;
 color
 Then he shrove him of his sinnes all,
 And prayd he might his broder be,
 confessed himself
 To serve God in bowr and hall,
 3785 That might-full King of mercy free.
- The holy bishop nolde not blinne,
 But blithe was to do his boon;
 would not refuse
 He received him with wele and winne,
 And thanked Jesu trew in trone,
 fulfill his request
 rejoicing
 3790 And shrove him there of his sin,
 As clene as he had never done none;
 throne
 And sithe he kiste him cheek and chin
 And an habit there did him upon.
 absolved
 monastic habit put on him
- His grete host at Dover lay,
 And wend he sholde have come again,
 army
 3795 Til after befell upon a day,
 Sir Lionel, that was mikel of main,
 With fifty lordes, the sooth to say,
 To seek his lord he was full fain;
 3800 To London he took the righte way;
 Alas, for wo! There was he slain.
- Bors de Gawnes wolde no lenger abide
 But busked him and made all boun,
 And bade all the host homeward ride —
 prepared himself; ready
 3805 God send them wind and weder round!
 To seek Launcelot will he ride;
 ample wind
 Ector and he diverse wayes yode,
 And Bors sought forth the weste side,
 As he that coude neither ivel nor good.
 knew not evil from (i.e., in a daze)
- 3810 Full erly in a morrow tide
 In a forest he fand a well;
 He rode ever forth by the river side,

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 3815 Til he had sight of a chapel;
 There at mass thought he abide;
 Rewfully he herde ring a bell;
 There Launcelot he fand with mikel pride,
 And prayd he might with him there dwell.
- 3820 Ere the half yere were comen to the end,
 There was comen of their fellowes seven,
 Where ichon had sought their frend,
 With sorrowful herte and drery steven;
 Had none never will away to wend,
 When they herde of Launcelot neven,
 But all togeder there gan they lende,
 As it was Goddes will of heven.
- 3825 Holich all tho seven yeres
 Launcelot was prest and mass song,
 In penaunce and in diverse prayers;
 That life him thought nothing long;
 Sir Bors and his other feres
 On bookes redde and belles rong.
 So little they wex of lin and leres
 Them to know it was strong.
- 3830 It fell again an even-tide
 That Launcelot sekened sely sore.
 The bishop he cleped to his side,
 And all his fellows less and more;
 He said: “Brethern, I may no lenger abide;
 My baleful blood of life is bare;
 What boot is it to hele and hide?
 My foul flesh will to erthe fare.
- 3835 “But, brethern, I pray you tonight,
 Tomorrow, when ye find me dede,
 Upon a bere that ye will me dight,
 And to Joyous Gard then me lede;
 For the love of God Almighty,
 Bury my body in that stede;
- 3840 *What good is it to conceal and hide it?*
- 3845 *bier; prepare (embalm)*
- Wholly
priest and sang mass*
- companions
read; rang
thin; grew; loin; face
difficult*
- happened one evening
sickened wondrously*
- place*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

Some time my trouth there-to I plight;¹
 Alas! Me forthinketh that I so did!"

- 3850 "Mercy, sir," they said all three,
 "For His love that died on Rood;
 Yif any ivel have greved thee,
 It is but hevyness of your blood; *heaviness*
 Tomorrow ye shall better be;
- 3855 When were ye but of comfort good?"
 Merrily spake all men but he,
 But straight unto his bed he yode.
- And cleped the bishop him until, *to him*
 And shrove him of his sinnes clene,²
- 3860 Of all his sinnes loud and still,
 And of his sinnes much did he mene; *speak*
 There he received with goode will
 God, Maryes Son, maiden clene. *pure*
- Then Bors of weeping had never his fill;
 3865 To bed they yede then all bydene.
- A little while before the day,
 As the bishop lay in his bed,
 A laughter took him there he lay, *where*
 That all they were right sore adredde; *frightened*
- 3870 They wakened him, for sooth to say,
 And asked yif he were hard bestedde. *pressed*
 He said: "Alas, and wele-away!
 Why ne had I lenger thus be led? *been led (in dreams)*
- "Alas! Why nighed ye me nigh
 3875 To awake me in word or steven?
 Here was Launcelot bright of blee *sound*
 With angeles thirty thousand and seven;
 Him they bore up on high; *countenance*

¹ Once I pledged my word to that; / Alas, I repent that I did so!

