

Gendered Space and Power Symbol: Imagining the Castle in Middle English Romance

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

In
English

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

© May 11th, 2017

Abstract

The subject of this thesis is to analyze the way in which a castle acts as a setting for the action of entrapment within Middle English romances. It is proposed that the castle's symbolic attributes are both dependent upon as well as help define the nature of entrapment. The literary castle is a social space that is subject to social paradigms, yet its image evokes various symbolisms of power and authority. Gender interactions, in turn, contribute to the action of entrapment and reconfigure the way in which power and authority are represented by the setting of the castle. The concept of the castle is itself fluid, as its existence is not always evident. However, by deciphering both descriptive and sometimes vague cues as to the nature of the setting within the texts, it is possible to identify this powerful structure. After the castle is shown to exist within the narrative, it is possible to analyze its figurative connotations and how these relate to various modes of gendered interactions.

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Introduction: The Production of Gendered Castle Space

In his study entitled “The Donjon of Knaresborough: The Castle as Theatre,” Philip Dixon explores the symbolic peculiarities of the design of the Knaresborough castle and its donjon. He states that the odd design of this structure was due to a very specific intent, namely the desire of the castle's builder to confer upon the castle a theatrical quality.¹

The construction of the castle was funded by King Edward II who subsequently bestowed the lordship of the structure and its surroundings upon Piers Gaveston, a court favorite whose relationship with the king was a matter of deep resentment among royal peers. To settle this issue and cement Gaveston's prominent position at court, Edward gave to his friend the earldom of Cornwall, the district wherein Knaresborough was located.² This gift was to be a display of unquestioned royal authority in which the Knaresborough castle had a specific role to play, according to Dixon. In fact, the architectural design of the castle was intended to act as a theatrical setting for the show of kingly power:

The narrow newel staircase provided the necessary access of attendants to the principal room on the first floor. The normal approach to this room, however, was contrived in such a way as to make a much greater impression on the visitor. It began outside the donjon in a gracefully vaulted gate passage, rose by a (probably) broad set of gentle steps, covered in elaborate vaulting, and paused in an ante-or waiting room, lit by a fine window, provided with seats around its walls, and perhaps heated by a fireplace in the missing eastern wall...until the arrival in the audience chamber the approach road was elaborately vaulted. The

¹ Philip Dixon, “Donjon of Knaresborough: The Castle as Theater,” *Chateau Gaillard* 14 (1988), 121.

² *Ibid.*, 126.

chamber itself, however, was very simple, apart from the treatment of the dais... it may have been the intention that the visitor should be impressed by the grandeur of the building while approaching the chamber, and while waiting for admission in the ante-room, but once admitted should not be allowed to be distracted by quality of the chamber from the necessary awe at the presence of the castle's lord, the brightest object in the room, with his courtiers sitting in a discrete twilight on benches around the walls.³

Dixon's work suggests something interesting about the physical space of the castle: it implies that this space was not simply a place of habitation for the lord, his family and his subjects but that it also acted as a stage setting for specific types of actions wherein people were expected to perform certain socially sanctioned roles.

In the case of Dixon's donjon, the theatrical quality of the castle space was political in nature and the roles that were imposed on the inhabitants of that space were meant to demonstrate class hierarchy and thus exhibit the superiority of the king and his chosen vassal. However, the setting of, and the action within, the castle space, are not limited to the sphere of politics. In his study, *Beyond the Castle Gate: From Medieval to Renaissance*, Matthew Johnson notes the importance of Dixon's suggestions about the use of castle space, yet chooses to carry this idea further:

Castles were theatrical in that they served as stage settings. The social identities thus staged were unstable, and the staging itself was constitutive of that status. The ambiguity of the early fourteenth- century inscription over the gate at Brougham – 'Tys made Roger'- encapsulates the recursive nature of material things and social identities. If Roger made the castle at Brougham, the castle made Roger... social identities were in part the result of performances at an everyday and ceremonial level. Who people were... depended on these performances. Obviously, performances are structured by the world in which they are set, and architecture is a way of manipulating that world.⁴

³ *Ibid.*, 126-127.

⁴ Matthew Johnson, *Beyond the Castle Gate: From Medieval to Renaissance* (London: Routledge, 2002), 12.

In manipulating a physical space by means of architecture, the performative aspect of social identities is itself manipulated. Furthermore, the number of possible theatrical settings and performative roles within the castle space is quite vast, resulting in the making of endless social identities which both define and are defined by their architectural surroundings and the space they create. Some of these social identities, as noted by Johnson, are constructed through the performance of gender roles and as such, confer gendered symbolism unto the castle space they occur in.⁵ Masculine and feminine spaces then play a part in “defining and renegotiating” gender roles and these roles will necessarily impact the symbolic connotations of castle spaces.

Johnson's study is one example of a new wave of castle studies that looks at, amongst other factors, the symbolic dimensions of castle space. However, the physical remnants of these structures provide only one gateway into interpretation of the castle space. Contemporary medieval literature provides another, for one need look no further than medieval romance to find depictions of the literary castle scattered across its imaginative landscape. The castle is a ripe setting for various types of action that reinforce its theatrical quality and its ability both to shape, and be shaped by, the performance of gender roles. The way in which these gender roles are performed is influenced by the masculine and feminine symbolisms associated with different castle spaces. In turn, these symbolisms are dependent upon the performance of gender roles either to reaffirm or subvert their figurative associations. In the words of Johnson, “if Roger made the castle... then the castle made Roger.”

⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the literary castle as both a gendered space and a stage setting for particular types of action within a number of Middle English texts.

Prior to the literary analysis in the following chapters, this introduction proposes a way of studying how a castle constitutes a social space by looking at Henri Lefebvre's theory of the *Production of Space*, necessarily noting that the space in this context will always be considered as the space of the medieval castle. According to Lefebvre, it is important to think of physical space, mental space and social space as essentially overlapping and constantly dependent on each other.⁶ By this token, the physical structure of the castle, the symbolic attributes of the castle, and the castle as a setting of action are all intertwined concepts. Space, including that of the castle, is a product of human labor-nature, although playing a role in the concept of space, cannot construct a social space.⁷ As such, the social space is a coded space that can be read and deciphered. Lefebvre writes:

... even if there is no general code of space, inherent to language or to all languages, there may have existed specific codes, established at specific historical periods and varying in their effects. If so, interested 'subjects', as members of a particular society, would have acceded by this means at once to *their* space and to their status as 'subjects' acting within that space and (in the broadest sense of the word) comprehending it.⁸

This idea may be directly applied to Johnson's prior statement regarding the use of architecture for the manipulation of the world. The anatomy of the castle, the product of construction in literal form, can itself be deciphered as a code made up of various

⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 14.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

architectural parts. A person-- or the “subject” -- can learn to read this code composed of physical cues to decipher the symbolic attributes of a given space and the behavioral patterns it implies. For example, the visitor to Dixon's donjon at Knaresborough castle would have been forced to interpret his or her surroundings as a stage setting for the display of kingly power based on the symbolic attributes inherent in the architectural design of the donjon itself. By this token, the expectations regarding his or her social role would be relayed to the visitor through the symbolic associations of castle space. The castle in literature functions in much the same manner, for its depiction, either as a whole structure or as a series of separate anatomical parts, represents a certain behavioral codification which is reliant on the symbolic attributes of castle spaces. In light of this, when analyzing an action taking place within a castle space, a reader might anticipate certain modes of behavior from the characters based upon what that castle space would symbolize in the context of the narrative. Yet what happens when the characters do not adhere to the implicit code of the social space they inhabit? Do they, by literally going outside the physical boundaries set up by the castle space, redefine the social roles they have been prescribed? Do they, in doing so, reinvent the codification of the castle space and the symbolic implications it carries? To explore these questions, it is necessary first to discuss the a structure Lefebvre proposes for the production of space and establish how that might be applied to the space of the medieval castle.

Lefebvre uses three interconnected elements when talking about the production of social space. The first element is *representational space*, which encompasses the imaginative faculties relevant to space such as ideals and symbols associated with it. In other words, this is the figurative and idealized concept about what a given space means.

The second is *representations of space*, the descriptive manifestations of the imaginative which may consist of such things as models and diagrams and, for the purpose of this study, literary depictions. Lefebvre states that a *representation of space* is an image that conveys an idea and, since a literary castle creates a mental image which conveys concepts, it may be thought of as a *representation of space*.⁹ The third is *spacial practice*, which involves daily routine and urban reality within the lived space itself, composed of actions and interactions between the people inhabiting it.¹⁰¹¹ When applying this model to castle space in literature, the term *representation of space* applies to any description, mention, or textual reference of the physical structure of the castle. *Spacial practice*, in turn, refers to any specified action set within the *representation of space* of the literary castle. Finally, the *representational space* of the castle is any symbolism or group of symbolic attributes attached to the descriptive *representation of space* and dependent upon the *spacial practices* performed within it. The castle in reality is a “pre-existing space” that “underpins... *representational spaces* and [the] attendant imagery and mythic narratives [associated with them].”¹¹ In other words, the castle of the imagination is based upon the castle in actuality and the symbolisms attached to it are dependent upon *spacial practice*, the actions going on within the castle space which are themselves dictated by the function of the real castle.

By examining the ways in which *representational spaces* and *spacial practices* within the literary castle correlate to one another, this thesis will ultimately address issues

⁹ *Ibid.*, 230.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹¹ .

Ibid.,

concerning what constitutes male and female agency within Middle English romance.

For this purpose, the social spaces of the castle will be thought of in relation to their creation of figurative gendered boundaries which depend upon the performance of masculine and feminine identities. The theories concerning gendered space and the performance of gender identities will be derived from the work of Roberta Gilchrist, “The Contested

Garden: Gender, Space, and Metaphor in the Medieval English Castle.” In her study, Gilchrist, like Johnson, attempts to challenge claims by earlier scholars who have conceived of the castle as a “purely masculine domain” characterized by male values.¹² Yet, within this allegedly hyper-masculine space, the female body is always present and active and, as such, along with the male body, plays a role in the “perceptual experience” occurring within the castle.¹³ This perceptual experience, according to Gilchrist, is dependent upon segregation of the castle space into spheres that are either distinctly masculine or distinctly feminine. Her idea becomes evocative of Lefebvre's *spacial practice*, in that the actions of male and female bodies help compose, on the figurative level, the gendered *representational space* of the castle. As a result, it is this very segregation of space based on gender which becomes one of the functions of the castle in actuality. On the literary level, or at the level of *representations of space*, the castle spaces in romances recreate in symbolic terms the meanings inherent in various architectural spaces of the castle.

¹² Roberta Gilchrist, “The Contested Garden: Gender, Space and Metaphor in the Medieval English Castle,” in *Gender and Archaeology: Contesting the Past* (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 1999), 109.

¹³ 110.

Ibid.

In short, as Gilchrist puts it, “the metaphoric space of the castle enclosed both the female and male body... the body of the king represented the sanctity of the kingdom, while that of the queen symbolized the integrity of the kingdom. This complementarity extended to the cultural symbolism of the castle, both the masculine symbol of lordship and dominion, and the feminine symbol of chastity and enclosure.”¹⁴ The masculine areas of the castle, such as walls and battlements, were predominantly external and associated with militarism, whilst the feminine ones, such as enclosed pleasure gardens and bowers, were defined by their internal and reclusive nature. Architecturally, these could be analyzed by breaking apart the anatomy of the castle and discussing its various spaces in association with their male and female connotations. Middle English romances may be used to perform this analysis on a literary level for, as stated, the imagined castle of literature is an example of *representation of space*, a construct which embodies *representational space* or the symbolic attributes of its physical counterpart, and is host to *spacial practice*. In each of the romances discussed in the following four chapters, the anatomical parts of the literary castle will be revealed gradually in tandem with the description of ongoing action within their prescribed spaces. One thing to consider briefly prior to delving into the discussion of particular texts is that castles, either as whole structures or separate parts, are not always described in detail in Middle English romances, nor are certain settings automatically identifiable as castle spaces. In such cases, as with the besieged cities in Chapter 1 and the orchard of Chapter 2, it will first be

¹⁴ 144.

Ibid.

necessary to prove, with the help of recent castle studies, why these spaces should be considered as castle spaces.

The action, or *spacial practice*, that is the focus of this study is entrapment within a castle space. Entrapment in Middle English romances occurs in many forms and is itself reliant on various other *spacial practices* that lead up to, renegotiate, and eventually

terminate it. The persons who experience entrapment may be either male or female and may likewise be entrapped by either male or female persons. As a result, gender interaction is created through the *spacial practice* of entrapment, the nature of which is then defined, and helps define the *representational spaces* of the castle in which it occurs. The kinds of entrapment taking place, as well as who is being entrapped by whom, shall be segregated by chapter, with each chapter focusing on two Middle English romances as source material in combination with various castle and gender studies.

The texts studied in Chapter 1 are Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* and the *Sowdone of Babylone*. These two texts deal with the entrapment of male knights taken hostage in battle by other male characters and imprisoned inside a castle. Both texts include a heroine who inhabits the castle space alongside the imprisoned knights. In the case of the *Knight's Tale* the heroine (Emelye) is a passive one, whereas the *Sowdone of Babylone* depicts a heroine who is active in the events taking place within the castle and plays a decisive role, rather than an inspirational one, in the fate of the imprisoned knights. The comparison serves to show two contrasting ways in which women shape male entrapment. The first woman, Emelye, does so by remaining within the boundaries of a feminine castle space and without having an awareness of being observed by the imprisoned knights. The second, Floripas, plays a decisive role in the initial entrapment of the knights and continues to define this entrapment by reconfiguring gendered boundaries of castle space.

The subject of Chapter 2 is the castle as a space meant to limit access to the female body. In both the romance of *Floris and Blancheflour* and the episode entitled “The Tale of Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwenyvere” in *La Morte Darthur* by Sir Thomas Malory, it is the female heroines, Blancheflour and Guinevere, who experience entrapment within a

castle. They are entrapped by men who wish to have exclusive access to their bodies, and as such, the castles where they are held captive act as barriers between them and any rival male lovers. However, something curious happens when the ladies' lovers, Floris and Lancelot respectively, come to their rescue. The men find ways of infiltrating the castle wherein the women are enclosed and, by being admitted into this castle space, they refashion it as a space not of enforced chastity but of erotic encounter. In so doing, the knights manipulate the castle space to fit their amorous needs, and the gender roles played out within that space take on another tone, one that can be perceived as illicit and, in the case of *Morte*, even treasonous. Accordingly, this chapter examines feudal allegiances, how they help define the association between castle space and chivalric virtue, and how the interactions of characters can sometimes work to undermine lordly power and incite political destabilization.

Undermining of lordly power can also be seen in the stories of *Sir Orfeo* and of Uther and Igraine in Layamon's *Brut*, which are discussed in Chapter 3. Like the romances studied in the previous chapter, these texts feature entrapment of a female character whose body becomes the site of contention between competing masculine authorities. However, in these narratives the characters that infiltrate castle spaces are themselves kings, not mere knights, and gaining possession of entrapped female bodies means a reinstatement of sovereign authority, rather than the undermining thereof as in Chapter 2. In both cases, the possession of a woman's body is related to the exercise of a king's sovereignty in complex and multi-faceted ways. The space of an enemy castle thus becomes the space wherein the kings must reinstate themselves and answer an insult to their authority that occurs previously in the space of their own castles.

In contrast to Chapters 2 and 3, Chapter 4 examines texts wherein a man is entrapped by a woman within a castle. This type of entrapment appears in one example discussed in Chapter 1, but there the woman (Floripas) exercises her authority quite forcefully over the knights whom she entraps. The women in the texts examined in Chapter 4, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and the *Prose Merlin*, entrap men by means of enchantment and seduction. Both the Lady and Nimiane use a combination of seductive tactics in order to place Gawain and Merlin in precarious positions and thus ensure that these men comply with their wishes. Awareness and male agency play a certain role in these entrapments, and the ladies' motivations clearly differ. In both texts, however, whether because of ignorance or purposeful allowance of entrapment, the men give up an integral part of their male identity to the females who entrap them. Gawain does so by accepting the life-preserving girdle and thus undermining his proclaimed chivalric code of conduct, whereas Merlin gives up both his knowledge and freedom to be confined within an enchanted castle constructed by the woman he loves. In both instances, the men show a certain amount of desire for their confinement in enclosed castle spaces, thus allowing the women to exercise power over them and the castle spaces wherein they are located. The castle space acts as the stage of entrapment through which gender roles are subverted as men allow themselves to be manipulated into entrapment.

As was noted above, the way in which the literary castles in these romances are depicted varies greatly. Sometimes these depictions are detailed, yet at other times the structure is barely referenced. However, a poorly described castle has as much to offer in terms of analysis as a castle which has been described at length, for a castle's mere presence in a text conveys the image of a physical structure and, by extension, the

symbolisms it embodies. The literary castle as a *representation of space* is host to myriad forms of interaction, and its *representational space* is shaped by, and helps shape, social paradigms. Often, castle-situated interactions are a way to establish power and authority, both over others as well as over the space in which the interactions occur. Such is the case with the literary castle and the *spacial practice* of entrapment studied in the succeeding chapters. This analysis of the *representational spaces* and *spacial practices* of Middle English romance castles aims to suggest an ongoing correlation between inhabited spaces and gendered interactions that is observable both in the Middle Ages and now, albeit in very different spaces. An exercise of authority and power, whether male or female, often informs gendered interactions and the spaces, whether imagined or real, wherein they occur. How this exercise of authority is accomplished, and to what purpose, is examined at length in the succeeding chapters.

Chapter 1: “Ful Blisfully in Prison Maistow Dure”- Knights in the Dungeon

This chapter begins the analysis of the castle as *representational space* by looking at the *Knight's Tale*, the first of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*,¹⁵ comparatively with the *Sowdone of Babylone*, an English Charlemagne romance of the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century.¹⁶ In both narratives, knights are taken captive due to warfare and become entrapped within a castle prison. The prisons of the two texts differ significantly, with Chaucer's knights, Arcite and Palamon, being confined to a tower overlooking the inner garden of the castle, whilst the knights in *Sowdone*, Roland and Oliver, are imprisoned in an underground dungeon. During the period of the knights' imprisonment, both texts introduce central female characters who go on to define the nature of the men's entrapment. The heroine of the *Knight's Tale*, Emelye, does so passively by becoming a distant object of male observation while inhabiting the secluded, feminine space of the castle's garden. In contrast, the *Sowdone*'s Floripas actively rescues the knights from the dungeon while freely manipulating the symbolic gender boundaries of castle space. The respective behavior of the two heroines and the way in which it defines the knights' experience of entrapment correlates to the way in which gender identities are presented within the two texts. These gender identities are intertwined with the *representational*

¹⁵ It has been proposed by Susan Crane that Chaucer felt negatively about romance as a genre and, for this purpose, it may be difficult to classify *The Knight's Tale* as one. However, she does concede that "the romance genre informs *The Knight's Tale* more fully than any other genre." In the context of this thesis, *The Knight's Tale* is considered a romance.

Susan Crane, "Medieval Romance and Feminine Difference in the *Knight's Tale*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 12 (1990): 47.

¹⁶ *The Romaunce of The Sowdone of Babylone and of Ferumbras his Sone who Conquerede Rome*, edited by Emil Hausknecht, Early English Text Society, e.s 38, (London: Oxford University Press, 2002), xiv.

spaces of specific castle locations wherein they are played out and both define and are defined by the *spacial practice* of entrapment.

To begin with, the *Knight's Tale* and the *Sowdone of Babylone* offer a comparable pattern of entrapment brought about as a direct result of warfare. In the *Knight's Tale*, Theseus, the duke of Athens, makes war on Thebes to avenge the women whose dead husbands were refused funeral rites by King Creon (lines 952-974).¹⁷ Theseus comes out as a victor in the ensuing siege of Thebes:

With Creon, which that was of Thebes kyng,
He [Theseus] faught, and slough hym manly as a knyght
In pleyn bataille, and putte the folk to flyght;
And by assaut he wan the citee after,
And rente adoun bothe wall and sparre and rafter (986-990).