² And cleansed himself of his sins by confession

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 3880 Against him opened the gates of heven;
 Such a sight right now I see,
 Is none on erthe that might it neven." *describe*
- 3885 "Sir," they said, "for Cross on Rood,
 Doth such wordes clene away.
 Sir Launcelot aileth nothing but good;
 He shall be hole by prime of day." *the first hour*
 Candle they light and to him yode,
 And fand him dede, for sooth to say,
 Red and fair of flesh and blood,
 Right as he in sleeping lay.
- 3890 "Alas!" said Bors, "That I was born!
 That ever I sholde see this in-deed!
 The beste knight his life hath lorn
 That ever in stour bestrode steed!
 Jesu, that crowned was with thorn,
 In heven his soul foster and feed!"
 Unto the fifth day at the morn
 They left not for to sing and rede, *chant*
- 3900 And after they made them a bere,
 The bishop and these other bold,
 And forth they went, all in fere,
 To Joyous Gard, that riche hold;
 In a chapel, amiddes the quere,
 A grave they made as they wolde,
 And three dayes they waked him there,
 In the castel with cares cold. *bier*
 stronghold
 amid the choir
- 3905 Right as they stood about the bere
 And to burying him sholde have brought,
 In came Sir Ector, his broder dere,
 That seven yere afore had him sought.
 He looked up into the quere; *choir*
 To here a mass then had he thought;

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

For that they all ravished were¹
 They knew him and he them nought.

- 3915 Sir Bors both wept and sang,
 When they that faire fast unfold;²
 There was none but his handes wrang,
 The bishop nor none of the other bold. wrung
 Sir Ector then thought long;
 What this corpse was fain wite he wolde;³
 An hundredth times his herte nigh sprang, nearly broke
 By that Bors had him the tale told.
- 3925 Full hendely Sir Bors to him spake,
 And said: "Welcome, Sir Ector, iwis;
 Here lieth my lord Launcelot du Lake,
 For whom that we have morned thus."
 Then in armes he gan him take,
 The dede body to clipp and kiss, embrace
 And prayed all night he might him wake, watch by him
 For Jesu love, King of bliss.
- 3930 Sir Ector of his wit ner went, nearly went out of his mind
 Wallowed and wrang as he were wode; wrung his hands
 So wofully his mone he ment said
 His sorrow minged all his mood; confused; mind
 When the corpse in armes he hent, seized
 3935 The teres out of his eyen yode; went
 At the last they might no lenger stent, delay
 But buried him with drery mood.
- 3940 Sithen on their knees they kneeled down —
 Grete sorrow it was to see with sight:
 "Unto Jesu Crist I ask a boon,
 And to his Moder, Mary bright:

¹ Because they were all in a religious ecstasy, / They neither knew him nor did he know them

² When they closely embrace that fair one (Ector, Bors' brother)

³ He wanted very much to know who this corpse was

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- Lord, as thou madest both sun and moon,
And God and Man art most of might,
Bring this soul unto Thy trone,
And ever Thou rewest on gentle knight.”
- Sir Ector tent not to his steed,
Wheder he wolde stint or run away,
But with them all to dwell and lede,¹
For Launcelot all his life to pray.
- 3950 On him did he ermites weed,
And to their chapel went their way;
A fourtenight on foot they yede,
Ere they home come, for sooth to say.
- When they came to Aumsbury,
Dede they found Gaynor the queen,
With rodes fair and red as cherry,
And forth they bore her them between,
- 3955 And buried her with mass full merry
By Sir Arthur, as I you mene;
Now hight their chapel Glastonbury,
An abbey full rich, of order clene.
- Of Launcelot du Lake tell I no more,
But thus beleve these ermites seven.
And yet is Arthur buried there,
And Queen Gaynor, as I you neven,
- 3960 With monkes that are right of lore;
They rede and sing with milde steven:
“Jesu, that suffred woundes sore,
Graunt us all the bliss of heven!”
- Amen

Explicit le Morte Arthur
(Here ends the Death of Arthur)

¹ But decided to dwell with them all and lead his life there

Notes

In the textual notes, corrections and emendations made by J. D. Bruce (see Bibliography) are accepted without comment. Additional changes made by Larry D. Benson in the edition on which this volume is based (see Preface to the Revised Edition) are indicated: Be.