Theseus takes control of the city and his men, pillaging among the dead bodies of the enemy, discover two young knights, Arcite and Palamon:

And so bifel that in the taas they founde,
Thurgh-girt with many a grevous blody wounde,
Two yonge knyghtes liggynge by and by,
Bothe in oon armes, wrought ful richely,
Of whiche two Arcita highte that oon,
And that oother knyght highte Palamon.
Nat fully quyke, ne fully dede they were,
But by hir cote-armures and by hir gere
The heraudes knewe hem best in
special As they that weren of the blood

¹⁷ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Knight's Tale*, ed. Larry D. Benson in *The Riverside Chaucer* (Harvard: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008) *The Geoffrey Chaucer Page*. www.sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/teachslf/ktpar0.html. Accessed January 19th, 2017. All subsequent citations will be from this edition.

roial Of Thebes, and of sustren two
yborn.

Out of the taas the pilours han hem torn,
And han hem caried softe unto the tente
Of Theseus; and he ful soone hem sente
To Athenes, to dwellen in prisoun
Perpetually-- he nolde no raunsoun (1009-1024).

Heralds identify the two young men as royals by their coats-of-arms and they are brought before Theseus. The duke's decision is to send his new captives to Athens, where they are to be imprisoned forever without ransom.

Thus far, this account relates the story of two young men whose entrapment is a direct consequence of them being on the losing side of battle. Moving forward, by examining the descriptive elements of the city of Thebes, it is possible to relate this capture and entrapment to gendered castle symbolism. However, prior to analyzing the *representational space* associated with gender, it is necessary to first establish that the *representation of space* being described is a castle. In literary tradition, cities were often imagined as castles when thought of in the context of military exploits and, by this token, the city and castle were synonymous to a certain degree. This is noted by Malcolm Hebron when he asserts that "real sieges of the time were generally of towns... in other texts... cities are imagined as castles. The defence and definition of town walls gave towns an extra sense of unity as a fortress."¹⁸ In addition, as Abigail Wheatley discusses in *The Idea of the Castle in Medieval England*, a large portion of royal castles prior to 1100 were built at the sites of already existing towns, thus "ensuring some continuity

¹⁸ Hebron goes on to apply this idea about the malleability of the castle and city to the concept of allegorical sieges, wherein the mind or soul becomes the defended fortress.

Malcom Hebron, "Allegorical Siege" in *The Medieval Siege* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 140.

with the existing system of local administration.”¹⁹ Further, using seals as the main example, Wheatley asserts that visual representations of castles actively sought to convey the notion that the city and the castle were unified extensions of one another.²⁰ This fluid concept of the castle and city is likewise attested to in a twelfth century homily attributed to St. Anselm of Canterbury, wherein it is written that “any tower surrounded by a wall is called a castle.”²¹ The Latin words used to describe a tower and castle in the homily are *turris* and *castellum*, respectively.²² Yet, these words have multiple meanings when translated, and *castellum* can mean both a castle as well as a fortified city.²³ The Latin *turris* may also imply a “castle, citadel or palace,” whilst its Middle English counterpart, *towre* or *toure* may refer to “a fortified city taken as a whole.”²⁴ Summarily, the unity of the castle and city, oftentimes physical, was depicted in material culture, medieval allegorical thought and contemporary terminology, suggesting that perceptions of the castle were not static. In addition, Wheatley states that medieval terminologies pertaining to castle spaces imply that the castle was thought of as “a collection of architectural elements in relationship to one another.”²⁵ This is relevant to the action of the *Knight’s*

¹⁹ Abigail Wheatley, *The Idea of the Castle in Medieval England* (Wiltshire: Antony Rowe Ltd., 2004), 48.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 68. See also images on pages 72-73.

²¹ Hebron, “Allegorical Sieges”, 143.

²² The original passage, cited by Hebron, is “castellum enim dicitur quaelibet turris, murus in circuitu ejus”, 143.

²³ Wheatley closely examines the variant meanings of the Latin terms pertaining to castles in the first chapter of the *Idea of the Castle*. Aside from describing a fortified town or the castle as a structure, this term could be used in relation to “military defences and fortified houses”, as well as, “ecclesiastical and urban defences.” *Idea of the Castle*, 26.

²⁴ Meanings of the Latin *turris* can be found in *A Latin Dictionary*. Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, ed. *A Latin Dictionary*, in Perseus Digital Library (Tufts University) Accessed on January 10th, 2017.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0059%3Aentry%3Dturris>.

For a range of meanings pertaining to the Middle English term see *towre* in the *Middle English Dictionary*, edited by Frances McSparren, *The Middle English Dictionary* (University of Michigan, 2001). Accessed on January 10th, 2017. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>

Tale, for, although there are no overt references to castles or towers during the capture of Thebes, Theseus is seen to break down the “walle”, “sparre”, and “rafter” of this city as he conquers it. Wheatley points to the issue of trying to identify the presence of the castle structure within a text by simply looking for passages containing the word *castle*, instead of paying attention to the presence of other words that can be used to describe it.²⁵ In the context of the *Knight’s Tale*, “walle,” “sparre” and “rafter” can function in this descriptive capacity.²⁶ By this token, due to the flexible interpretation of the city and the castle, the walls broken into by Theseus are simultaneously the walls of both. The “walle” is the protection surrounding both a castle and a fortified town, both of which also share the “sparre” and the “rafter” as architectural components. The relationship of these architectural elements to one another and their symbolic and physical functions as fortified defenses, coupled with the fluent meaning of terminologies relating to castles, allow them to be read as a castle space.

The action then takes place on the outer walls, the function of which is to defend the entire castle.²⁷ As defensive features, the outer walls are evocative of warfare and become associated with the more violent aspect of medieval masculinity. By this token, this external feature of the castle becomes a male- gendered space. Further, since castles symbolized lordship and chivalric values,²⁸ then Theseus is seen to assert his own lordship and chivalric prowess over Thebes by aptly breaking through the defending

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁷ Gilchrist, “The Contested Garden,” 118.

²⁸ Johnson suggests that that medieval concepts of militarism were intertwined with ideas of masculinity and knighthood thus impacting the way in which chivalry could be viewed by its association with the military symbolism of the castle, *Beyond the Castle Gate*, 30-31.

structure of the city, or castle. The *spacial practice* of Arcite and Palamon's entrapment thus occurs within the *representation of space* that is the outer wall of the city- castle of Thebes. The *representational space* of the wall is dependant on its function as a defensive structure and the action of fighting and entrapment that happens within its boundary.

Since this fighting and consequent entrapment are intertwined with a masculine, knightly identity these *spacial practices* contribute to the gendering of this part of the castle as a masculine space. As such, this *spacial practice* reaffirms the creation of gender boundaries within the *representation of space* that is the city- castle of Thebes by creating a *representational space* symbolic of the male chivalric identity. Although the action of the narrative forthwith changes to Athens, this initial fighting scene creates an important contrast between what is considered a masculine *representational space* and the feminine *representational space* of the garden introduced later in the text.

The *Sowdone of Babylone* likewise presents the depiction of a besieged city, this time Rome. Like Thebes in the *Knight's Tale*, Rome can be simultaneously considered as a city and a castle space. This fluidity is exemplified at the beginning of the tale, when the initial capture of Rome by the Sultan is described:

To the toure a bastile stode,
An engyne was i-throwe -
That was to the cité ful goode -
And brake down towres both hie and lowe (395-398).²⁹

²⁹ *Sowdone of Babylone*, Hausknecht. All subsequent citations will be from this edition.

Naturally, it is the city of Rome that is besieged, yet by allotting to the city the outward architectural components of a castle, Rome as a city is also an extension of castle space. Thus, the corresponding symbolisms associated with a male-gendered, militaristic *representational space* are applicable to the capture of Rome. In like manner to Theseus, when Laban, the Sultan of Babylon, “the wallis overthrowe[s]” (388), and captures Rome he is participating in the *spacial practice* of warfare which takes place within the *representations of space* that are the outer defenses of the city, and castle by extension. This *spacial practice* contributes to the creation of symbolic gender boundaries by which the *representational space* of the city-castle resonates with masculine, knightly attributes. However, just as the setting of the *Knight’s Tale* changes to Athens, so too does the *Sowdone* narrative switch locations after the Sultan has taken Rome. Laban, after having shown his martial prowess through the symbolic breaking of the city’s walls, returns to his own seat of power at Agremore, “his chief Cite” (719). It is towards this city that king Charlemagne’s forces are sent, seeking to avenge Rome, wherefore the king swears that he will not leave the Sultan alive “withine walle ner withoute” (760). In this statement, Charlemagne makes clear his objective to not only slay the Sultan, but to disassociate him from any claim to military might that the latter obtained through the capture of Rome. Charlemagne vows to do so by either slaying Laban “withine” the walls of his castle, or refusing to let him live outside them, thus essentially making the Sultan’s seat of power the *representational space* of his demise.

However, Charlemagne’s army does not make it to the walls of Agremore without interference from the Sultan’s forces in a forest outside the city (1054). Here, the *Sowdone of Babylone* becomes concerned with describing isolated instances of fighting

in copious detail. Roland and Oliver too are taken captive, yet unlike Chaucer's knights, who are found unconscious amid the dead, they are captured during, not after, the battle:

Whan Roulande was on his fete, Than
was he woo with-alle.
Many of hem he felte yete
And dede to grounde made hem falle.
At the last his swerde brake,
Than hadde he wepyn noon,
As he smote a Saresyns bake
Asundre down to the arson.
Tho was he caught; he myght not flee.
His hondes thai bounden faste And
lad him forth to here cité, And in
depe prison they hem caste.
Olyvere sawe howe he was ladde.
A sorye man than was he; Him
hadde lever to have bene dede
Than suffren that myschief to be.
Smertly aftire he pursued tho To
reskue his dere brother.
The prees was so grete, he myghte not so -
It myghte be no othir
But he was caughte by verre force With
sixti of Ascopartes (1403-1424).

It is impossible to gauge the prowess of Arcite and Palamon, as they are not shown fighting during the siege of Thebes and are first introduced only after Theseus has taken the city. Roland and Oliver, on the other hand, are depicted as being right amid the fighting, actively playing out their knightly duties. When they are made captive, Charlemagne's knights are brought before the Sultan "to be prisoners" in his "toure" (1502). In this instance, the *toure* may be read as the residential space of a castle which centralizes Laban's lordly authority.³⁰ As such, it is a place intrinsically tied to militaristic

³⁰ The MED also defines *toure* as referring to "a seat of power."

male- gender identities that dictate the *spacial practice* of Roland and Oliver's entrapment.

Whereas in the *Knight's Tale* it is the captor, Theseus, who decides that Arcite and Palamon are to be imprisoned, this is not the case in *Sowdone*. Imprisoning Charlemagne's knights does not occur to Laban, whose first response is to have the pair executed. It is the Sultan's daughter, Floripas, who ultimately suggests imprisonment as an alternative:

I counsaile you, my fader dere, To
have mynde of Sir Ferumbras.
Pute hem in youre prison here
Tille ye have better space,
So that ye have my brother agayn For
hem that ye have here (1519-1524).

Floripas offers sound advice in proposing her father keep the captive knights imprisoned so that the Sultan can later trade them to Charlemagne in exchange for his captive son, Ferumbras. Thus, it is Floripas, not Laban, who dictates the *spacial practice* of entrapment, effectively taking over the authoritative function of her father's lordly influence. This is the first instance in which Floripas exercises this agency, actively manipulating the *representational space* associative with the male-gendered *toure*, the fortified nexus of the Sultan's power. The *toure* of the Sultan should be the space from where he exercises his power, playing out a further element of his masculine identity. Floripas' intercession undermines this *representational space* when she becomes the agent responsible for Roland and Oliver's entrapment, thus putting in question the control which her father has over this male-gendered *representation of space*.

Conversely, the *Knight's Tale* depicts a heroine entirely different from the actively influential Floripas. Emelye, Theseus' sister-in-law, is not concerned with the political ramifications of the battle of Thebes, nor is she aware that Arcite and Palamon have been sent to Athens for imprisonment. The Theban knights, however, are aware of her. The two are entrapped within a tower, having access to a window from which they can see into the enclosed garden of the castle:

The grete tour, that was so thikke and
stroong, which of the castel was the chief
dungeoun (Ther as the knightes weren
prisoun of which I tolde yow and tellen shal),
Was evene joynant to the gardyn wal Ther as
this Emelye hadde hir pleyyng.
Bright was the sonne and clear that morwenyng,
And Palamoun, this woful prisoner,
As was his wone, by leve of his gayler,
Was risen and romed in a chambre an heigh,
In which he al the noble citee seigh,
And eek the gardyn, ful of braunches grene (1056-1067).

This passage reveals that the tower, wherein the knights are entrapped, is the main fortification of the castle, as is evidenced by its description as “the chief dungeoun.”³¹ As its main defensive point, its purpose is evidently militaristic and as such, male. However, from this male gendered space, Palamon can see the enclosed garden and Emelye within it. The enclosed garden space, also known as the *hortus conclusus*, came to symbolize the pure female body, a metaphor which arose out of its association with the Virgin Mary in the Old Testament.³² In actuality, the enclosed garden was a common feature of the castle

³¹ The MED defines the “dungeoun” as “the most strongly fortified, central part of a citadel or castle.”

³² Gilchrist writes that “the link between women’s chastity and the enclosed garden was made in the Old Testament *Song of Songs*, ‘a garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse/a spring shut up, a fountain sealed (4.12).’ This passage served as one image in constructing the iconography of the Virgin Mary,

space commonly associated with women and often commissioned by them, which provided them with the opportunity to segregate themselves from the “acrid smells and drab greys of the stable and garrison.”³⁴ As such, the garden could most definitely be considered a sanctioned feminine space which stands in stark contrast to the “thikke and stroong” tower with its militaristic male symbolisms. Further, just as the *representational space* of castle fortifications is symbolically characterized as a masculine space through the *spacial practice* of militaristic activities, so too is the feminine garden defined by *spacial practices* evoking peace and tranquility. Emelye is seen to engage in such *spacial practices* when “in the gardyn... she walketh up and doun, and as hire liste/she gadereth floures, party white and red/ to make a subtil garland for hire hede” (1051-1054). As noted by Gilchrist, one function of the garden was to allow the women of the castle to “perambulate” and spend time among a variety of herbs and flowers that were a central staple of the enclosed garden.³³ These are precisely the activities that Emelye is engaged in and which comprise the *spacial practice* which feminizes the secluded space of the garden and differentiates it from the masculine activities practiced in other parts of the castle.

It is in this feminine space that Emelye abides, being viewed from the tower by the entrapped knights:

And so bifel, by aventure or cas,
That thurgh a wyndow, thikke of many a barre
Of iren greet and swuare as any sparre,

who was symbolised by the *hortus conclusus*, the enclosed garden and the fountain of water which referred to the Virgin’s purity, her enclosed womb.” “Contested Garden,” 140. ³⁴*Ibid.*, 126.

³³ *Ibid.*, 125-126.

He [Palamon] cast his eye upon Emelya,
And therewithal he bleynte and cride, “A!”
As though he stongen were unto the herte.
And with that cry Arcite anon up sterte
And seyde, “Cosyn myn, what eyleth thee, That
art so pale and deedly on to see?
Why crimestow? Who hath thee doon offence? (1075-1083).

To which question, Palamon replies:

This prison caused me nat for to crye
But I was hurt right now thurghout myn ye
Into myn herte, that wol my bane be.
The fairnesse of that lady that I see
Yond in the gardyn romen to and fro
Is cause of al my criyng and my wo (1095-1100).

Arcite too proceeds to look out the window into the garden and likewise becomes smitten with Emelye. The lady remains in constant sight of Arcite and Palamon and, unbeknownst to herself, becomes a passively influential force dictating the nature of their entrapment. She does this simply by being the object of their observation, for, as examined by Jamie Fumo, “aggressive vision on the part of the looker can be matched by an equally invasive ocular ricochet *even if the object of vision does not reciprocate the look.*”³⁴ In other words, the mere sight of Emelye is damaging to the two knights as their active observation of her causes them to languish from desire. Their suffering is further enhanced by Emelye’s passivity in relation to them due to her unawareness of their presence. Fumo equates this passivity with a “visual projectile” which throws back at the

³⁴ Jaime C. Fumo, “The Pestilential Gaze: from Epidemiology to Erotomania in the *Knight’s Tale*,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 35, (2013): 99. ³⁷Ibid.

looking knights their own fervent desire, toxifies the effect of love, and makes it akin to illness.³⁷

By this token, the entrapment of the knights within the tower takes on an allegorical function evocative of the concept of love-siege that rose out of the French romance tradition. Typically, this love- siege depicts the woman as besieged by the advances of her lover, as is evidenced by the popularity of the *Roman de la Rose*. However, Hebron gives examples from Provencal poetry by Giraut de Borneil, suggesting that a reverse image of love-siege also existed, wherein the man was the one besieged by the image of the beloved.³⁵ As such, the image of the besieged castle becomes a masculine “metaphor for the experience of love and desire.”³⁹ For men, this experience was expressed by equating the sight of the lady with an assault, portraying the lover as besieged by the image of his beloved. In this model, the lady remains distant and silent, while the male lover pines and makes speeches describing the nature of his affliction. This is precisely what happens in the *Knight's Tale*, as the entrapped knights view Emelye in her distant and distinctly feminine space, in which she remains speechless, while they proceed to speak at length of the agony of their love for her. Unknowingly, Emelye exerts her power over the men without having to leave the feminine confines of the enclosed garden by becoming the object of their gaze and inadvertently causing them to suffer from desire. She accomplishes this by doing nothing more than engaging in the leisurely *spacial practices* associated with the garden as a *representational space* of female seclusion and

³⁵ Hebron quotes Borneil’s lyric, ‘lady, as when a castle is besieged by grim barons... and the onslaught is so fierce from every side that neither cunning nor guile avails them... does it not seem and appear to you that there’s need for them to cry mercy? In the same way, I humbly cry mercy of you, good lady, noble and worthy.’ Herbon states that, whereas Ovid implies that it is the woman who should surrender to the advances of a man, here it is the man that is surrendering, placing the woman in the place of the besieger. “Allegorical Sieges,” 152. ³⁹Ibid., 151.

enclosure. Yet her passivity changes the nature of entrapment experienced by the two knights in the tower, who now perceive their imprisonment on a metaphorical level. Their tower prison becomes a physical manifestation of their mental besiegement by Emelye's image, a phenomenon caused by the *spacial practice* of their active observation of her. As such, the *representational space* of the tower, previously evocative of Theseus' military victory over Thebes which concluded with the imprisonment of Arcite and Palamon, turns into a prison of love in physical form and Emelye too becomes the knights' captor.

Floripas, on the other hand, exercises a very active form of influence over the entrapped knights in the *Sowdone of Babylone*. As has been observed, it is through her intercession that Roland and Oliver are placed within the confines of the castle's dungeon to begin with, whereas their fate at the hands of the Sultan would have been death. The nature of the prison space which they occupy is portrayed as radically different from the one in the *Knight's Tale*:

Tho were thay cast in prison depe;
Every tyde the see came inne. Thay
myght not see, so was it myrke; The
watir wente to her chynne. The salte
watir hem greved sore, Here
woundis sore did smerte.
Hungir and thurste greved heme yet more:
It wente yet more nere here herte. Who
maye live withoute mete?
Six dayes hadde thay right none,
Ner drinke that thay myght gete,
Bute loked uppon the harde stone (1539-1551).

The prison-tower of Arcite and Palamon offers them the panoramic view of the castle's garden where they see Emelye. In contrast, Roland and Oliver's dank prison offers no such sights, as, in fact, it is so dark that they can scarcely see. In addition, their dungeon is susceptible to flooding and the knights are constantly subjected to the discomfort of being submerged up to the chin in salt water. The nature of their confinement prevents Roland and Oliver from being aware of Floripas and her actions when she enters her own enclosed garden:

So on a daye, as God it wolde,
Floripas to hir garden wente To
geder floures in morne colde.
Here maydyns from hir she sente,
For she herde grete lamentacion
In the prison that was ther nye. She
supposed by ymagynacion That it
was the prisoners sory.
She wente here nerre to here more: Thay
wailed for defaute of mete.
She rued on hem anoon ful sore;
She thought how she myght hem beste it gete (1551-1562).

Unlike Emelye, who is completely oblivious of the prisoners whilst in her garden, Floripas is at once aware of the cries of the prisoners in hers, which suggests that the gendered associations of the garden and the prison are much more fluid in this text. The garden does not provide complete isolation from the militaristic castle space of the prison and, in fact, the space of the prison penetrates the garden through the voices of the men calling out for help. If, as per Gilchrist, the sounds of the enclosed garden functioned to contrast the "male voices and clattering hooves" that dominated the masculine spaces of

the castle, then Floripas' garden fails in this objective.³⁶ For this reason, this *representation of space* is hardly evocative of femininity, making it difficult to apply to it the usual symbols associated with an enclosed garden.

Nor is Floripas seen to experience any pleasure from the leisurely *spacial practice* of gathering flowers which should take place within the garden. In the case of Emelye, this pleasure is made evident as she rises early to “doon honour to May” (1047), dresses gaily for this purpose⁴¹, and sings “as an aungel hevenyshly” (1055) as she perambulates and gathers flowers. Emelye takes joy in these *spacial practices* and the secluded, feminine space of the garden. With Floripas there are no such expressions of gaiety, and the only description pertaining to her walk in the garden is that it happens on a “morne cold” (1553). This chill morning atmosphere contrasts significantly with the sunny May morning of the *Knight’s Tale* and does nothing to promote the impression of feminine tranquility. Moreover, Floripas does not actively seek to occupy herself with such womanly activities, instead becoming instantly distracted by the male cries evocative of masculine space and the *spacial practice* of entrapment. As she is made aware of the knights’ distress, Floripas immediately meditates on how she might once more influence the nature of their captivity, by first ensuring that the men receive sustenance.

Prior to helping Roland and Oliver, however, Floripas disposes of those in opposition to her plan. The first such opponent is her own governess, who, when told Floripas’ intention, is outraged. Floripas is weary of the woman’s reaction and takes definitive action to stop any potential threat that she might pose:

³⁶ Gilchrist, “The Contested Garden,” 126.

⁴¹“yclothed was she fresh” (1048).

[Floripas] cleped Maragounde anoon
right To the wyndowe to come a while
And se ther a wonder syght:
'Loke oute,' she saide, 'and see aferre
The porpais pley as thay were wode.'
Maragounde lokede oute; Floripe come nere And
shofed hire oute into the flode.
'Go there,' she said; 'the devel the spede!
My consail shaltowe never biwry (1572-1580).

Floripas' primary concern is that, having heard her intention, Maragounde will betray her to Laban. For this purpose, she tricks the governess into looking out a castle window and forcibly throws her out into the ocean. When Floripas reveals her plans to her governess, she acts under the presumption that the woman is loyal to her. Maragounde, however, makes the mistake of aligning herself with the Sultan by refusing to cooperate with Floripas since her father has ordered that no one is to feed the prisoners.³⁷ In so doing, Maragounde acknowledges the supremacy of the Sultan's lordly authority in dictating the *spacial practices* which occur within the masculine spaces of his castle. Floripas, on the other hand, is looking to subvert this very authority by going against the orders of her father, thus actively undermining his lordship. To accomplish this, Floripas must implement changes to the *spacial practice* of entrapment experienced by Roland and Oliver in the confines of the Sultan's dungeon, thus claiming dominance over the dungeon and, by extension, the castle as a *representational space* evocative of her father's authority. By not complying with Floripas' wishes, Maragounde denies the princess' ability to manipulate the gendered boundaries of castle space by making it a setting where her own power can be exercised. For this purpose, if Floripas is to proceed with her plan,

³⁷ "Thy fadir did us alle defende/both mete and drinke and othere goode/that no man shulde hem thider sende" (1568-1570).

Maragounde must first be expelled from the castle entirely, for her presence poses an obstacle to Floripas' assertion of dominance over the *spacial practices* within the castle space.

Floripas' next obstacle is Britomayne, the jailor of Roland and Oliver, to whom she likewise reveals her intention to feed the knights, thus allowing him the opportunity to align himself with her interest instead of her father's. Yet Britomayne too refers to the Sultan's ultimate authority over the manner of the knight's entrapment when he exclaims "hath not youre fader charged me/ to kepe hem from every wyght" (1595-1596). The jailor turns to leave with the intention of telling the Sultan of his daughter's treachery. Floripas, however, has no intention of letting him divulge her plans:

She sued him as faste as she myghte
go For to gif him harde grace. With the
keye cloghe that she caught, With
goode wille she maute than.
Such a stroke she hym there raught,
The brayne sterte oute of his hede than (1601-1606).

Without losing composure, Floripas quickly snatches away Britmayne's keys and effectively kills him by striking him with an attached block.³⁸ The keys are physical instruments that grant immediate access into an enclosed space-- in this case the dungeon in which Roland and Oliver are confined. Accordingly, by seizing the jailor's keys, Floripas forcibly wrestles from him the authority over the prisoners' fate and, by extension, appropriates the power over the castle space which they open. For this reason, Floripas' seizure of the keys is evocative of her beginning to grasp the control of the city from her father, a process which was begun when she first suggested the entrapment of

³⁸ The MED defines "cloghe" as a "block or chunk of wood... tied... to a key to prevent loss."

the knights. The keys allow her to control the *spacial practice* of Roland and Oliver's entrapment by releasing them from the dungeon, directly displaying her authority over the militaristic *representational space* of the castle associated with male dominance. By extension, due to the often-unified nature of the castle and city as *representations of space* in the medieval imagination, in gaining authority over the castle space Floripas exerts a growing control over Agremore itself.

Floripas deceives her father by telling him that Britmayne was intent on helping the prisoners, whereupon the Sultan makes her their new jailor (1608-1616). Once Floripas' new authoritative position has been affirmed, she immediately proceeds to release the captive knights from the dungeon:

A rope to hem she lete down goon
That aboven was teyde faste. She and
hir maydyns drewe theruppon Tille up
thay hadde hem at the last.
She led hem into here chambir dere
That arrayed for hem was right wele,
Both Roulande and Olyvere,
And gafe hem there a right gode mele.
And whan thay hadde eten alle her fille
A bath for hem was redy there.
Therto thay went ful fayre and stille And
aftyr to bedde with right gode chere.
Now Floripas chamber is here prisone,
Withouten wetinge of the Sowdon;
Thai were ful mery in that dongeon,
For of hem wiste man never oone (1647-1662).

Not only does Floripas take herself, and several other ladies, into a place utterly different from the enclosed space of her garden and the feminine *spacial practices* therein played out, she then takes the rescued knights into her private chambers, which become their

new prison. In a sense, Floripas rescues the captive knights from entrapment within one castle space and takes them into another space, one dominated completely by her, to continue entrapment on her terms. By fluidly accessing male-dominated spaces, Floripas eclipses her father, the Sultan, as the lord of the castle, and the castle can no longer be a symbol of his masculine authority. Instead, the center of power shifts to her internal chambers, wherein she can exercise her will over the continuously entrapped knights. That the knights are, in fact, still entrapped is evidenced by the association of her chambers with a prison in the above passage. The nature of their entrapment may have changed for the better, yet Roland and Oliver are still in enemy territory and completely at the mercy of Floripas.

Floripas uses this situation to her utmost benefit when more members of Charlemagne's entourage are captured. Floripas once more intercedes on the behalf of the prisoners and Laban hands them over to her, whereupon Floripas takes these new knights "to dwelle in her owen boure" along with Roland and Oliver (1870). Coincidentally, one of the new captive knights, Sir Guy, is the long- desired object of Floripas' affection whom she has "loved many a day" without ever having met him (1891-1892). With Sir Guy now fortuitously entrapped within her bower, Floripas proposes a marriage between them. Upon hearing this proposal, Sir Guy proclaims bluntly "her wole I never have," thus displaying obvious objection to the prospect of this union (1910). However, Roland and Oliver dually act to dissuade him from rejecting the princess:

Tho spake Roulande and Olyvere,
Certifynge him of here myschefe,
Tellinge him of the parelles that thay in
were, For to take this lady to his wedded

wife. 'But thou helpe in this nede, We be
here in grete doute.
Almyghty God shalle quyte thy mede;
Elles come we nevere hennys oute.'
Thus thay treted him to and fro;
At the laste he sayde he wolde (1915-1924).

The fact that they are utterly at the mercy of Floripas is not lost on the knights, who still perceive themselves to be in danger even if they are no longer captives in the Sultan's dungeon. For this reason, Roland and Oliver actively force Sir Guy into an unwanted marriage by convincing him of the peril they remain in while entrapped in Floripas' bower. Ensuring that Floripas receives what she desires-- Sir Guy as a husband-- is the quickest way that the knights can secure her good-will and consequent help in escaping their captivity.

In acceding to her demands, the knights show an awareness of the authority Floripas has over the *spacial practice* of their entrapment and, through it, the *representation of space* that is the castle. When Floripas first rescues Roland and Oliver from the dungeon and relocates them to her own chambers, she effectively makes this internal feminine space the new nexus of power within the castle where she is free to negotiate the conditions under which further help is provided to the knights. In so doing, Floripas continues to subvert the castle's *representational spaces* by traversing the gendered boundaries they imply, a process first begun when she, a woman, suggests entrapment of the knights to her father. Floripas completes this process once she has negotiated an advantageous marriage for herself, whereupon she immediately tells her captives the best way to escape, displace her father, and "wynne this castel" (1950). Ultimately, Floripas' active manipulation of the gendered boundaries of *representational spaces* of the castle

illustrates her gradual ascendancy as the main authoritative force within this castle space. In culmination, her authority is demonstrated at its fullest when she finally ends the entrapment of the knights and devises a plan by which they escape and take control of the castle which has long been the seat of the Sultan's power. This is accomplished when the knights surprise Laban during his meal and, slaying his men, frighten him into ignobly escaping by leaping "oute at the wyndowe," thus forsaking both his castle and his authority (2041). The Sultan's expulsion from Agremore is finalized by the physical image of him being shut out of the city when the draw bridge is "teyed fast" behind him while the "gatis that were so wyde" are "shitte" (2053-2054). As the Sultan is removed from the castle formerly representative of his lordship, an action which Floripas orchestrates through her manipulation of the *spacial practice* of the knights' entrapment, Floripas cements her agency over the social space of the castle by destabilizing the gender boundaries implicit by its *representational space*.

In conclusion, the women in both texts are exerting a power over the men entrapped within the militaristic confines of a castle space, thus exemplifying different modes of feminine agency. For Emelye in the *Knight's Tale*, this agency is passive, as she does not leave the enclosed confines of the castle garden, indulging only in the leisurely *spacial practices* associated with the garden as a feminine *representational space*. Emelye affects the nature of Arcite and Palamon's entrapment without resorting to the manipulation of gender boundaries between feminine and masculine spaces of the castle. She does so simply by being the object of their observation, a *spacial practice* that results in the mental torment of the two knights. Their pattern of observing Emelye and lamenting for her becomes evocative of the masculine allegorical experience of love as an entrapment within a castle, wherein the men are besieged by Emelye's image. This psychological

experience leads to their reinterpretation of their physical entrapment within Theseus' tower, as is evidenced by Arcite's speech upon release, wherein he says to Palamon, left to languish in prison, that, "ful blisfully in prison maistow dure-/ in prison? Certes nay, but in paradys" (1236-1237). The confines of the tower are no longer solely evocative of Theseus' military might through which Arcite and Palamon are first brought there. Instead, the tower becomes the space from where the knights may indulge in the continued *spacial practice* of observing Emelye. For this reason, Emelye inadvertently becomes the agent changing the nature of the knights' entrapment from one associated purely with displays of masculine dominance to one metaphorically evocative of their figurative imprisonment by love. Yet this does not change the function of the physical prison which keeps the knights in a segregated, masculine space, nor does Emelye have the agency to free the knights from the tower. As such, their respective *spacial practices* only reaffirm the gender boundaries set between them by the space of the castle, even as the *representational space* of the tower is altered to include a symbolism associative with love-siege. Emelye becomes their captor via her visual presence, yet physically, it is still Theseus that has control over the *spacial practice* of entrapment.

The same cannot be said of the *Sowdone of Babylone*, wherein the heroine is the one that actively controls the nature of entrapment within the castle, thus making its *representational spaces* more subjective, since they no longer support a castle's function of space segregation based on gendered symbolism. Although in both romances the imprisoned knights are captured by means of battle, a *spacial practice* that helps establish the outer defenses of the city-castle as masculine *representational spaces*, in the *Sowdone* the consequent entrapment of Roland and Oliver is a direct result of Floripas interceding the Sultan's decision to execute them. For this purpose, Floripas becomes responsible for

the direct, physical entrapment of the knights within the castle's dungeon. The space of the dungeon aurally infiltrates the feminine space of the castle garden, thus undermining its *representational space* as a secluded and enclosed place intentionally segregated from places with a militaristic connotation. Having begun her influence over the knights' entrapment, Floripas now changes the physical setting of this *spacial practice* from the dungeon to her own bedroom. Prior to this, the princess kills those members of the household that deny her authority, instead aligning themselves with the overarching authority of her father, the Sultan. She does so both through forcible bodily expulsion from the castle space, as with Maragounde, and by bludgeoning with an object directly evocative of physical dominion over castle space, as with Britmayne.

By disposing of any opposition that might hinder her progressively growing power over castle space and the *spacial practice* going on within it, Floripas centralizes her authority in her own bower, where she brings the captive knights, keeping them there until such a time as her ultimate desire has been fulfilled. Once she has successfully secured a marriage alliance, Floripas reveals to her captives the means to dispose of the Sultan, effectively expelling him from the castle and city of Agremore, all the while cementing her dominance over the physical space of the castle through the exercise of active and premeditated female agency. In contrast, the Sultan's claim to lordship, associated with the militarily masculine character of the castle, is undermined. The entrapment of male prisoners after battle reflects the power of the victor. In order to maintain that power, a lord must retain control over the bodies of knights captured in battle by entrapping them within the space of the castle's prison. Yet, a lord's power is also dependent upon his ability to use castle space to regulate access to its womenfolk as

“the honour and patrimony of lordship rested on the impermeability of both the castle and the female body.”³⁹ The physical placement of feminine quarters deep within the castle space, far away from the ceremonial main entrance, is in accordance with this need for segregation, and contributes to the symbolic relationship between the woman’s body and secluded, internal castle spaces.⁴⁰ How the infiltration of this confined, feminine space and the illicit access to the women entrapped within it results in the undermining of lordly authority is examined in the next chapter.

Chapter 2: When Walls will not Suffice to Hinder Love

Castles throughout history, no doubt, acted as settings for countless trysts and affairs, some of which were illicit. One such affair is discussed in detail in Thomas V. Cohen's book *Love and Death in Renaissance Italy*. In the first chapter, Cohen recounts an incident wherein the lady Vittoria Savelli was caught in her bed with Troiano Savelli, the bastard half-brother of her husband. The latter, Giovanni Battista Savelli, upon surprising the couple in the middle of the adulterous act, killed both lovers on the spot.⁴¹ The gruesome incident stood out to Cohen due in part to the role the physical structure of the Savelli castle played in the ongoing affair of the lady and her lover. Vittoria Savelli's room was in a hard to reach location and Troiano would not have been able to easily gain

³⁹ Gilchrist states that this need for the segregation of the woman, as well as, the ambivalence with which the female body was perceived, arose out of the necessity to protect dynastic power through insuring legitimacy. “Contested Garden,” 139.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Thomas V. Cohen, *Love and Death in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 17-19.

his lady's quarters from the inside without being detected. However, aided by the layout of the castle, Troiano improvised a plan:

Vittoria's room stood at the end of the castle's piano nobile [main floor], at its northwest point. Part of the westward sixteenth-century annex, it was beyond the sturdy old round tower that once had reinforced the corner of the original castle nucleus. The Renaissance addition, swallowing up half the tower, had afforded the piano nobile three new rooms, the smallest being hers... the older, taller part of the castle had a small mezzanine- on the north side only- with access to the tower stairs and, above that, an attic that ran its length and breadth... The tower clinched the trick. Its narrow, twisting stairway spiraled to the castle's top, lit by little windows some fourteen inches wide, just big enough to wiggle out if one were lithe and nimble. The topmost window of the tower opened just south of westward, over the annex's gentle roof. From there, Troiano, [cloth] strips in hand, could work his way to the north face and lower himself to Vittoria's window.⁴²

Unfortunately, this ingenuity met with a rather morbid end. In retrospect, however, this historic account may serve as an example of subverted symbolisms of castle space, namely the violation of the feminine chamber's association with protective seclusion through the *spacial practice* of an illicit love affair.

As a bastard son of a peasant woman, Troiano's status in his brother's court was not a high one, which is further evidenced by the fact that Troiano had no formal quarters of his own in the castle, but rather slept in the main hall, or the sala.⁴³ The lovers were thus physically separated according to class and gender, with him sleeping in the hall and her in the newly renovated and isolated part of the castle. The isolated nature of her quarters is obvious from the fact that "Vittoria's room... had only a single door, opening onto a chamber with the two beds where slept four maid servants."⁴⁹ Thus, getting to her

⁴² *Ibid.*, 20-21.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

ordinarily should have been impossible for anyone but her husband as she was confined to a very specific architectural domain based both on her status and gender. The utilization of this particular room as the lady's bedroom was literally a physical manipulation of castle space for the purpose of segregating the female quarter from the male one and of barring easy entry into Vittoria's room from the inside of the castle. Yet, the same castle that was designed to keep everyone in their prescribed social and gendered place acted as a means by which these boundaries could be traversed, allowing an affair to go on for months under the husband's nose.

The *representational space* of the castle was altered when the physical structure itself aided the *social practice* that subverted its intended purpose. If the castle's function is to privatize female quarters, then that notion is challenged when the same isolated space becomes the setting for a tryst. Likewise, if the castle is representative of its master's authority, then the use of that castle to perform an act which is treasonous to the lord would serve to undermine that very authority. Thus, the subversive nature of Vittoria and Troiano's liaison is literally reflected in the way in which the castle space was manipulated for the purpose of their romance and the infraction done against the husband is symbolically emphasized by the subversion of the castle's *representational space*. Although, these kinds of affairs could meet with very drastic results, this is not always the case in literary scenarios. If the actors in this tragic tale were characters in a romance, one could argue that Vittoria, in her isolated quarters, was experiencing a form of entrapment. Yet, the setting of entrapment changed to that of romantic enclosure when her lover infiltrated it. Further, just as the lovers subverted this *representational space* by making the setting of entrapment into that of an erotic encounter, so did the lady's

husband ultimately restore his authority over them by turning it into a scene of murder, in this way ensuring that no formal escape from this entrapment could ever take place.

The same is not always true of similar scenarios found in medieval literature, as is testified by the romance of *Floris and Blancheflour* and the Knight of the Cart section in “The Tale of Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwenyvere” of Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur*. The female protagonists of both tales, Blancheflour and Guinevere, are first captured and then entrapped within a castle by male characters seeking to lay physical claim to them. In the meantime, the castle space wherein they are entrapped is meant to act as a barrier between the women and anyone other than their captors who may seek a sexual encounter with them. However, Floris and Lancelot, their respective lovers, find ways to infiltrate the castle spaces wherein the ladies are entrapped. Not only do the men find their way into what are supposed to be inaccessible quarters, they then go on to use those quarters for the enactment of the very deed which the physical confines of the castle are meant to hinder. In both romances, this infiltration and manipulation of castle space serves to undermine the original purpose of Blancheflour and Guinevere’s entrapment, which is an assertion or contention of masculine authority through the possession of a female body.⁴⁴ Further, if the castle is the theater in which the display of masculine power is enacted through entrapment, then this *representational space* is challenged when the *spacial*

⁴⁴ Peggy MacCracken argues that the contention over the female body was a form of chivalric competition. For this reason, gaining access to a forbidden female body entrapped in a secluded castle space constitutes a victory over a rival male and simultaneously, through the penetration of this body and the castle space, subverts the castle as a symbol of his lordship and power.