Explanatory notes are Benson's, either verbatim or with minor changes to fit the format of this revision. Additional explanatory material is cited as follows:

F: Edward E. Foster, editor of this revision

M: Charles and Ruth Moorman, *An Arthurian Dictionary*. Oxford, Mississippi: University of Mississippi Press, 1978.

OED: *Oxford English Dictionary*

- 1 *Lordinges*: a familiar form of address for the audience at the beginning of romances. See, e.g., *Havelok* and the Pardoner's address to the other pilgrims in *The Canterbury Tales*. It implies nothing about the social status of the audience. (F)
- 43 *Galehod*. Malory's Galyhodyn, king of Surluse and kinsman of Galehaut. See lines 225, 261, 2572, and 2587.
- 152 The convention noted in lines 147-152 was not the case in actual life.
- 245 *aunt*. Ascolot's sister, to whom they return when Launcelot is wounded, line 321.
- 284 *brown*: the word is used in the sense of “shining, gleaming, or burnished” only with regard to swords or steel. (F)
- 309 MS *hitte*: *hit him*. (Be)

hood: “The part of a suit of armor that covers the head; applied to the helmet itself, or to a flexible head-covering inside the helmet” (*OED*).

Notes

- 361 The stanza beginning at 361 has only seven lines as does the stanza beginning at 1483; the stanza beginning at 3678 has only four lines; the stanzas beginning at 1176, 1318, 1490, 1920, 2318, 2716, 3130, and 3416 have only six lines. Nothing seems lost to the sense by these omissions or variations, although the six line stanzas beginning at 1176 and 1318 are at the beginning and end of the long gap in the MS.
- 457 The boards are set on trestles to form tables. Permanently assembled tables were still rare at this time.
- 603 *Launcelotes shield du Lake*: Launcelot du Lake's shield. The inflectional ending is placed on the primary noun rather than on the last word of the noun phrase. The construction was disappearing in the fourteenth century but can be observed in Chaucer's "Wyves Tale of Bath" ("Wife of Bath's Tale"). (F)
- 764 *Cross and Rood*. The redundancy perhaps implies urgency. Benson notes, however, that the expression *Cross on* (or *and*) *Rood* is frequently used in this poem; the word *cross* is probably a metathesis of *cors* — body, as in line 2880, where *Cors on Rood* does appear.
- 840 No reason is provided as to why the squire wishes to poison Gawain and, within the narrative conventions of romance, none is needed: our interest is in what the effects will be for Guinevere. (F)
- 916 Guinevere has two choices: to be "defended" in combat or be tried by a group of the knights. She knows that if the latter occurs she is doomed.
- 1105 *ender* (Be). MS: *?ender*.
- 1350 *Cross on Rood*. See note to line 764.
- 1377 *agUILte* (Be). MS: *gilte*.
- 1396 Identical to line 1380.
- 1414 A missing line is provided here by Furnivall's conjecture, accepted by Br and Be. (F)