Peggy MacCracken, *The Romance of Adultery: Queenship and Sexual Transgression in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 109.

practice transgresses the boundaries of the castle space to accomplish that which it was meant to prohibit.

Floris and Blancheflour is a Middle English romance of the mid-thirteenth century.⁴⁵ This popular tale, adapted from a French original, tells the story of a Christian woman who, captured in war by the King of Spain, gives birth to a daughter on the same day as her captor's wife gives birth to a son.⁴⁶ The young prince and the girl, Floris and Blancheflour, grow up together and eventually fall in love. Fearing their union, the pagan King of Spain sells Blancheflour to a group of merchants, who then travel on to the city of Babylon. Once there, Blancheflour is sold to the Emir of the city:

To the Amyral of Babyloyn
They solde that mayde swythe soon;
Rath and soone they were at oon.
The Amyral hur bought anoon,
And gafe for hur, as she stood upryght,
Sevyn sythes of gold her wyght,
For he thought, without weene, That
faire mayde have to queene.
Among his maydons in his bour
He hur dide with muche honour (191-200)⁴⁷

Thus, Blancheflour comes to be entrapped within the harem of the Emir, which is synonymous here with the *bour*, or bower, that is the part of the castle housing female

⁴⁵ Erik Kooper, “*Floris and Blancheflour*: Introduction”, *Sentimental and Humorous Romances*, Kalamazoo: TEAMS Middle English Texts, 2005; Robbins Library Digital Projects. <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/kooper-sentimental-and-humorous-romances-floris-and-blancheflour>. Accessed February 3rd, 2017.

⁴⁶ “*Floris and Blancheflour*,” *Database of Middle English Romance*, University of York, 2012. <http://www.middleenglishromance.org.uk/mer/21>

⁴⁷ *Floris and Blancheflour: A Middle English Romance*, edited by F.C De Vries (Croningen: Druk, 1966). All subsequent citations will be from this edition, however, the Kooper edition will at times be referenced for comparison.

chambers.⁴⁸ It is noteworthy that the two intertwined meanings of the word *harem*, deriving from Arabic root *h-r-m*, are “to be forbidden or unlawful,” and “to declare sacred, inviolable, or taboo.”⁴⁹ Coincidentally, the harem, a space housing the multiple wives and concubines of an emir or sultan, was considered a sacred place to which access was restricted, especially for unrelated males.⁵⁶ As such, it is already similar in function to the secluded and protected female bower of the medieval castle, which allows for a more fluent merging of these two spaces and their underlying symbolic associations.

Blancheflour's entrapment comes about by means of force, as she becomes an object for the exercise of masculine willpower by not one, but two kings-- the one who sold her and the one who bought her. The driving necessity for both rulers revolves around the restriction of physical access to Blancheflour. On the one hand, Floris' father, the King of Spain, uses his authority to curtail his son's sexual access to the young woman's body. On the other hand, the Emir desires to add to his own authority by owning the exclusive rights to all such sexual access by placing Blancheflour into a castle space that restricts any potential sexual rival from reaching her. Moreover, although the bower is a place associated with women, it is in this passage identified as “his bour” and, as such, it is an

⁴⁸ This connection is noted in the footnotes to lines 199 in Erik Kooper's edition of *Floris and Blancheflour*, wherein it is claimed that since the bower is a lady's room then it must in this context imply a harem. This is in regard to the version of the tale found in manuscript E which explicitly labels the place where Blancheflour is taken as a bower. In manuscript V, however, the same line reads “his maidenes up in his tur,” with the girl now being taken to a tower, which would not always have the same associations as an exclusively feminine place. However, as Gilchrist writes occasionally the tower was incorporated explicitly into the female quarters in castles” a fact that would strengthen its association with seclusion. “The Contested Garden,” 139.

⁴⁹ Leslie P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (London: Oxford University Press 1993), 3-6.

Whereas the association between the bower or tower and the harem may not be obviously evident from the text itself, the meaning behind the root word found in harem does parallel the *representational space* of the bower, although it is questionable whether this Arabic lexicon would be known to the composers of the romance, nor does the word *harem* appears in any Middle English romance, even if the concept of it is evident from the context of the narrative. ⁵⁶Ibid.

anatomical part of a castle which is reflective of his male authority and ownership.⁵⁰

Were it just a bower then it could be said to belong to the maidens, yet since it doubles as a harem it belongs, first and foremost, to the Emir. The *spacial practice* of female entrapment within the private space of the bower, and harem by extension, correlates to the *representational spaces* they evoke, with their emphasis on the seclusion of the female body. Further, this restricted access to the women's bodies directly reflects upon the Emir's power as the lord of the castle, for the legitimacy of his dynastic succession is dependent upon his preventing any sexual interference with the women residing there.

Whereas Blancheflour coming into the Emir's harem was a case of circumstantial, albeit forceful action, Guinevere's abduction in *Morte Darthur* is a premeditated affair. Her abductor, the knight Meligaunt, has long awaited the opportunity to steal the Queen away:

... and this knyght had that tyme a castell of the gyffte of Kynge Arthure within seven miles of Westmynster. And thys knyght Sir Mellyagaunce loved passyngly well Quene Gwenyver.. and the booke seyth he had layn in awayte for to stèle away the Quene (fol.436r 2-6).⁵¹

Such a chance comes about when the queen goes out Maying with a group of knights and ladies in the forest, without the invincible Lancelot by her side to keep her safe. Meligaunt, lying in wait with his own armed men, ambushes her and overpowers the

⁵⁰ This is in stark contrast to the bower of Floripas in *Sowdone of Babylone*, which is described as "here chambir" in line 1651, although it is a part of the whole structure of which her father is supposed to be the ruler. As a sultan, Floripas' father would have a harem of his own, and it would be in the nature of the harem to contain not only wives and concubines but other female family members and children. By this token, if Floripas was to abide in a bower it would possess the nature of a harem akin to the one found in *Floris and Blancheflour*, yet this is not the case. For more about the members of a sultan's harem see Pierce's "Introduction" in *Myths and Realities*.

⁵¹ Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. P.J.C Field (Cambridge: D.S Brewer, 2013). All subsequent citations will be from this edition.

knights who accompany her. Fearing that her companions are to be slain, Guinevere tells Meligaunt that she would rather kill herself than go with him unless her wounded knights are to be taken to where she is going. To this Meligaunt replies with “for your sake they shall be lad wyth you into myne owne castell, with that ye woll be rueded and ryde with me” (fol. 437r. 38-40). The important thing of note in this instance is Meligaunt's appropriation of the castle in question, which has been given to him by Arthur. As Philip Dixon notes in “Donjon of Knaresborough,” the bestowing of a castle upon a vassal was a sign of favoritism on the part of the king that could simultaneously be employed for the purpose of displaying that king's overarching authority.⁵² This fact reflects the feudal relationship between medieval kings and their vassal-knights that was based on an economy of estate grants in exchange for fealty.⁵³ The gift of the castle, equivalent to an estate grant, strengthens an existing bond between the king and the knight wherein it is understood that any privileges bestowed upon the latter were given at the behest of the former and may be taken away if loyalties are not maintained, as in instances when the knight's behavior was treasonous.⁶¹

In other words, Meligaunt's relationship with Arthur is one of a vassal owing allegiance to his king, as is exemplified by Arthur's gift of landed property to Meligaunt in exchange for his ongoing loyalty.⁶² This is clarified further when Lancelot, standing outside the gates of Meligaunt's castle shouts “where arte thou, thou false traytoure Sir

⁵² Refer to the introduction for a more detailed discussion of this article and the subject of kingly displays of power.

⁵³ This relationship is described at length by Marc Bloch in his study, *Feudal Society*. Bloch describes the granting of estates to the vassal by the lord as an essential component of assured subservience. The estates thus granted were understood as payments for loyalties, yet continued to belong to the king or lord in question but held by the knight until the nullification of this relationship. Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society* 1 (London: Routledge, 1989), 163-165.

Mellyagaunte, and knyght of the Table Rownde” (fol. 439r. 34-35). Here Meligaunt is overtly stated to be a knight of the Round Table, the elite circle of worthy knights immediately close to the king. For this reason, Meligaunt’s abduction of Guinevere and his desire to physically possess her, is a form of treason that violates his knightly contract

⁶¹Historically, a king could reclaim the given properties when vassals betrayed their allegiances and return them once they returned to it. Permanent withdrawal of allegiance would result in total forfeiture of properties to the king. “Preface” to J.G. Bellamy, *The Law of Treason in England in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

⁶²This is strikingly different from the relationship Meligaunt and Arthur have in previous versions of the tale, namely the *Lancelot- Grail* cycle and Chretien de Troyes *Chevalier de la Charrete*. In these versions, Meligaunt does not have personal relationship with Arthur as he is a knight of another court, and country entirely. He presents a direct challenge to Arthur’s authority by blatantly taking the King’s subjects as his prisoners, culminating in his taking Guinevere directly from inside Arthur’s court. However, this is not an act of treason as it is in Malory, for there is no prearranged contractual agreement between king and vassal represented by the granting of property. For this reason, although he presents a challenge to Arthur that takes on the mode of chivalric contention over a female body, the Meligaunt of previous traditions does not violate any legally binding agreements the way Malory’s Meligaunt does. In turn, the castle as Arthur’s vassal gift acts to accentuate the treacherous nature of Meligaunt, in this way contesting Muriel Whitaker’s claim that castles in Malory are “regulated by codes of chivalry and courtly love rather than by the political and economic requirements of feudal life.”

Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Vulgate and Post- Vulgate in Translation, vols. I, II, III, editor Norris J. Lacey (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2010), 256.

Chretien De Troyes, “The Knight of the Cart (Lancelot)” in *Arthurian Romances*, translated by William W. Kibler (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 207.

Muriel Whitaker, Castles, Courts and Courtesy”, in *Arthur’s Kingdom of Adventure*, Cambridge: D.S Brewer, 1984, 31.

of allegiance to Arthur.⁵⁴ Hence, even as Meligaunt refers to it as “myne owne castell,”

the structure ceases to belong to him as soon as the abduction of Guinevere takes place, for it was originally granted to him to cement a relationship that stopped existing upon

⁵⁴ This action is treasonous on account of Meligaunt’s obvious desire for a sexual relationship with Guinevere, Arthur’s queen and wife. Maureen Fries writes that “adultery with the wife of one’s feudal lord was equated with treason in French and English law... as it encompasses either attempted or real harm to the king or the safety of the commonwealth.” The customary punishment for a knight who sleeps with a queen was hanging, drawing and quartering.

Maureen Fries, “Women, Power and (the Undermining of) Order in Lawman’s Brut” in *Arthuriana* 8, no. 3 (1998):30-31.

this abduction. Once he commits treason, Meligaunt forfeits the chivalric values of knighthood and the castle no longer functions as a *representational space* of knightly virtue because of Meligaunt's disassociation from this trait of masculine identity. Nevertheless, Meligaunt attempts to exercise his now dissociative masculine authority by entrapping the queen within the confines of the castle, seeking to deny access to her and, as such, becoming the victor in the chivalric contention over her body. However, although the entrapment of Guinevere should act as a way of maintaining this authority through the forced seclusion of her body and the implied sexual possession of it, there are several factors which undermine this.

The first of these is the ease with which Lancelot, who immediately goes after the abductor, enters the castle, "and therewithall he bare the gate wyde opyn upon the porter, and smote hym undir the ere wyth hys gauntlet, that hys nekke braste in two pecis" (fol. 439r. 37-39). Since the knight Meligaunt has proven to be traitorous to his lord king, thus violating the standards of chivalric conduct, the castle ceases to be a bastion of his strength. This is directly reflected in that the *representational spaces* of the castle associated with military prowess no longer keep out the attacking enemy. The very gates meant to protect the castle from easy infiltration crumble at the first strike from Lancelot who then proceeds to stand "wrothe oute of mesure [in the inner courte]" (fol. 439v. 13). Meligaunt weakness of character is revealed when he is frightened at the first appearance of Lancelot and allows Guinevere, his captive, the liberty to traverse the spacial boundaries of the castle. If the contention over her body, resulting in the *spacial practice* of her entrapment, is meant to exhibit his knightly prowess by limiting access to her person, then Meligaunt fails in this objective.

The second factor then becomes the fluidity with which Guinevere can move through the castle to speak with Lancelot in the courtyard upon his arrival. Without being able to keep the castle gates from admitting the rescuer, Meligaunt is left only to offer Lancelot “such chere as may be made hym in thy poure castell” (fol. 439v. 6). The *representational space* of the castle is certainly impoverished, for its association with Meligaunt’s knightly identity is based upon the strength of the allegiance it cemented between him and Arthur. Since Meligaunt nullifies this allegiance upon turning traitor, he is violating the symbolic attributes of the castle as a representation of his chivalric virtue, a virtue that is itself violated through the *spacial practice* of the queen’s entrapment. As the castle no longer functions as a *representational space* of Meligaunt’s power-- for in turning traitor he abdicated his right to it-- it likewise fails to keep Guinevere confined within the enclosed, feminine space of her chamber, thus subverting any inherent gender boundaries between this place and the rest of the castle. As a result, Guinevere can easily access the inner courtyard to speak with Lancelot and later take him to “her chambir” to continue their conversation privately (fol. 439r. 2).⁵⁵ The final factor then is the presence of the wounded knights in the queen's room, a fact that subverts the function of this space as an enclosed female quarter. In this instance, Guinevere herself does not wish to have the knights separated from her, for although Malory indicates that the wounded men had their own allotted chambers, the queen “wolde nat suffir her wounded knyghtes to be fro her, but that they were layde in wythdraughtes by hur chambir, upon beddis and paylattes” (fol. 440v. 32-34).⁵⁶ This blurred boundary between the feminine and

⁵⁵ It is notably her chamber even though it is his castle, a reversal of the gender possessive identification found in *Floris and Blancheflour*.

⁵⁶ It is worth noting that the space Guinevere here allots to the knights is a space that would normally be occupied by other women, as may be observed in the case of Vittoria's bedroom at the beginning of this

masculine domain is thus partially Guinevere's doing, for when the figurative boundaries of the castle's *representational space* dissolve due to Meligaunt's treachery, the nature of *spacial practices* likewise undergoes a change, with entrapment now being dictated by the captive rather than the captor.

In contrast, no such feudal relationship between king and vassal exists in *Floris and Blancheflour*. The castle space wherein Blancheflour is entrapped belongs to the Emir alone and is not representative of any external contractual allegiances. In taking possession of Blancheflour, the Emir is not in violation of any knightly virtues and her body, along with the bodies of the other women in the harem, becomes symbolic of his dominion over the castle spaces that entrap them. In accordance with the hitherto uncontested authority of the Emir, his city- castle is described as outwardly impenetrable:

Abouten Babiloine, withouten wene,
Sexti longe milen and tene And
ate walle thar beth ate Seven
sithe twente gate.
Twente toures ther beth inne,
That everich dai cheping is inne;
Nis no dai thourg the yer That
scheping nis therinne plener.
An hondred toures also therto Beth
in the borewe, and somdel mo.
That alderest feblest tour
Wolde kepe an emperour
To comen al ther withinne,
Noither with strengthe ne with ginne.
And thei alle the men that beth ibore
Adden hit up here deth iswore,
Thai scholde winne the mai so sone
As fram the hevene hegh the sonne and mone.
And in the bourh, amide the right, Ther stant

chapter. Gilchrist notes that the rooms adjoined to that of the lady would be set aside for her female servants and the nursery. "Contested Garden," 124.

a riche tour, I thee aplight. A thousand taisen
he his heighe, Woso it bihalt, wid, fer, and
neghe.

And an hondred taises he is wid,
And imaked with mochel prid
Of lim and of marbelston; In
Cristienté nis swich non.
And the morter is maked so wel, Ne
mai no man hit breke with no stel.
And the pomel above the led
Is iwrount with so moche red,
That men ne dorfent anight berne
Neither torche ne lanterne;
Swich a pomel was never bigonne,
Hit schineth anight so adai doth the sonne.
Nou beth ther inne that riche toure
Four and twenty maidenes boure (587-622).⁵⁷

The given description paints a formidable impression of these structures, and, through their correlation to the kingly identity of the Emir, a grandiose impression of his power. Anyone wishing to reach the tower of the captive maidens first must contend with the seventy-mile-long wall surrounding the city and over a hundred towers-- the weakest of which is said to be fully capable of protecting a king against a full military assault (588 and 595-599). If that is not enough, the tower itself is over a thousand feet high and made of lime, marble and mortar so strong that no army would be able to get through it to the prized maidens who are kept within (607-611). The result is an astounding impression of

⁵⁷ The passage describing the Emir's castle is from the Kooper rather than the Vries edition. The passage herein cited is found in the A manuscript of the romance and is the most detailed one out of the four extant manuscripts. The other three versions, all found in the Vries edition, vary significantly in length and description of the city-castle of the Emir. Some notable differences are found in the C manuscript, wherein the tower harem is surrounded by a crystal wall. A crystal wall is also present in the other versions; however, it surrounds the harem garden rather than the tower itself, which is already at the center of the castle and the city. Also, the C manuscript counts forty-four maidens entrapped in the tower, as opposed to twenty-four.

strength which reflects favorably on the *representational space* of the Emir's castle as a symbol of his masculine and kingly authority.

This is in sharp contrast to the weak image of Meligaunt's castle that is depicted in *Morte Darthur*. In part this is because Malory does not engage in lengthy descriptions of any castles in his work, aside from noting briefly some specific anatomical features common to all castles, such as the gates, the towers, the courtyards and so on.⁵⁸ Yet there is a way in which a castle's prominence is established in Malory, even without delving into elaborate detail on the scale found in *Floris and Blancheflour*. Namely, this is done through the process of naming. Barry Gaines notes that there are over forty specific castles that are named within the *Morte Darthur*, the names of many of these deriving from French sources. Malory often stops to tell the stories behind the names of these castles, thus drawing attention to their inherent symbolism by describing the *spacial practices* that lie behind their *representational spaces*. Gaines gives “Castell Plewre” as one example of this, which Malory attests means the “wepyng castell” in French.⁶⁸ The reason behind this name is the odious custom of the castle by which any knight riding by it with a lady must fight with the lord of the castle. As such, this custom of fighting becomes the *spacial practice* of this particular castle, whose name of “Castell Plewre” is reflective of its *representational space* denoting sadness and weeping. Malory thus shows an awareness of the symbolic nature of castles and uses their names and explanatory stories to draw attention to their inherent symbolisms. Conversely, if a castle's name is reflective of its symbolic attributes, so too must be a castle's lack of name. By this token,

⁵⁸ Barry Gaines, “Malory's Castles in Text and Illustration” in *The Medieval Castle: Romance and Reality*, edited by Kathryn Reyerson and Faye Powe (Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1984), 217.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 216.

the fact that Meligaunt's castle does not bear a name may well signal that as a *representational space* this castle is indicative of Meligaunt's none-existent chivalric virtue. This lack of knightly integrity is a weakness of Meligaunt's character and it is conveyed by the castle's evident absence of functional defenses.⁵⁹ This was earlier proven with the ease with which Lancelot broke through this castle's gate and passed the gate keeper to gain access to Guinevere. Meligaunt tainted his chivalric masculinity through his treasonous act and therefore the castle gifted unto him by Arthur is no longer reflective of knightly prowess and cannot withstand full frontal assault. Even the gatekeeper is accommodatingly weak in this tale, his neck breaking in half from a mere strike of Lancelot's gauntlet.

In comparison, there is the intimidating gate-keeper protecting the gates to the maiden's tower in *Floris and Blancheflour*. He is said to be

no fol ne no coward;
Yif ther cometh ani man
Withinne that ilche barbican,
But hit be bi his leve
He wille him bothe bete and reve⁶⁰ (634-638).