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

- 1472 Sometimes *blake* has the meaning white and Be glosses it thus. I think, however, that it is more likely that Lancelot is dressed in black and the more ordinary meaning can stand. (F)
- 1617-18 Compare Priamus's words to Gawain in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, lines 2646-49.
- 1831 *hauberk*: "Originally intended for the defense of the neck and shoulders; but already in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries developed into a long coat of mail, or military tunic, usually of ring or chain mail, which adapted itself readily to the motions of the body" (*OED*).
- 1951 The smock is a loose, usually white, simple sleeveless dress over which the other garments were put; the counterpart of a modern slip, though it would usually show beneath the vest, sleeves, cloaks, and such that were put over it.
- 2025 Launcelot apparently thinks Gaheriet fought against him.
- 2052 Launcelot offers to take part in a judicial duel of the sort he previously fought to prove Guenevere's innocence of the charge of poisoning.
- 2253 A papal interdict would deny the sacraments of the Church to everyone in the country.
- 2305 *Benwick* is Bayonne (or Beune), a city in southwestern France. See *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, line 587. (F)
- 2345 *Joyous Gard then they* (Be). MS: *Ioyus gard the they*. Joyous Gard is Lancelot's castle (fortress) in Northern England. (F)
- 2361 The heathen nations are in the Orient, from which silk came.
- 2466 Caerleon, in South Wales on the River Usk near the Bristol Channel, was one of the chief Arthurian cities. See *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, note to line 61. (F)
- 2639 The phrase *wise . . . under weed* has little real meaning and conveys only the idea of a "good knight."
- 2837 Gawain is Arthur's nephew.

Notes

- 2934 *oute*. Br reads *cute*.
- 2954 *That false traitour*, applied here to Mordred, is a commonplace epithet for Satan, who led the rebellion against God. (F)
- 2955 Mordred was the product of an incestuous union between Arthur and his own sister. Though little is made of it in this poem, Arthur's fall is partly a consequence of his own sin.
- 2957 The motif of the false steward, who evilly abuses his stewardship, is a familiar literary and folk motif. (F)
- 2960 Thus Mordred intends to commit incest, made worse since Guenevere is also his father's wife. (Compare line 2987.)
- 3121 *his* (Be). MS: *hye*.
- 3160 The Feast of the Trinity is the first Sunday after Pentecost.
- 3179 *Besaunt*: a coin of Byzantine origin, sometimes used as ornamental jewelry. (F)
- 3357 *fewtered*: placed spears against the “fewter,” the spear rest on the saddle, into which the spear would be placed when the knight prepared to attack.
- 3376 *Brutus*. MS: *Britain*. Be notes the error but does not emend (F). Brutus is the legendary hero who, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* (Book I), conquered what is now England from a race of giants and founded the nation to which he gave his name.
- 3413 *names seven*. The number seven commonly signifies a totality. Thus the seven names implies *all the names of Jesus*. But traditions reaching far back into the rabbinical commentaries often, in fact, identify seven specific names for God. According to *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, “The number of divine names that require the scribe's special care is seven: El, Elohim, Adonai, YHWH, Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh, Shaddai, and Zeba'ot” (9, 163). The seven names of the Lord are also referred to in *The Second Shepherd's Play* (lines 190–91), where Mak says: “Now lord, for thy naymes sevyn, that made both moynt and starnes /Well mo then I can neuen thi will, lorde, of me tharnys [is unclear].” See also Brian P. Copenhaver, “Names of God,” in *A Dictionary of Biblical Traditions in Eng-*

Stanzaic Morte Arthur

lish Literature, ed. David Lyle Jeffrey (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), pp. 535–37, who notes more than one hundred and fifty substitute names for God and, in the New Testament, more than forty names and titles for Jesus.

- 3504 Possibly Morgan le Fay, Arthur's half-sister. Although often antagonistic to Arthur and Guenevere, she often helps heal Arthurian knights and assists in transporting Arthur to Avalon. (M)
- 3507 *leching*. In the fourteenth century, leeching had no necessary connection with the therapeutic application of leeches. It means simply “medical care” from OE *laece*, to heal.
- 3569 *Aumsbury*: Almesbury (or Amesbury): a town in Wiltshire where Guenevere retreats to a convent after Arthur's death. (M, F)
- 3628 *nun* (Be). MS: *man*.
- 3709 *black and white* (Be). MS: *whyte and blak*.
- 3759 The “recent events” are Mordred's treachery and Arthur's death.
- 3815 *ring a bell* (Be). MS: *a bell ring*.
- 3862 *received* in this line refers to receiving the sacrament of the Eucharist, the body and blood of Christ, after having been forgiven (shriven) one's sins.
- 3896 *fifth* (Be). MS: *fyfty*.