⁵⁹ In regard to defenses of Meligaunt's castle, Gaines proposes something interesting using specific excerpts from this episode, wherein he combines the quotes "the castell where sir Mellyagaunt abydith" with [Lancelot] "avoyeded hys horse and wente on foote, but there were so many dychys and hedgys betwyxte hem and hym that he myght nat meddyll with none of hem" (217). The combination of these citations suggests that as Lancelot was approaching this castle he had to abandon his horse in order to walk around the ditches that protected the castle. However, in reality the two excerpts are small parts of completely unrelated quotations. The former excerpt is a part of a statement by Lancelot sending a message to a fellow knight to come after him and not stop until he reaches the "castell where sir Mellyagaunt abydith." The latter occurs on a subsequent folio after Lancelot's horse is shot by archers and he is forced to proceed on foot through ditches until he comes upon a cart, which takes him the rest of the way to the castle. Gaine's reading thus suggests that the ditches are a part of the defenses around the castle, which is historically plausible yet is not directly evidenced by the text itself.

⁶⁰ The MED gives one definition of the verb *reve* as "to cut off (a bodily member)," which in this context can refer to castration.

Curiously, Kooper's version identifies the term *reve* as denoting castration and, therefore, the punishment which the gate-keeper administers to those who would come into the forbidden space of the maiden's tower is to castrate them, thus depriving them of a defining part of the male anatomy. This further attests to the authoritative power of the Emir, represented by the formidable depiction of his castle, as anyone seeking to undermine his masculine prowess by illicitly infiltrating the castle space himself risks ultimate emasculation. Thus, the tower is not only physically impenetrable, it is also physically destructive to would be suitors of any of the Emir's brides. Floris' quest to reunite with Blancheflour thus takes on another dimension, for he now must figure out a way to get past the gate-keeper without losing an integral part of his manhood in the process. His friend, Dares, suggests a cunning plan to the young man, telling him to pretend to be a craftsman examining the tower and thus befriend the gate-keeper. The men should then engage in a game of chess, with Floris letting the gate-keeper win a golden cup, thus endearing the man to him and investing his help in getting inside the forbidden tower.

Whereas Lancelot's method of infiltrating Meligaunt's castle is brute force, Floris enters the tower by means of deception, as the gate-keeper's plan for him involves hiding inside a basket of flowers, which would then be carried by the maidens inside the tower and into Blancheflour's chambers:

He wist it was the maydons wylle.
To lepes he lete of floures fylle;
That was the best reed as him thought thoo
Florys in that oon lep to doo.
Twoo maydens the lepe bore;
So heuy charged never they wore,

And bade God yeve hem euyl fyne, To
mony floures he dide therynne. To
Blaunchefloures chamber they shuld tee;
They yede to another, and let that be.
They shuld have gon to Blauncheflour,
And yede to swete Clarys boure (737-748).⁶¹

The effect is nearly humorous, as the effeminate Floris ends up gaining the tower in a rather unknighthly fashion, concealed among flowers in a basket carried in by women. In fact, Floris' behavior throughout the romance is passive as he relies on others to figure out how to get to Blancheflour for him, whilst all he does is weep and swoon at the thought of losing her.⁶² He meets with a series of characters who give him advice and redirect him to someone who could best help him. In the end, the best plan of action is provided by the gate-keeper, yet it is executed by the captive maidens themselves-- although they are oblivious to it. In a way, the gate-keeper had performed his duty of castration, albeit it is not a physical one. Floris does not possess the qualities of a knight⁷³ and, although he is a sexual rival, his presence does not denote a chivalric competition. As such, even though Floris succeeds in entering the castle space, the castle itself, unlike that of Meligaunt, is not damaged, and neither is the Emir's authority. Due to this fact, the literal threat of castration does little to hinder Floris, as he effectively castrates himself figuratively by remaining passive while others actively come up with strategies for him to infiltrate the tower.

⁶¹ *Floris and Blancheflur*, De Vries, manuscript E.

⁶² Kooper remarks on the feminine quality of Floris' displays of emotion in a footnote to line 690.

⁷³ Nor is he referred to as one by the text.

The last of this series of helpers is Clarice who, upon discovering Floris in the basket of flowers accidentally brought to her chamber, realizes who he must be and brings him to Blancheflour's bower, thus orchestrating the final stage leading to their illicit love affair. Floris' dependency on others in gaining access to his lover is further accentuated in this episode, for he needs Clarice to create the enclosed space where the two can consummate their love, thus giving her agency over his sexual fulfilment:

To on bedde she hath hem ibrowt,
That was of silk and sendal wrought.
Thai sette hem there wel softe adoun, And
Clarice drowgh the courtyn roun.
Tho bigan thai to clippe and kisse,
And made joie and mochele blisse (892-897).

Regardless of the fact that Floris' entry into the castle's restricted female quarters is done through deception rather than by knightly force, the young man still finds himself in the forbidden bedroom of his beloved. The tough city walls and the height and strength of the maiden's tower did not serve their allotted purpose of prohibiting access to the women segregated within the female quarter of the Emir's domain. Herein this story becomes similar to the episode recounted at the beginning of the chapter; the tower meant to isolate a contested female body and limit sexual access to it to the use of one exclusive contender becomes, through a subversion of *spacial practice*, a setting for an illicit love affair. Thus, the Emir's patriarchal authority, if not his martial prowess, is undermined since by legal right Blancheflour is his intended bride, or potential concubine, whom Floris manages to bed within "his bour," the isolated harem space which was supposed to keep her physical body for the Emir alone.

Incidentally, Floris and Blancheflour nearly meet an end similar to that of Vittoria and Troiano Savelli, for, although Clarice initially succeeds in keeping the affair secret from the Emir, the two lovers are eventually discovered by a chamberlain:

Into hir bour he his icome,
And stant bifore hire bed,
And find thar twai, neb to neb,
Neb to neb, an mouth to mouth:
Wel sone was that sorewe couth.
Into the tour up he steigh,
And saide his louerd al that he seigh (979-985).

Caught in the middle of the illicit act, Floris and Blancheflour should rightfully be doomed and indeed the Emir is at first so wrathful that he wishes to put the two lovers to death. Arguably, the killing of the lovers should serve to undo the subversive effect Floris and Blancheflour's affair had on the *representational space* of the Emir's grandiose castle as it would restore his authority over the female body inhabiting it while simultaneously punishing the male body that violated "his bour."⁶³ The entrapment thus experienced by Blancheflour would culminate in an ultimate display of power over her, and by extension Floris', sexuality. However, due to a member of the Emir's council taking pity on the lovers, the miraculous happens and this transgression and the symbolic violation of the harem's sanctity is pardoned (1148-1159). Floris' rather unheroic and badly planned attempt at a rescue is excused; Blancheflour is able to get away with giving up her prized virginity to someone other than her husband to-be. Although by subverting the *spacial practice* of entrapment within the bower-harem Floris wins the contested body of

⁶³ In the Savelli case, the husband is said to have made a comment about restoring honor to their family through the killing of his wife. Since he is the head of his household, her main affront was against him and as such in restoring honor to the family, he primarily restores his own.

Blancheflour, the Emir comes to see that there is “litel pris” in slaying children (1152).

Further, upon hearing Floris’ tale of how he came to be in the maiden’s tower, the assembled crowd laughs, ensuring that this entry into enclosed space becomes viewed as ridiculous rather than militaristically threatening (1177).

On the other hand, Lancelot forcibly breaking inside Meligaunt’s castle gates poses a definitively violent risk to the treasonous knight. As has previously been proposed, Meligaunt’s castle essentially fails to act in accordance with the *representational space* attributed to it due to Meligaunt’s failure to act in a manner worthy of a knight. Hence, the physical and symbolic boundaries of the castle space do not function as they ought and, because of this, Lancelot can break through the gate, Guinevere is able to fluidly cross between masculine and feminine spaces, and the wounded knights come to inhabit an enclosed space adjacent to the queen’s chamber, which is usually reserved for female servants. However, one more *spacial practice* takes place in the castle later that night which denotes a subversion of its *representational space*-- namely, a tryst between Lancelot and Guinevere. What is interesting to note in this instance is that Meligaunt’s masculine authority had been undermined long before the liaison takes place as, in fact, he effectively subverted it himself through his treachery. As such, if the castle wherein the meeting of the lovers takes place is not reflective of Meligaunt’s knightly prowess, then whose authority is being undermined by the affair?

The answer is Arthur’s. Meligaunt came by the castle as a gift from the king himself, by which token the castle is to act as a symbol of both men’s authority- one knightly and one kingly. Hence, if by breaking peace with Arthur Meligaunt abdicated his rights to the castle and all its symbolic associations, then the castle’s ownership should be considered as exclusively Arthur’s. This reasoning implies that Guinevere’s chamber should act

similarly to her chamber at Westminster, wherein direct sexual access to her was prohibited to any but the king. As such, the tryst which takes place between Lancelot and the queen is treasonous both because of its adulterous nature, as well as, its subversion of Arthur's kingly authority through the manipulation of a castle space which is meant to reflect his power and keep Guinevere effectively isolated from would-be lovers by keeping her enclosed in secluded quarters. A queen and a knight having an adulterous relationship was a treason punishable by death, which is one reason why Meligaunt's abduction of her violates his contractual relationship with Arthur. Yet, although Guinevere avoids a sexual relationship with Meligaunt, she does have one with Lancelot and, were it to be revealed, it would openly challenge the king's authority.⁶⁴

The nature of Guinevere's entrapment in Meligaunt castle was fluid from the beginning due to the inadequate role of her captor. Yet, even as she chose to bring her knights into the antechamber outside her room, she thus effectively entrapped herself between them on one side and a barred window on the other, which should have kept anyone from gaining access to her. However, Lancelot's way is not to be barred by such trivialities:

Than Sir Launcelot toke hys swerde in hys honde and prevaly wente to the place where he had spyeid a ladder tofore-hande; and that he toke undir his arme and bare hit thorow the gardyne and sette hit up to the wyndow- and anone the Quene was there redy to mete hym. And then they made their complayntes eyther to other of many dyverce thyngis.

And than Sir Launcelot wyshed that he myght have comyn in to her (fol.440v. 42-48)

“Than shall I prove my myght,” seyde Sir Luncelot, “for youre love.” And then he sette hys hondis upon the barrys of iron and pulled at them with suche a myght

⁶⁴ McCracken discusses this in relation to Guinevere and Lancelot, as well as, Tristan and Iseut. The revelation of the affair results in a political destabilization at court, wherein different factions can now compete for power. McCracken, *The Romance of Adultery*, 91-95.

that he braste hem clene oute of the stone wallys- and therewithall one of the barres of iron kutte the brawne of hys hondys throughout, to the bone- and than he lepe into the chambir of the Quene (fol.440v. 8-13)

So, to passe uppon thys tale, Sir Launcelot wente to bedde with the Quene and toke no force of hys hurte honde, but toke his plesaunce and hys lykynge untyll hit was the dawnyng of the day (fol.441r. 15-18).

Whereas Floris is earlier depicted as passively hiding in a flower basket to gain entry to the enclosed space wherein his lover is entrapped, Lancelot relies fully on his physical prowess and knightly strength to pull out the iron bars in the queen's window. In much the same fashion, he earlier ripped asunder the gates to the castle. His aggression results in the physical maiming of the anatomical components of the castle space, which is in turn reflective of his ruinous effect on the regal authority of king Arthur. As stated by Andrew Cowell in regard to the function of castle walls in medieval literature, "just as in ritual gift exchanges, where the item exchanged occupies a primarily symbolic role, and is imbued with the persona of the giver, so the wall becomes imbued (by its very breaking) with the same persona."⁶⁵ The gift of the castle to Meligaunt by Arthur is one kind of ritual gift exchange and, as such, is infused with Arthur's kingly persona. Hence, the breaking of the defensive elements of the castle-- for gates and bars, just as walls, are defensive elements-- resonates with a figurative breaking of Arthur's authority. By this token, the physical destruction of the castle's various anatomical parts correlates directly to the undermining of the king's power by the treasonous *spacial practice* of adultery. It is worth noting that this is the only time in the romance that Malory specifically states

⁶⁵ Andrew Cowell, "The Subjectivity of Space: Walls and Castles in *La Prise d'Orange*", in *Locating the Middle Ages: The Spaces and Places of Medieval Culture* eds. Julian Weiss and Sarah Salih (London: King's College Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 2012), 187.

that a sexual union between the two has taken place, and this occurs in a section immediately preceding the final book wherein the affair is finally exposed, quickly followed by the demise of king Arthur and his court.⁶⁶ As such this ruined castle foreshadows the future demise of Camelot after the affair of Guinevere and Lancelot is finally revealed, destabilizing the structure of Arthur's court.

In conclusion, both romances recount tales in which the *representational space* of the castle, associated both with feminine inaccessibility and knightly or kingly authority, subverts those symbolisms when the *spacial practice* taking place within these spaces directly undermines these figurative connotations. The preliminary and normative action would be the entrapment of the women within a secluded, feminine space of a castle, which asserts the authoritative force of the men who put them there. However, the infiltration of these secluded and restricted castle spaces by the women's lovers changes the setting of the action from one of entrapment to one of romantic enclosure. This change subverts the castle's function of denying direct access to the women and limiting sexual contention over their bodies. At the same time, this *spacial practice* of infiltration undermines the authority of the rulers for whom the castles should serve as a theatrical display of power. In the case of *Floris and Blancheflour*, although Floris puts in question the Emir's ability to control physical access to his harem, his affair with Blancheflour does not pose the risk of political destabilization. Blancheflour is not yet married to the Emir, nor does Floris belong to his court, thus not characterizing their actions as an

⁶⁶ In this section, Meligaunt accuses the queen of adultery after finding Lancelot's blood on her sheets and, although guilty, Guinevere is cleared of the charge. By contrast, in the following section, Agravain catches Lancelot and Guinevere in the queen's chambers and accuses both of treason, which this time is proved. Malory does not indicate a sexual union to have occurred at the time of Agravain's accusation, however the mere presence of Lancelot in the queen's internal chambers is enough for the conviction to occur. This, in turn, signals the importance of the castle's internal chambers in barring sexual access to the queen.

ultimately destructive act of treason. This is exemplified by the fact that Floris does no physical damage to the Emir's castle when he sneaks into it, leaving intact its defenses and outward manifestations of strength. Hence, the Emir's authority, challenged by Floris' entry into a restricted castle space, is restored just as much by pardoning the couple as it would be in killing them, as he would be, in either case, asserting his power over the physical bodies of the two lovers.

The same cannot be said of Lancelot and Guinevere, whose affair quite literally results in physical damages to the structure of the castle, thus irreversibly maiming its *representational space*. This is exemplified by Lancelot's vain attempt to fix the window he had broken when gaining access to the entrapped Guinevere: “he toke hys leve and departed at the wyndowe, and put hit togydir as well as he myght agayne” (fol.441r. 2021). However, the subversive quality of their illicit love affair cannot be undone. Lancelot trying to put the bars of the broken window in again is reflective of the way in which he tries to make amends with Arthur after the affair is exposed in the final section of the book. Once the authoritative function of *representational space* manifests itself in the physical form of the maimed castle, this function can no longer be restored. In the same way, the prominence of Arthur as a king can never be restored when the affair of his queen and favourite knight is made public knowledge. If a castle is a seat of a lord’s power, then it is also a figurative representation thereof, for a castle is the “product of lordship.”⁶⁷ Conversely, lordship is the product of the castle, for it is a distinct masculine identity played out within the setting of a castle space that contributes to the

⁶⁷ Liddiard suggests that it was a social expectation for a lord to own and live within the fortified castle, as it was representative of status. The building of castles was done precisely for the purpose of living up to the standard associated with social rank.

representational space associated with lordly authority. Lordship is dependent on the understanding that the lord has superiority over his vassals, an understanding that contributes to their maintenance of *spacial practices* that uphold the *representational space* of the castle as a symbol of his authority. *Spacial practices*, such as adulterous liaisons and treasons, alter the meaning of the *representational space* of the castle, as they constitute familial disharmonies and acts of rebellion detrimental to the honor of the lord and his exercise of lordship.⁷⁹

Robert Liddiard, *Castles in Context: Power, Symbolism and Landscape, 1066-1500* (Oxford: Windgather Press, 2012), 38.

⁷⁹ Leonie V. Hicks, “Magnificent Entrances and Undignified Exits: Chronicling the Symbolism of Castle Space in Normandy” in *Journal of Medieval History* 35 (2009): 52-69.

Chapter 3: Disguised Kings and Contested Sovereignty in Castle Spaces

Access to women's bodies entrapped within castle spaces directly correlated to chivalric contentions of power amongst men, a power that was displayed or challenged through the infiltration of a restricted enclosure. By placing a woman within the confines of a privatized castle space, a lord displayed his authority by ensuring that the female body belonged to him alone. This was accomplished through the *spacial practice* of entrapment within specific castle spaces, usually bowers or private chambers, that were *representational spaces* of seclusion and privacy often evocative of chastity. However, the infiltration of these castle spaces by rival males changed the nature of the *representational spaces* associated with them and, by extension, undermined the authority of the lord for whom the entire castle served as a seat of power. The texts of the previous chapter exemplify this when the Emir and Meligaunt attempt to entrap Blancheflour and Guinevere within their castles, neither of which ultimately prevents the ardour-filled male lovers from coming inside. Whereas in *Floris and Blancheflour* this transgression is not politically destabilizing, in *Morte Darthur* it is, for it foreshadows the chaos which ensues upon the revelation of their affair. This destabilizing nature of the latter is due to the relationship of a queen's sexual integrity and the sovereignty of the king, which becomes challenged when the queen is accused of treasonous adultery, as is explained by Peggy MacCracken.⁶⁸ Exclusive access the queen's body is integral to the concept of kingship and violations of kingly authority can be observed when his ability to

⁶⁸ MacCracken, *The Romance of Adultery*, 53.

possess it is somehow hindered. Such an instance is seen to happen in the Breton lay *Sir Orfeo* dating to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century.⁶⁹ *Sir Orfeo* is a romance of the mythic King Orfeo, whose wife Herodis is abducted by a Fairy King and who then exiles himself from his kingdom until his eventual rescue of the queen from an Otherworldly castle. The body of Herodis becomes the site of contest between two kings when Orfeo's sovereignty is challenged by her abduction from the private space of his castle. Orfeo's ability to reclaim the right to his kingship is, therefore, dependent upon gaining access to Herodis, now forcibly entrapped within the castle space of another king. A similar situation is presented in Layamon's *Brut*, an early thirteenth-century text based on Wace's AngloNorman *Roman de Brut*, when king Uther Pendragon tricks his vassal's wife, Igraine, into sleeping with him upon first entering the enclosed space of Tintagel castle.⁷⁰ The major difference between the two narratives is that in *Sir Orfeo*, the entrapped Herodis is king Orfeo's rightful wife and queen, while Uther's desired damsels, Igraine, is the wife of Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall. Uther's authority is blemished when the Duke of Cornwall leaves the banquet hall of the king without permission, rebutting the former's command to return. For this reason, Uther must infiltrate Gorlois' fortress and lay claim to the body of his wife entrapped within as a means of avenging the insult done to him in his hall. In doing so, Uther regains his right to kingly power which, like Orfeo's, is dependent upon gaining access to an entrapped, female body locked within a castle. Whereas contention over the female body is at the core of Chapter 2 as well, here

⁶⁹ *Sir Orfeo*, edited by Walter Hoyt French and Charles Brockway Hale, in *Middle English Verse Romances*, edited by Donald B. Sands (New York: Holt, Rinehard and Winston Inc., 1966): 185.

⁷⁰ Layamon, *Arthur*, edited by W.R. J. Barron and S. C. Weinberg in *The Arthurian Section of Layamon's Brut* (lines 9229-14297) (Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies, Exeter: Short Run Press Ltd., 2001), xii-xiii.

this contention is used to reinstate masculine sovereignty rather than challenge mere lordly authority.

The preliminary action of both texts too begins within a castle space. In *Sir Orfeo*, Herodis is obducted from an orchard, likely one adjacent to the castle of the royal couple. As stated by O. H. Creighton, the orchard was usually “a plot within or immediately beyond the baily [of the castle],” that is an open space within the parameters of the castle.⁷¹ Enclosed pleasure gardens would also normally be located here. Moreover, Herodis refers to it as “our owhen orchard,” which to her is synonymous with “hom,” and by this token it may be identified as a castle space (138-139).⁷² The orchard may thus be likened to a pleasure garden, a secluded feminine space meant to be a place of peace and leisure. The queen takes only two ladies with her, implying that the orchard is within a distance safe enough for three high ranking ladies to walk to without an entourage. Furthermore, Herodis and her maidens use the orchard in the same way that an internal, female garden would be used, as is indicated by the following lines:

This ich Quen, Dame Heurodis,
Tok two maidens of priis,
And went in an undrentide
To play bi an orchardside- To se
the floures sprede and spring And
to here the foules sing.
They set hem doun all three
Under a fair ympe-tree;
And well sone this fair Quene
Fell on slepe upon the grene (39- 48).⁷³

⁷¹ O.H. Creighton, *Castles and Landscapes: Power, Community and Fortification in Medieval England* (London: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2002), 74.

⁷² *Sir Orfeo*, Sands. All subsequent citations will be from this edition.

⁷³ For comparison one may note the similarity of these lines to the passage in *The Knight's Tale* wherein Emelye is first seen entering the inner garden. Although it is also possible for similar activities to be

The queen and her ladies go out to enjoy the courtly activities of play within the orchard, eventually coming to rest under an “ympe,” or grafted, tree. Such grafted trees were extremely popular amid the nobility of the Middle Ages, becoming notable staples in personal gardens and orchards on private property.⁸⁶ A variety of grafted trees in a garden came to symbolize the power and wealth of the proprietor.⁸⁷ As such, the grafted tree becomes another signifier that the orchard in question is within the boundaries of the castle space specifically belonging to Orfeo and which must be imagined as the logical living place occupied by Orfeo and Herodis.⁸⁸

The preliminary appearance of the Fairy King in Herodis' dream then occurs in this space, which embodies the qualities of female seclusion, peace and tranquility. This space in turn exists within the broader boundaries of the castle inhabited by Orfeo which becomes the *representational space* associated with his power as a king. The grafted tree, a part of the castle's landscape, is likewise a symbol of this same kingly power and is a

⁸⁶Judith A. Peraino, *Giving Voice to Love: Song and Self Expression from the Troubadours to Guillaume de Machaut* (London: Oxford University Press, 2011), 212.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸One of the only descriptive elements pertaining to the nature of this potential castle comes earlier in the poem when Orfeo's city, identified in this version as both Thrace and Winchester, is said to have “nobel defens,” that is fortifications. Dominique Battles also notes this obvious lack of description of Orfeo's castle and property, especially with comparison to the ample descriptions of the ones belonging to the Fairy King, in her article “Sir Orfeo and the English Identity.” Battles states that this lack of architectural details denoting a castle suggests a Saxon-style fortified hall rather than a castle, as there is only a reference to the word *halle* in line 401 to describe it. She then argues that the association of Orfeo's kingdom with Winchester is a deliberate attempt to give Orfeo a distinct, Anglo-Saxon identity, as this was the place from whence West-Saxon kings ruled. There is evidence that there was originally an urban palace in the style of a Saxon-hall in this city and, by this token, Battles suggests that the nature of Orfeo's dwelling is more akin to this type of urban palace, as opposed to the obviously privatized castles of the Fairy King, whom she associates with the Anglo-Normans. However, the image of the orchard and the grafted tree counters this supposition. In her book, *The Medieval Garden*, Silvia Landsberg states that orchards were protected by various boundaries such as moats and walls, features that do not correspond to an Anglo-

enjoyed outside the immediate confines of the castle space, as in the case of Guinevere going Maying in the forest. Here, however, the near proximity is suggested by Herodis' obvious lack of escort.

Saxon hall but parallels Creighton's placement of the orchard within the bailey of the castle. The Motte-and-Bailey design of the castle was, in turn, introduced by the Anglo-Normans, of which Liddiard writes "the Normans can... be credited with introducing...the motte and baily castle... [which] consisted of an artificial mound of earth [motte], with which was associated some kind of tower or superstructure, and usually at least one enclosure (the baily)," *Castles in Context*, 17. In addition, grafted trees were a staple of private gardens of nobility, as has been examined by Peraino, which were expensive and needed expert gardeners for regular maintenance. As such, it is not likely that Anglo-Saxon halls would have either orchards or grafted trees akin to the one described by the text.

Dominique, Battles, "Sir Orfeo and the English Identity," *Studies in Philology* 107, no.2 (2010): 190-195.
Silvia Lansberg, *The Medieval Garden* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2003), 17-22.

part of the theatrical display of that power. It is under this tree that the queen first dreams of the Fairy King, who then spirits her away to show her his own kingdom, of which his "palais," "castels" and "tours" are all intrinsic parts (133-135). In a sense, Herodis is being taken away from a space symbolizing the kingly attributes of her husband and being shown places and spaces which supplant them by exhibiting the kingly power of another. Her abduction the following day is thus a complex insult to the very nature of Orfeo's kingship, as it illustrates the unlawful infiltration of a private, feminine, space which ought to be protected by the militaristic and masculine construct of the castle to which it belongs. Seen from this perspective, the lack of the actual mention of this castle as a whole is even more keenly felt, for its inability to protect the secluded space of the orchard is akin to non-existence. For this purpose, it is possible to assume that the lack of description of a castle space may be reflective of Orfeo's lack of power as a king, which prohibits the function of the castle in accordance with its *representational space* and, as such, does not warrant a noteworthy *representation of space*.

As has been shown in the Meligaunt episode in *Morte Darthur*, the inability of a castle to adhere to the ideals of its *representational space* directly correlates to the nullification of the corresponding masculine authority of its master. It comes as no surprise then, that Orfeo is unable to stop the kidnapping of Herodis even with an armed force:

And Orfeo hath his armes y-nome
And wele ten hundred knighthes with him,
Ich y-armed stout and grim;
And with the Quen wenten he
Right unto that ympe- tree.
They made sheltrom in ich a side
And said they wold there abide
And die ther everichon
Er the Quen shuld fram hem gon.
Ac yete amiddes hem full right The
Quen was oway y-twight,
With fairy forth y-nome (159-169).

Although the knights gather under the grafted tree and form a defensive battle formation, their display of masculine prowess does not amount to anything and Herodis is lost. As such, Orfeo's kingship, just like the grafted tree itself, is ornamental at best. Further, as the grafted tree is supposed be symbolic of his power in a similar way that a castle is, the kidnapping of his queen at its location is a double blow to Orfeo's authority, for it subverts the *representational space* of the orchard as a castle space and the symbolism of the grafted tree. Following the abduction, Orfeo retreats into his chamber where he "swooned op on the ston" and "made swiche diol and swiche mon" (173-174). Orfeo is keenly aware of the damage done to the idea of his sovereignty, and as such, takes himself into the private domain of his chamber wherein he can express his grief away from the public spaces of the castle whose *representational spaces* have now been subverted to mock his ineffectuality.

The story of Uther's conquest of Igraine in Layamon likewise commences with an insult to the king's authority. Uther Pendragon, having come back to London after his military exploits have ended with success, calls all his noble subjects and their families to

celebrate Easter with him. After religious functions have been observed, feasting commences in the king's hall:

Mid muchele godnæsse; þe king iherde mæsse. Gorlois
þe eorl of Cornwale; & mid him cnihtes uale. muche
blisse wes i þan tun; mid Vðer kinge Pendragun.
Þa þe mæsse wes isungen; to halle heo þrungen. bemen
heo bleowen; bordes heo brædden.
al þat folc æt & dronc. & blisse heom wes imong (9239-9244).⁷⁴

Although, as in the case of *Sir Orfeo*, there is no description of a specific castle, there is direct evidence that the setting is Uther's hall, which is a castle space and thus bears associations with his kingly authority. The hall, or the open and communal part of the castle, was a space where the power and authority of the proprietor were displayed and acted out accordingly and, as such, often became the symbol of “male lordship in its ceremonial guise.”⁷⁵ The feast too is a display of royal power through the “celebration of life grounded in religious observance,” a deliberate *spacial practice* meant to reflect favorably on the king’s character in front of his royal peers.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ “With great devotion, the king heard mass, and Gorlois, the earl of Cornwall, and many warriors with him. Great was the joy in the town at King Uther’s presence. When the mass had been sung, they thronged to the hall; trumpets were sounded, tables were spread; the whole company ate and drank and there was joy among them.”

Layamon, *Arthur*, Barron and Weinberg. All subsequent citations will be from this edition.

⁷⁵ Leonie V. Hicks, “Magnificent Entrances and Undignified Exits.” See also Philip Dixon’s “Donjon of Knaresborough.”

⁷⁶ Whereas Byrne talks about the feast in relation to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, her points about the connectivity of nobility of kingly character and the courtly feast that commemorates both life and religion are applicable here. Uther has just returned from a military exploit, and wishes to celebrate his victories, which he does by throwing an elaborate Easter celebration culminating with a feast in his hall. Both factors contribute to the notion that the feast in the hall is a deliberate exhibition of Uther’s nobility as a king. Aisling Byrne, “Arthur’s Refusal to Eat: Ritual and Control in the Romance Feast,” *Journal of Medieval History* 37, no. 1 (2011): 65.

During the feast, the king is on the high table at the dias end of the hall,⁷⁷ a strategic location where he may be seen clearly by his peers and Gorlois, along with his wife, share his table:

Þer sæt Vðer þe king; an his hæh setle.
forn aȝan him Gorlois; hende cniht ful iwis. þe
eorl of Cornwale; mid aðele his wife. Þa heo
weoren alle iseten; eorles to heore mete. þe
king sende his sonde; to Igærne þere hende
Gorlois eorles wif; wifmone alre hendest.
Ofte he hire lokede on; & leitede mid eȝene (9245-9251).⁷⁸

With the high table being in full view of the assembly, the drama which ensues is clearly observed by everyone present. Layamon appears to be criticizing the actions of the king when he states that, “næs þe king noht swa wis; ne swa ȝære-witele/ þat imong his duȝeþe; his þoht cuðe dernen (9255-9256).⁷⁹ This line directly calls into question the rationality of the king who places his political alliance in jeopardy by making a public exhibition of his amorous feelings for a powerful noble's wife.⁹⁵ In this sense then, Uther shows weakness of character as a ruler, which directly impacts the *representational space* of the hall and the *spacial practice* of the feast, as they are displays of his nobility.

⁷⁷ Johnson, *Beyond the Castle Gate*, 78-79.

⁷⁸ “There sat King Uther in his seat of honour; directly opposite him Gorlois, the earl of Cornwall, a truly valiant warrior, sat with his gracious wife. When the nobles were all seated at their meal, the king sent his respects to the fair Ygerne, the wife of Earl Gorlois, the fairest of all women. He looked at her often, flashing glances from his eyes.”

⁷⁹ “The king was not so prudent nor so quick-witted that he could conceal his feelings from his followers.”

⁹⁵Not only are the king's actions politically precarious, Rosemary Morris also points out that they are uncourtly in her article “Uther and Igerne: A Study in Uncourtly Love.” Whereas the Anglo-Norman Wace attempts to veil the affair in a semblance of courtliness by making Uther first fall in love with Igraine through hearsay of her virtues and thus becoming akin to a courtly pining lover, Layamon's Uther is lustful. Morris stresses that since that which is considered courtly love aught to be a secretive affair, it should be very subtly handled. As such, Uther's obvious favoritism and gestures done in plain view of his subjects would be an affront to courtly sensibilities.

Rosemary Morris, “Uther and Igerne: A study in Uncourtly Love,” in *Arthurian Literature IV*, ed. Richard Barber (Exeter: Short Run Press Ltd., 1985), 73-80.

Instead they become evocative of his moral failure and as such a power reversal in the feasting hall is to be expected when Gorlois, angered by the king's obvious advances towards Igraine, hastily storms off with his retinue of knights.⁸⁰

With the high table being in direct view of the rest of the king's hall, the abrupt rise and exit of people without the direct dismissal of the king would have a dramatic effect on the crowd and be an insulting blow to the king's authority. Uther believes this to be so when he sends messengers commanding Gorlois to return:

& nom him forð-rihtes; twælf wise cnihtes.
& sende after Gorlois; gumenene ældere. and beden hine an
hiȝinge; cumen to þan kinge. & don þan kinge god riht; &
beon icnowen of his pliht. þat he ha[f]de þene king iscend; &
from his borde wes iwende.
he and his cnihtes; mid muchele vn-rihte.
for þe king him wæs glad wið; & for he hailede in his
wif. & ȝif he nalde aȝein cumen; & his gult beon
icnawen; þe king him wold after; and don al his mahten.
binimen him al his lond; and his seoluer & his gold (9262-9271).⁸¹

Uther cunningly glosses over his own insult to Gorlois, passing off his lustful advances as signs of respect toward the Duke of Cornwall himself. He then emphasizes the insult

⁸⁰ Wace and Geoffrey of Monmouth both offer comparable descriptions of Gorlois' sudden flight from the feasting hall. In Wace it is referred to as a "shameful and disgraceful deed," while Monmouth describes it as an "insult." In all instances, although it is Uther's affection that is adulterous in nature, it is the infraction of the duke against the king that is accentuated as the greater offense, evidently due to its public nature. This justifies the notion that Gorlois' abrupt leaving is perceived as an insult primarily because of its public nature.

Wace, *Roman de Brut: A History of the British*, ed. and trans J. Weiss (Exeter Medieval English Texts and Studies, Exeter: Short Run Press Ltd, 1999), 217.

Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the King's of Britain*, translated by Michael A. Faletra (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2008), 158.

⁸¹ "[Uther] immediately summoned twelve prudent knights and sent them after Gorlois, that leader of men, and commanded him to come quickly to the king, and submit to the king and acknowledge his fault, that he had insulted the king and departed from his table, he and his knights, most improperly since the king was pleased with him and had drunk a toast to his wife; and if he would not return and acknowledge his guilt, the king would pursue him and do all within his power, would deprive him of all his land and his silver and his gold."

done to his own person in the form of Gorlois departing “from his borde.” In order to appease the king and restore the sanctity of the hall as the ceremonial place designated to display the power of the ruler, Gorlois must return and admit his mistake and ask forgiveness. If this is not done, Uther threatens to come after him with a force and take away his properties, thus reasserting his right to kingly power and re-establish his authority by means of warfare. Loftily, the duke responds by telling the king “at Tintaieol he mai me finden,” thus making his insult final. If Uther should desire to avenge himself and his honor, he must first defeat Gorlois in his own castle fortress, the symbolic seat of the duke's own authority. Uther, in turn, wastes no time in pursuing the duke and avenging the insult.

In contrast to this is the passive reaction of Orfeo, who, instead of actively seeking to restore his authority, chooses to hand over his kingdom to his steward whilst he goes “into wilderness” and lives “ther ever-more/ with wilde bestes in holtes hore” (188-190). In Orfeo's defense, his military prowess has already proven ineffectual against the magic of the Fairy King. However, he never contemplates for a second that Herodis might be rescued and, as such, his self-inflicted exile indicates his understanding that the loss of his kingly authority makes him unfit to be a king.⁸² Orfeo's abdication is indefinite and, quite possibly, permanent, as the harper king does not have a particular plan of action except isolation from civilization, although he refrains from having the parliament name

⁸² It is quite possible that abdication is the only safe route left to him, as suggested by Oren Falk in “Son of Orfeo: Kingship and Compromise in a Middle English Romance.” Falk argues that Orfeo, having suffered both a personal defeat and a double public humiliation in the form of Herodis' initial madness and later abduction, would be faced with an increasingly tense political situation which would be recognizable to the poem's audience due to the contemporary drama surrounding the reign of Edward II. As such, not only does Orfeo himself recognize the blow to his kingly status, but so would the members of his court. Oren Falk, “The Son of Orfeo: Kingship and Compromise in a Middle English Romance,” *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 30, no. 2 (2000): 253.

a new king until they know him to be dead.⁸³ Having thus left his final instructions, Orfeo stays true to his word, leaving for the woods where he lives for ten years, finding solace only in playing his harp. Eventually, and seemingly by accident, a way to regain his kingship presents itself when he sees Herodis in the company of a fairy hunting party:

To a levedy he was y-come,
Biheld and hath wele undernome
And seth by all things that it is
His owhen queen, Dam Herodis.
Yern he biheld hir, and she him eke,
As noither to other a word no speke (295-300).

There is a distinct moment of recognition by both parties during which both Orfeo and Herodis appear dumbfounded at this unexpected reunion. The feelings behind their gazes do not escape notice by the members of the fairy hunting party and Herodis is once more whisked away-- the Fairy King does not wish to make reclaiming Herodis an easy feat, since it is important that Orfeo prove himself worthy of recovering first his wife and then his kingdom.

That the Fairy King wishes for Orfeo to follow is evident from the fact that the entourage surrounding Herodis leaves an obvious trail for the king. As has been mentioned earlier in the poem, the fairies possess magic to make a person disappear without a trace and leave no evidence of where he or she had gone. If they had wanted to keep Herodis from Orfeo forever, they could, arguably, whisk her away by magic once

⁸³ Falk argues that this is a predetermined maneuver in which Orfeo isolates himself politically to avoid any potential usurpers until such a time wherein he may reclaim his authority without such a threat looming over him, “Son of Orfeo,” 254. However, this decision seems more impulsive and driven by despair rather than premeditation. Orfeo himself does not appear to know what it is he wants except that, for the moment, he wants to be alone with his sorrow.

more. Riding away on horses and leaving a blatant path to their destination would thus be redundant unless the trail had been left on purpose, making it easy for Orfeo to follow behind at a distance:

His sclavin he dede on all so spack
And henge his harp opon his back
And had well gode will to gon-
He no spard noither stub no ston.
In at a roche the levedis rideth
And he after and nought abideth (319-324).

As opposed to his earlier lack of definitive action, Orfeo, once he has caught sight of an opportunity to redeem himself, responds quickly. When the fairy ladies retreat into a rock, Orfeo follows suite without hesitation. Upon crossing over into what appears to be an otherworldly kingdom, Orfeo is struck, above all, by the view of a castle:

Amidde the long a castel he sighe, Riche
and real and wonder heighe.
All the untmast wall
Was clere and shine as cristal. An
hundred tours there were about
Degiselich and bataild stout. The
butras com out of the diche, Of
rede gold y-arched riche.
The vousour was avowed all
Of ich mander divers aumal
Whithin there were wide wones
All of precious stones (131-151)

It is toward this imposing structure that the ladies ride with Herodis, leaving Orfeo to choose whether he wants to follow and approach the formidable fortress. In contrast to the distinct lack of detail given about Orfeo's dwelling, the castle of the Fairy King is an architectural marvel displaying obvious signs of wealth and power, and as such, the Fairy

King's authority. This is expressed most fully in lines 135 -136, describing the “hundred tours” that were “degiselich and bataild stout.”⁸⁴ Creighton states that crenellated or “bataild” buildings were especially evocative of lordly authority, as per their obvious indication of a military fortification. As such, battlements on a building helped convey the image of power of the resident lord.⁸⁵ The Fairy King clearly wishes for the sight of his castle to be an awe-inspiring experience for Orfeo, as his guided path exhibits the view of the castle from the best possible advantage to convey the power of the structure and its owner. In Chapter 2 of *Beyond the Castle Gate*, Johnson talks about the deliberate manipulation of the castle's landscape to control the way in which the structure came into view when being approached by visitors.⁸⁶ The features of the castle would be revealed in such a fashion as to make the view more imposing and, as such, to create a grandiose impression of the owner's power. This appears to be happening to Orfeo, since the ladies quite intentionally lead him through the rock and down a very particular path before he is exposed to the view of the Fairy King's castle. Once the sight and all its accompanying symbolism are impressed upon the traveler, the challenge is evident. The Fairy King has abducted Orfeo's queen from the midst of the latter's property, thus stealing away his right to power and insulting his authority as king. If Orfeo wishes to reestablish himself, he must devise a plan to free Herodis from forced entrapment within the confines of his

⁸⁴ Line 136 may be translated as “wonderful and boldly crenelated/fortified,” as per definitions found in *MED*.

⁸⁵ Creighton points out that the contention over promoting crenellations as a vehicle for displaying authority is evidenced by the large records of licences to crenellate- special legal documents that allowed lords to crenellate their households. Creighton, *Power, Community and Fortification*, 67.

⁸⁶ Johnson, *Beyond the Castle Gate*, 24-26.

rival's castle and bring her back home. The sight of the castle is a spectacle intended to test Orfeo's resolve.

Orfeo is not intimidated by the sight of the castle and thus passes the first test of the Fairy King, devising a plan to enter the castle space and not turning his back on the evidently impenetrable fortress. Whereas Orfeo's earlier strategies have proven ineffectual, his new tactic involves cunning rather than an exhibition of brute force. He chooses deception to enter the castle, approaching the porter and claiming to be a minstrel seeking to entertain the court. The porter opens the door for him, making the entry into this grandiose castle suspiciously simple for someone who has earlier been described as having the appearance of a wild beast after living in the forest for ten years. The Fairy King's testing is not over, however, as first Orfeo must pass through the internal gallery of the castle and its frightful images:

Than he gan bihold about al,
And seighe liggeand within the wal Of
folk that were thider y-brought And
thought dede, and nare nought.
Sum stode withouten hade,
And sum non armes nadde,
And sum thurth the bodi hadde wounde,
And sum lay wode, y-bounde,
And sum armed on hors sete,
And sum astrangled as thai ete; And
sum were in water adreynt, And
sum with fire al forschreynt.
Wives ther lay on childe bedde,
Sum ded and sum awedde,
And wonder fele ther lay bisides
Right as thai slepe her undertides; Eche
was thus in this warld y-nome, With
fairi thider y-come.
Ther he seighe his owhen wiif,
Dame Heurodis, his lef liif,

Slepe under an ympe-tre (363-383).

Just like the view of the castle from the dale as Orfeo approached, these images within the walls of the castle are laden with symbolisms pertaining to kingly power. In her article “The Heroism of Heurodis: Self Mutilation and Restoration in *Sir Orfeo*,” Ellen Caldwell states that “these mutilated victims represent all levels of society, and their injuries range from punishment to accident, from the martial to the domestic realms... these images of dismemberment or mutilation reflect not only the dissevering of husband and wife, but of kingdom and its ruler.”⁸⁷ Caldwell’s assessment ties the king’s sovereignty directly to the possession of the queen’s body, and relates it to images of societal discord that remind Orfeo of his obligation to his realm. One such obligation, as noted by Falk, is Orfeo’s ability to provide the kingdom with an undisrupted line of succession to the throne, an ability that is intrinsically tied to his exclusive right to the body of the queen.⁸⁸ This body is instrumental in asserting his claim to sovereignty through her ability to provide him with heirs, thus ensuring the stability of his reign and the stability of his kingdom. Orfeo's kingship then is dependent upon the recovery of Herodis, for it is her body that should give him legitimate offspring. It is then fitting that the image of the sleeping Herodis follows directly after the images of labor and that she lies under the grafted tree, the very tree beneath which she was abducted and which in itself represents kingly authority. By presenting images associative with societal and political discord, followed by the images of women dying in labor, the Fairy King is

⁸⁷ Ellen M. Caldwell, “The Heroism of Heurodis: Self-Mutilation and Restoration in *Sir Orfeo*” in *Papers on Language & Literature* 43, no. 3 (2007).

http://go.galegroup.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=ocul_carleton&id=GALE|A168857753&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon&authCount=1. Accessed, March 1st, 2017.

⁸⁸ Falk, “The Son of Orfeo,” 248.

showing to Orfeo his ineffectuality as a ruler. These images represent a stasis of royal prerogative and are in direct contrast to the preceding image of the Fairy King's castle which evokes an active and effectual authority. Since kingship is dependent upon progeny, by reclaiming the queen Orfeo has a chance to re-establish his right to reign. For this purpose, it is imperative that Herodis be saved from entrapment within the castle of another, for in such a way she will be symbolically removed from the *representational space* associated with the power of another king.

Upon viewing the images in the walls, Orfeo proceeds to enter the *representational space* of the Fairy King's superior power- his hall, where the king sits with his queen and other courtiers. The resolution of the tale seems almost anti-climactic by comparison to the series of vivid symbolic images that accosted Orfeo on his way through the kingdom and castle of the Fairy King. Now, after being confronted with visual displays that convey to him his ineffectuality as a ruler, Orfeo must exhibits his skill as a harper by playing to the Fairy King, who then promises to give to him whatever he desires as a reward for his performance. Orfeo asks for Herodis, and although the king first points to the absurdity of this notion, stating that Orfeo has the appearance of a beggar while the lady Herodis is "lovesum, withouten lac," he eventually complies (436). Orfeo recovers the queen and they begin their journey back to their kingdom. Yet does Orfeo truly recover the full symbolic attributes of his sovereignty in reclaiming the body of his wife? Neither Orfeo nor Herodis are shown to exhibit any pronounced displays of emotion upon reuniting akin to those of Floris and Blancheflour or Guinevere and Lancelot. The only outward show of emotion from Orfeo is toward the Fairy King before whom he "kneled adoun and thonked him swithe," notably acknowledging the Fairy King's

superiority by physically kneeling before him in the hall and, further, following the latter's obvious command to "take hir [Herodis] by the hond and go" (446-448). Herodis, being taken by the hand and lead away, does not receive an intimate moment of reunion with Orfeo and is not mentioned again by the text until the ending lines when she and Orfeo are crowned again (569-570) Herodis has not, in fact, been depicted as speaking since her outburst in the orchard and subsequent explanation of her dream to Orfeo. This has caused Falk to speculate that Herodis has become both mentally and physically damaged due to her prolonged stay at the fairy court, an assumption he makes by associating her episode of self-mutilation in the orchard with insanity and her muteness at the end with the lingering effects of trauma.⁸⁹ After all, she has spoken before-- so why does she not speak now? It is due to the loss of these mental and physical faculties that Herodis is no longer fit to bear Orfeo's children and cannot with her body cement a dynastic continuity. It is her entrapment within another man's castle that quite literally results in the loss of her ability to provide Orfeo with heirs and as such her body does not function in accordance with the needs of the king, making it symbolic of his failure as sovereign.

Orfeo remains an ineffectual king, who is now unable to provide his kingdom with an enduring dynasty, as is proposed by Falk who notes the obvious absence of heirs from the ending of the narrative. This notable lack of biological heirs is clearly apparent when Orfeo, upon having tested his steward for loyalty, says to him, "thou shust be king after my day" and that after him and Herodis had lived long, "sethen was king the steward." (548/572). Orfeo did not assure any dynastic continuity, as that would ensure a direct line

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 260.

of succession and would imply that Herodis has succeeded in bearing progeny. Orfeo must name the steward his heir because there are none of his blood to continue his line and he must provide for his realm in whatever way he sees fit. Yet this conclusion signals the eventual end of Orfeo's dynasty and, by this token, his failure as a king. The lack of theatrical displays of any castle imagery when Orfeo makes his way back home parallels this loss of royal power. His homecoming stands in direct contrast to his journey into the Otherworld and the revelation of the Fairy King's imposing castle within the landscape. There is no description of the landscape of Winchester, nor of the castle that must therein exist. When this elusive castle is finally mentioned, it is linked with the steward who "in the castel... sat atte mete" (495). The steward is feasting in the castle, a *spacial practice* that denotes his claim to royal power for, as has been explored with Uther, a feast is one method of exhibiting a sovereign persona. It is this sovereign persona that the steward has adopted and it foreshadows his eventual and permanent succession to power after Orfeo's death. With Orfeo's kingship never coming to embody the attributes of power, the symbolic *representational spaces* associated with that kingship are evoked by the figure of the steward, the surrogate of his royal authority.

Orfeo represents a weak kingly figure, as is evidenced by his inability to protect the body of his queen, the end result of which is her inability to produce him with heirs and cement a strong dynasty. Uther, on the other hand, never doubts his rights as a king. Although he is in the wrong for his uncourtly treatment of a vassal's wife, he believes that his actions are less offensive than the insult done to him by Gorlois when the latter storms out of his hall. Uther assembles his armies and without hesitation declares war, on the one hand attempting to restore his kingly authority which has been subverted within the

space of his ultimate power, the hall, and on the other wishing to cement this authority by possessing the wife of the one who insulted him. In the meantime, Gorlois does not sit idle:

ƿe eorl anan wende; in-to Cornwaille he hafde
þer tweie castles; biclused swiðe uaste. þæ
castles aðele weore; of his eoldrene istreon.
To Tintaieol he sende; his leofmon þa wes hende.
Ygerne ihaten; wifene aðelest.
and heo biclusde uæste; inne þan castle.
Ygerne wes særí; & sorh-ful an heorte.
þat swa moni mon for hire; sculden habben þer lure.
ƿe eorl sende sonde; ȝeond al Brutlonde.
and bæd alcne ohte gome; þat he him sculde to cume.
for gold and for seolure; & for oðere ȝiuen gode. þat
heo ful sone; to Tintaieole comen.
& his aȝene cnihtes; comen forð-rihtes.
þa heo to-gædere weoren; sele þeines. þa
hafde he fulle; fiftene þusend.
& heo Tintaieol; faste bitunden.
Uppen þere sæ-stronde; Tintaieol stondeð
he is mid sæ-cliuен; faste biclused.
þat ne bið he biwunne; þurh nanes cunnes monnen.
bute ȝif hunger; cumen þer an-vnder.
ƿe eorl uerde þenne; mid seouen þusend monnen.
& wende to ane oðere castle; and bic[lu]sde hi[ne] ful uæste.
and bilefde his wif in Tintaieol; mid ten þusend monnen.
For ne þurue þa cnihtes; dæies na nihtes.
buten biwitien þat castelȝat; & careles liggen. slæpen.
and þe eorl wuste þene oðer; & mid him his a[ȝen] broðer (92839309).⁹⁰

⁹⁰ “The earl immediately made his way to Cornwall. He had two castles there, very strongly defended, famous castles inherited from his ancestors. To Tintagel he sent his beloved, gentle wife, called Ygerne, the fairest of all women, and shut her up securely in that castle. Ygerne was sorrowful and sad at heart that so many men for her sake should lose their lives there. The earl sent messengers throughout Britain, and invited every brave man to join him in return for gold and silver and other rich rewards, so that they very quickly came to Tintagel; and his own knights came immediately. When they had assembled, the noble thanes, he had fully fifteen thousand, and they fortified Tintagel strongly. Tintagel stands upon the seashore; it is closely surrounded by cliffs so that it is not to be captured by anyone whatsoever, unless hunger should enter there. The earl then set out with seven thousand men and went to another castle and fortified it very securely; and he left his wife at Tintagel with ten thousand men- for the soldiers there had no concern, by day or night, save to guard the castle gate and lie sleeping at their ease- and the earl held the other castle, and his own brother with him.

Gorlois' castle Tintagel is depicted as a fortress enclosed on all sides but one by the sea. This provides only one mode of entry into the castle, and as such, the castle could protect itself whilst the knights manning it could sleep easily. Further, there is Tintagel's association with the dynastic power of Gorlois' family-- the castle Tintagel is his ancestral home. Thus, not only does the castle represent his lordly power, it also stands as a symbol of the ongoing prominence of his line throughout generations. As such, it is both physically resilient and symbolically powerful, and enclosing, or entrapping, Igraine within its confines is the best mode of action that the duke can come up with. He relies upon the strength and impenetrability of this stronghold so much that he does not see his own presence as necessary and, remarkably, he retreats to another castle, leaving Igraine at Tintagel without him.⁹¹

Gorlois' trust in the impenetrability of his fortress proves to be his downfall for it gives Uther the means of infiltrating Tintagel. As the siege of Gorlois' castles wears on,¹⁰⁸ Uther quickly grows weary of the wait, for it is evident that, "Nis nan cniht swa wel iboren; of nane londe icoren/þe mi[d] strengðe of Tintaieol; þe ȝeten mihten untunen/buten he weoren ibirsted; mid hungere & mid þurste" (9455-9457).¹⁰⁹ Yet, as has been shown in *Sir Orfeo*, there are other modes of entering a defended fortress than force and, just as with Orfeo, Uther manages to enter Tintagel by means of deception. The magician Merlin is summoned to help the king and he devises a plan for entry, which involves giving Uther the semblance of Gorlois, thus letting him simply walk up to the

⁹¹ Layamon does not provide a clear reason for why Igraine was enclosed in Tintagel while Gorlois went to a different castle, yet in Wace it is stated that "he did not dare to put her elsewhere in case she was seized

castle gate and be admitted without any complications. In this disguise, Uther proceeds to trick Igraine into sleeping with him, without her knowing his true identity:

Ygærne beh to bure; & lætte bed him makien.
wes þat kine-wurðe bed; al mid palle ouer-bræd.
þe king hit wel bihedde; & eode to his bedde. and
Ygærne læi adun; bi Uðere Pendragun. Nu wende
Ygerne ful iwis; þat hit weoren Gorlois.
þurh neuere nænes cunnes þing; no icneou heo Vðer þene king.
þe king hire wende to; swa wapmon sculde to wimmon do.
& hæfde him to done; wið leofuest wimmonne.
& he streonede hire on; ænne selcuðne mon. kingen
alre kenest; þæt æuere com to monnen.
& he wes on ærde; Ærður ihaten.
Nuste noht Ygerne; wha læie on hire ærme.

or abducted,” relying on the fact that the castle was easy to defend, having but one entrance and being surrounded on all sides by sea and cliffs. Geoffrey of Monmouth writes that Gorlois “looked upon [Tintagel] as a place of great safety” because of its location on the sea shore and, further, that “to prevent their being both at once involved in the same danger.” In all instances, the security of the location is associated with its ability to be easily defended as the natural surroundings prevent access to it from more than one side.

Wace, *Roman de Brut*, 217.

Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Kings of Britain*, 158-159.

¹⁰⁸Uther is himself besieging the castle where Gorlois is, however, Tintagel too is being besieged.

¹⁰⁹“There is no man anywhere so noble, so excellent, who could open the gates of Tintagel by force, unless they were burst open by hunger and thirst.”

for æuere heo wende ful iwis; þat it weoren þe earl Gorlois
(95029514).⁹²

Uther repays an insult with an insult by coming into the ancestral castle of Gorlois and making love with his wife in his very bed. Gorlois' blind trust in the impenetrability of his

⁹² “Ygerne went into the bedroom and had his bed made; the bed, fit for a king, was all spread with rich coverings. The king looked at it with pleasure and went to his bed; and Ygerne lay down beside Uther Pendragon. Now Ygerne truly believed that it was Gorlois; in no way whatsoever did she recognise Uther the king. The king went unto her as a man should to a woman, and had his way with the woman most dear to him, and he begot on her a marvelous man, the boldest king who ever was born; and in this land he was called Arthur. Ygerne knew not who lay in her arms, for all the time she fully believed that it was the earl Gorlois.” In line 9502, *bure* is used to denote the bed chamber, evocative once more of the private nature of this space.

fortress works in his disfavor, for his absence allows the king to play out his trickery and break the connection between Tintagel and Gorlois' lordship, as the castle is unable to protect Igraine from being possessed by the king. Curiously enough, now that Uther enters his castle, Gorlois ventures out on the field of battle and is killed.⁹³ His physical death is only fitting in this instance, as it resonates with his ultimate loss of power and authority and takes place simultaneously with Uther reclaiming his sovereignty, both through his infiltration of his fortress, and through his physical possession of Igraine.⁹⁴ Igraine, as the wife of Gorlois, is important to the idea of the duke's power, as she should bear his heirs and thus continue the ancestral line which rules from Tintagel castle, and with which the castle's *representational space* is intrinsically connected. Thus, Uther's consequent impregnation of Igraine takes place in a space which should be the site of her impregnation by her rightful husband if his lineage is to continue. As such, Uther is laying waste to generations of ancestral control over the castle, supplanting them with the symbol of his own power which is characterized by his impregnation of its lord's wife. At the same time, Uther promptly reasserts his right to kingship which was called into question when Gorlois subverted his authority in the hall, by insuring his own dynastic continuation at the expense of the duke's. Uther then, is an effectual king, even if he is an uncourtly lover and a war-monger. On the other hand is Orfeo, who possesses all manner of courtly attributes, but is nevertheless an ineffectual king, a fact which is evidenced by his inability to beget heirs on his wife, even after he recovers her from her entrapment

⁹³ This is not an incidental occurrence, as the leaders of Uther's army deliberately spread rumours that the king has deserted his army, thus baiting Gorlois into leaving his fortified enclosure. Once Gorlois is killed in battle, Uther's men "comen to than castle and binnen heo thrasten ("came to the castle and forced their way in") (9555). As per this statement, not only did Uther deceptively infiltrate Tintagel, but his forces also manage to capture Gorlois' second fortress at the same time.

⁹⁴ In Layamon Gorlois' death occurs while Uther "laei an scenting" with Igraine ("lies in dalliance").

within the castle of the Fairy King. Orfeo's kingship thus remains devoid of authority, whereas Uther's is only made stronger, as he is able both to infiltrate the castle of his rival and simultaneously possess the body of a woman who should be the mother of this rival's children, making her instead the mother of his heir.

Chapter 4: A Castle Where the Lady Reigns

The preceding two chapters have been concerned with male contention over a woman's body that is entrapped within a castle space and must be obtained by an infiltration of the same castle. Yet, with the noticeable exception of Guinevere in Chapter 2, who effectively redefines the confines of her enclosure, the women studied in Chapters 2 and 3 have been the passive objects in the *spacial practice* of entrapment-- a *spacial practice* dictated by men. In part, this is due to the relationship of the woman's body to

the authority or sovereignty of the man who possesses her. Since these aspects of authority and sovereignty have been addressed in their relation to masculine identity, the overall passivity of the female characters is essential to the *spacial practice* of entrapment in Chapters 2 and 3, as it allows for the contention over power in a realm dominated by men. By this token, the castles as *representations of space* become those very arenas wherein the contest for power, or the reinstatement thereof, takes place, and the *representational spaces* of the castles remain symbolic of a distinctly masculine persona. This is not the case, however, when a woman becomes the active agent in the *spacial practice* of entrapment, as was shown with Floripas in Chapter 1. By exercising her authority over the entrapped bodies of male knights, Floripas subverts the masculine agency of her father, the Sultan, and makes her enclosed bower the new power nexus within the narrative.

This is also the case with the women in this chapter, namely the Lady of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and Nimiane of the *Prose Merlin*. Both women can be seen to manipulate castle space to exercise a form of control over entrapped men, Gawain and Merlin respectively. Unlike the previous kinds of entrapments that have been observed, the women rely on a mixture of deception, seduction and enchantment to ensure that the men yield to their requests. For the Lady in *Gawain and the Green Knight*, this request is the acceptance of the green girdle which denotes Gawain's relinquishing of his *trowthe*, an essential part of his chivalric identity. Nimiane, on the other hand, desires Merlin to yield both his knowledge and his freedom to her which, once given, disable him from performing his role as an advisor and magician of King Arthur's court. However, there is

a drastic difference in how the entrappings of Gawain and Merlin can be understood and defined.

In the case of *Gawain and the Green Knight*, one must first remember that the knight's entrapment is a joint effort and that the Lady is working in tandem with her husband as well as Morgan la Fay, who is the mastermind behind the entire adventure.⁹⁵ Despite this, the most important part of Gawain's testing falls undoubtedly to the Lady, who must subject Gawain to a trial of temptation, thus making his bedroom within the castle the setting of a siege, similar to, yet also different from, the allegorical siege of love. The Lady's aim is to have Gawain yield to her desire, thus exhibiting her influence over the private space of the chamber to which he is confined by her presence. In a broader sense, the Lady's private authority works in unison with the overarching authority of Morgan le Fay, an authority that has a far, external reach. Together, the two women, through exercising power over the private and public spaces of the castle of Hautdesert, figuratively trap Gawain within its confines, an act that results in his yielding to a temptation that blemishes his chivalric ethos-- the temptation to save his life.

Gawain is ultimately unaware of the circumstances surrounding the Beheading Game and his eventual arrival at the castle of Hautdesert. Nor is he aware that it was by Morgan's will that he came to be there, nor that the Lady's besieging tactics within the bedroom have an alternative goal from mere fleshly seduction. Thus, by being forced into this moral dilemma between his knightly obligations and human temptations, Gawain is effectively entrapped between the external influence of Morgan and the Lady's internal

⁹⁵ The manuscript spelling of the name is Morgne la Faye, however, she will be referenced here as Morgan la Fay for clarity.

seduction, both of which find their expression in the physical structure of Hautdesert. Moreover, the entire crux of Gawain's test relies upon the fact that the knight is not aware of what is truly going on, for this allows him to act according to his own internal moral code, which is itself being tested.

Comparatively, Merlin's entrapment differs in many ways, one of which is that Nimiane quite literally constructs a magical castle out of thin air to entrap her older lover. Yet, Merlin, unlike Gawain, is entirely aware of the deception taking place and his ultimate entrapment has actually been foreshadowed from the beginning of his meeting with the maiden. The enchanted castle built by Nimiane becomes synonymous with the abstract concept of their love, which, like the Lady's besieging of Gawain, both resembles and differs from the concept of love-siege. Certainly, it is a much more humane entrapment than the ones endured by Merlin in other versions of the tale, as Nimiane is not hostile toward him.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, although the maiden seems truly to love Merlin in this variant of the tale, there is still, at the core, a struggle for power which tips significantly in her favor once the old wizard is out of the way. For this purpose, the castle acts both as a symbol of Merlin's complete infatuation with the younger woman and as a symbol of Nimiane's cementing of her new-found power.

To begin with Gawain, this chapter will adhere to the theory that the challenge of the Green Knight is a test of integrity of the whole of Arthur's court for which Gawain will stand as the representative, based on the notion that he is the most chivalrous of the king's knights.¹¹⁵ It must thus be briefly pointed out that Gawain's testing at Hautdesert is the

⁹⁶ For example, Malory's Nimue, being rightfully afraid that Merlin intends to have her virginity, strategically plots to get rid of the wizard, telling Merlin to go under ground to tell her of the marvels there,

direct result of an insult to Arthur in the king's hall at Camelot. The castle of Camelot is the space where the greatest and noblest of persons "under Krystes selven" (51), are all gathered to participate in the extravagant pastimes put together for their amusement by Arthur, the "comlokest kyng that the court haldes" (53), and who is the "hyghest mon of wylle" (57).¹¹⁶ The relationship between Camelot and Arthur is made quite evident from the onset-- if he is the most exalted of kings with the most glorious of subjects then his castle must become the *representational space* which symbolizes this. Arthur is amid the "farand fest among his fre many in halle" (101), whereupon "ther hales in at the halle dor an aghlich mayster" (134). What follows is not unlike the incident in Uther's hall discussed in Chapter 3, wherein the king's authority is questioned by an insult given him

only to trap him there forever under a rock and leave. Nimiane of the *Prose* on the other hand, does not avoid physical intimacy, as will be shown in this chapter.

Malory, *Morte Darthur*, fol.45.v 4-20.

¹¹⁵Shiela Fisher, "Leaving Morgan Aside: Women, History, and Revisionism in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," in *Arthurian Women: A Casebook* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1996): 85. Fisher makes the claim that Gawain, in choosing to act as the representative of Arthur's court, ceases to be a private individual. This is especially relevant as upon entering Bertilak's castle and, further, a bedroom in the castle, Gawain begins existing in a very privatized space.

¹¹⁶*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. Paul Battles (Toronto: Broadview Editions, 2012). All subsequent citations will be from this edition.

in his seat of power. As with the case of Gorlois leaving Uther's hall without express permission, the Green Knight's forced entry into Arthur's hall is a sign of insult to the king's authority. This, of course, corresponds directly to the Green Knight's mission, for he is sent to test the chivalrous nature of this very court and its king. The insult soon takes on verbal form as well, for the Green Knight acknowledges that it was the fame of Arthur and his knights that brought him there to propose his challenge-- to exchange blow for blow with his axe. The Green Knight has entered the castle during a celebration, its setting festively reflecting the chivalric ideologies of Arthur and his knights. The Green

Knight is now undermining this very association through both his mere presence within the hall and his outward, verbal challenge-- if Camelot is all that it appears to be, then someone must prove it.

That someone, after some apparent hesitation whereupon Arthur nearly takes on the challenge himself, is Gawain. After beheading the Green Knight, Gawain promises to meet him in a year and a day at the Green Chapel where he will receive an answering blow in compensation for the one that he has given. His ability to remain true to his moral obligation, thus showing his *trowthe* and loyalty and saving the face of Arthur's court, will be the ultimate proof of his chivalric virtue.⁹⁷ Yet, unbeknownst to Gawain, the real challenge will take place not in the Green Chapel, but in another castle space. To make void all that the Green Knight has suggested about Arthur and the knights of the Round Table inside the castle of Camelot, Gawain must prove his own virtue inside the castle of Hautdesert. In taking on this duty, as is suggested by Sheila Fisher, Gawain must renounce all private desires in order to prove his chivalric ethos. However, the testing of this very same chivalric ethos is ultimately done by a woman, within the enclosed space of a bedchamber, and hinges upon her ability to expose Gawain's private desires through an enactment of a siege that entraps the knight within a moral predicament. Furthermore, the Lady must accomplish this through an exercise of authority over the private space of the bedchamber.

⁹⁷ Gordon M. Shedd discusses the nature of the challenge of the Green Knight and Gawain's acceptance of what it implies to take on this responsibility. Further, the sins which Gawain is afraid of committing later in the bedroom scenes of the castle are not of a sexual nature, but rather sins against the code of chivalry, the undermining of his *trowthe*, which includes loyalty to the host.

Gordon M. Shedd, "A Knight in Tarnished Armour: The Meaning of *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight*," *The Modern Language Review* 62, no. 1 (1967): 5-6.

One important difference between the Lady and Nimiane of the *Prose Merlin* is their marital status. The Lady will be shown to use the castle space to demonstrate a form of authority, a demonstration that is not entirely strange in her situation. As the wife of the lord of the castle, a certain amount of his power would be shared by her and her use of the castle space for exercising this power is not out of the ordinary.⁹⁸ Such is not the case with Nimiane, who is not married and does not own, even in tandem, any castles at all. This fact becomes one of the reasons why it is important for her ultimately to create a castle in order to be granted the same measure of power a woman may have upon marrying a lord. By consenting to be Merlin's lover, Nimiane essentially promises herself to a man who does not have any lands or subjects because he is not a knight and thus his authority cannot be measured or reflected by the physical construction of a castle. He is, however, an authoritative figure in his own right, although his own power is measured by the concepts of his knowledge and magic. It is these, then, that Nimiane must share in if she wants to gain a measure of authority herself. Yet, in this case, Nimiane becomes the dominant figure, whereas Merlin is seen to become progressively more submissive to her will. Their union-- never to be categorized as marriage-- cannot operate under the same conditions as marriage and, therefore, Nimiane can never exercise the authority of a wife over the estates and properties of her husband. For this reason, it becomes imperative for

⁹⁸ Leonie V. Hicks, "Magnificent Entrances and Undignified Exits," and Roberta Gilchrist in the "Contested Garden," both discuss the various roles the wife of the lord had in relation to the operations of the castle and how their presence was significant within it. Randy Schiff carries this discussion further, by relating female power to the economic opportunities presented by the militaristic life-style in the Northwest Midlands, the area where the fictional Hautdesert may have been located. Schiff states that "the Lady would have been seen as an active participant in estate life in any region, [however] the absenteeism of Northwest Midlands careerist culture magnified the potential for female self-assertion."

Randy Schiff, "Destabilizing Arthurian Empire: Gender and Anxiety in Alliterative Texts of the Militarized Midlands," in *Revivalist Fantasy: Alliterative Verse and Nationalist Literary History* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2011): 85.

her to seize all of Merlin's power for herself. Why this is the case shall be illustrated later in this chapter, yet for the moment it is worth noting again that the nature of Morgan la Fay's plan remains unknown to both Gawain and the reader until the end of the tale, whereas there are obvious hints in the *Prose Merlin* that suggest that Nimiane will hold sway over the old magician.

As an introduction to Nimiane, it is mentioned that her father was told by the Goddess Diana that his daughter would have the wisest man in the world in her thrall:

the firste childe that thow shalt haue female shall be so moche coveyted of the wisest man that ever was erthly or shall be after my deth, whiche in the tyme of Kynge Vortiger of the bloy mountayne shall be-gynne for to regne, that he shall hir teche the moste parte of his witte and connyng by force of nygremancye in soche manere that he shall be so desirouse after the tyme that he hath hir seyn that he shall haue no power to do no-thinge a-gein hir volunté. And alle thinges that she enquereth, he shall hir teche (307).⁹⁹

This man is, naturally, Merlin, as is shown in the episode that follows, wherein the magician sees the maiden Nimiane in a forest and approaches her. Whether Merlin is aware that he has met the instrument of his downfall at this point is debatable. Yet, it is peculiar that upon their first conversation, Merlin promptly reveals to her how he may be entrapped: "I cowde here reyse a Castell; and I cowde make with-oute peple grete plente that it sholde assaile, and with-ynne also peple that it sholde defende" (309). This statement is not only made in their first conversation but is also the first example that Merlin gives when Nimiane asks him what sort of magic he can do. This is relevant when one considers the status of Merlin in relation to Arthur's court, that is as his mage and

⁹⁹ *Merlin [English Prose]*, edited by H.B Wheatley, Early English Text Society, o.s, 10,21,36,112 (Hertford: Stephen Austin, 1869-1898). All subsequent citations will be from this edition.

adviser. Merlin is not a knight and his strength may not be measured based on the ideals of knightly chivalry. Therefore, a castle symbolizing a knight's masculine prowess could not in the same measure become a representational space of Merlin's power. This implies that, as a lover, Merlin cannot offer Nimiane the same advantages that a match with a knight would-- that is, a household over which she herself may exercise a significant amount of authority. However, as Merlin indicates, he does not need to possess such a castle; he can simply conjure one out of thin air, complete with residents to inhabit it. As such, he is implying that by sharing in this arcane knowledge Nimiane will likewise not need to be a lord's wife to have a castle and its accompanying authority, for she will be free to make a castle at will.

Another thing worth noting is the way in which Merlin portrays his figurative castle in this instance, as he clearly illustrates that it is a castle under siege. There does not appear to be any reason at all to depict a besieged castle in this case unless he is alluding to the siege of the castle of love. By this token, Merlin both suggests his intention to conquer Nimiane, having her yield to his desire to possess her, and implies that he himself is taken hostage by her beauty as a castle might be taken hostage by a siege.¹⁰⁰ This courtly allusion is strange coming from Merlin since, after all, he is no typical romantic lover, and he seems to gloss over the reference quickly enough by reciting examples of other things that he is able to accomplish with magic. Nevertheless, he has made his point and the castle imagery has served to illustrate it-- he could grant Nimiane power, if not through a typical form of marital contract then by exchanging a promise of knowledge for a promise of love. He also demonstrates that he is going to use this teacher and pupil relationship as

¹⁰⁰ See footnote 135 in this chapter for further discussion of the dual nature of the love-siege allegory.

a way of playing out his own version of the love- siege allegory, wherein his wisdom, rather than his physical prowess, should act as the force by which Nimiane will come to give in to his desire.¹⁰¹ Yet most importantly, he gives Nimiane the means by which she eventually segregates him from the world and, as such, the image of the castle is another means through which Merlin's fate is foreshadowed.

Unlike the enchanted castle of which Merlin speaks and in which he later becomes entrapped, Gawain's journey to the Green Chapel takes him through a desolate landscape to a very realistic and copiously described castle:

Er he was war in the wod of a won in a mote
Abof a launde on a lawe loken under boghes
Of mony borelych bole aboute bi the diches- A
castel the comlokest that ever knyght aghte,
Pyched on a prayere, a park al aboute,
With a pyked palays pyned ful thik,
That umbeteye mony tre mo then two myle (764-770).

The first glimpse of the castle is awe-inspiring in the same way that the castle of the Fairy King is in *Orfeo*, as it is gradually revealed to view while Gawain progresses along his trek toward it. It is shown to be both a beautiful architectural marvel and a well-defended fortress being “enbanned under the abataylment in the best lawe” (790). The castle conveys the impression of formidability that attests to the lordly authority of its owner, in the same way as has been exemplified by the Emir’s castle in Chapter 2 and the Fairy

¹⁰¹ This has been noted by Geraldine Heng, who discusses this in relation to Malory’s Merlin and Nimue. Merlin, as she suggests, reveals his arcane knowledge as his own “version of a knight’s performance of deeds for his lady’s pleasure,” thus enacting, to the best of his ability, a courtly relationship. Geraldine Heng, “Enchanted Ground: The Feminine Subtext in Malory,” in *Arthurian Women: A Casebook* (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1996): 104.

King's castle in Chapter 3. Moreover, just as with the Fairy King's castle in *Orfeo*, Castle Hautdesert is built into the landscape in such a way as to display its imposing image to the traveler who emerges from the depths of the wilderness. Someone wants Gawain-- and all visitors-- to be impressed by the grandeur of the structure and be aware of it as a *representational space* associated with power. In order to make a claim about the identity of the castle's owner, it is necessary to consult the ending of the story wherein the Green Knight's identity is revealed to Gawain. After the exchange of blows, the Green Knight tells Gawain that "Bertilak de Hautdesert I hat in this londe / thurgh might of Morgne la Faye, that in my hous lenges" (2446). In other words, the Green Knight, or Bertilak, is the lord of the castle Hautdesert, so made by the authority of Morgan la Fay. This suggests that Morgan is Bertilak's feudal overlord and that he has received the castle as part of a continuing lord and vassal relationship between them.¹⁰² The name of the castle itself might also be reflective of Morgan's identity, as has been suggested by Michael W. Twomey, who points to the importance of Morgan's epithet as "empress of the wilderness."¹⁰³ As Twomey explains, the name of the castle, Hautdesert, in Old French means "high wilderness/wasteland." This name then properly identifies the castle as part of the wilderness landscape through which Gawain travels and, coupled with Morgan's epithet, implies that it belongs, first and foremost, to her.

Thus, the castle is meant to be understood as a *representational space* of Morgan's power and authority. Yet, Gawain is not meant to understand Hautdesert as symbolic of Morgan's power until after he has undergone the trials of temptation within the internal

¹⁰² Michael W. Twomey, "Morgan le Fay at Hautdesert," in *On Arthurian Women: Essays in Memory of Maureen Fries*, eds. Bonnie Wheeler and Fiona Tolhurst (Dallas: Scriptorium Press, 2001): 113-114.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 103-105.

spaces of the castle. Bertilak, sent by Morgan la Fay in the guise of the Green Knight, acts as the bait that brings Gawain out into the wilderness in his search for the Green Chapel, thus leading him unsuspecting into a figurative entrapment between two castle spaces.

The first of these is the external structure of the castle, resonating with Morgan's power.

The second is the private space of the bedroom, the setting wherein the Lady exercises her authority. The external castle calls into question Gawain's adherence to the chivalric code, whilst the internal castle tests it. Moreover, just as Gawain is entrapped by his moral dilemma between Morgan's external and the Lady's internal spheres of influence, so is he trapped between the different desires of the two women. Morgan's desire, as per Schiff, is to convey the message of her legitimate power as a transregional feudal lord, which is expressed first in the Green Knight's adherence to her wishes,¹⁰⁴ and, second, through the grandiose structure of Hautdesert, over which she has the ultimate power, yet which she grants to Bertilak as a vassal gift in return for his service.

The Lady, on the other hand, who, as suggested by Fisher, is confined to the private enclosures of the castle, seeks to exercise her power by turning an internal castle space into a setting where she can besiege Gawain with her looks and discourse.¹⁰⁵

The likeness to siege warfare is made evident on the first morning that Lady enters Gawain's chamber:

¹⁰⁴ Schiff, "Destabilizing Arthurian Empire," 84.

¹⁰⁵ It is of course notable that Bertilak claims to have instructed his wife to tempt Gawain, however, the method by which she proceeds to do this is still evocative of her wish to speak her desire, as is proposed by Geraldine Heng. Yet this desire should be seen as part of the ultimate desire to make Gawain yield in accepting the girdle, which is itself part of the plan proposed by Bertilak. Further, Heng likewise points out the way in which the Lady overtly positions herself as the aggressor while acting out the courtly love-siege, thus providing a gender role reversal to this traditional form of "love-talking."

Geraldine Heng, "A Woman Wants: The Lady, "Gawain" and the Forms of Seduction," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 5, no. 3 (1992): 101.

“God moroun, Sir Gawayn,” sayde that gay lady,
“Ye ar a sleper unslyye, that mon may slyde hider;
Now ar ye tn as tyt! Bot true uus may schape, I schal
bynde yow in your bedde, that be ye trayst.” Al
lafhande the lady lanced tho bourdes (1208-1212).

The Lady's statement appears to be in jest; however, she is quite literally telling Gawain that she is binding him to his bed, thus entrapping him within the confines of his bedchamber. She also, very subtly, insults his merit as a warrior, since it would appear that anyone could sneak up on him and catch him off guard. Of course, Gawain notices her beforehand and simply pretends to be asleep (1189-1190). However, this slight insult mirrors the prior insult of her husband to Arthur's court, and thus the setting, in this case the bedchamber of the castle, becomes the space wherein Gawain must defend his knightly honor. For the moment, Gawain plays along, asking the Lady if she will release him from his prison so that he may get dressed, indicating that he is not comfortable being scarcely clad in bed in front of her: “I wolde bowe of this bed, and busk me better; / I schulde kever the more comfort to karp yow wyth” (1220-1221). The Lady refuses; she wants Gawain to be uncomfortable, for this demonstrates her ability to manipulate the castle space wherein they are enclosed.

The only way that Gawain can get dressed without fear of revealing his partially naked body is if the Lady leaves the room. Hence, by condemning him to remain without clothes, the Lady is exercising her authority to dictate what happens within the chamber. Gawain, being true to his courtesy, will not rise out of bed and this allows Lady Bertilak to continue her siege:

“Ye schal not rise of your bedde; I rych yow better- I
schal happe yow here that other half als,
And sythen karp wyth my knyght that I kaght have;
ForI wene wel, iwyssse, Sir Wowen ye are,
That alle the worlde worchipes where-so ye ride;
Your honour, your hendelayk is hendely praysed
With lordes, wyth ladyes, will alle that lyf bere.
And now ye ar here, iwyssse, and we bot oure one;
My lorde and his ledes ar on lenthe faren,
Other burnes in her bedde, and my burdes als,
The dor drawen and dit with a derf haspe (1223-1232).

She expressly tells Gawain that he is not going anywhere and proceeds to allude further to his honor and courtesy, once again mimicking Bertilak's earlier speech to Arthur's court.

Bertilak has stated that he came to Camelot on account of the great fame that Arthur's court has for being chivalrous and that is what makes him throw out his challenge. So it is in this case, as the Lady first asserts that she knows of Gawain's fame and then proclaims that she has caught him, further intensifying the imagery of entrapment by referring to the door being drawn and locked fast with a strong latch (1232). Like her husband, the Lady has proposed her challenge and Gawain must deal with her seductive lures with the full knowledge that there is no way he can get her to leave the chamber without getting out of bed. This means that, regardless of how he responds, he is trapped by her presence and thus under her control. By this token, Gawain becomes the object being besieged, complying to a peculiar type of gender role reversal in which he, the knight, is the one under assault by the Lady.

As it turns out, the Lady, for all her seductive wiles, chooses only to make playful conversation. The purpose of her flirtatious advances is not necessarily to sleep with Gawain, but rather to put him into a precarious situation wherein he does not have control over his confinement to his bedchamber until she leaves. Gawain does get out of bed and

leave the chamber on each of the three days that he is besieged by the Lady; however, he only leaves once she herself has chosen that she wishes their discourse to end for the day. For example, on the first day, the Lady “dos hir forth at the dore withouten dyn more / and he riches hym to ryse and rapes hym sone / clepes to his chamberlain choses his wede” (1309-1311). On the third day, a similar pattern occurs: “thenne lachches ho hir leve, and leves hym there... when ho was gon, Sir Gawayn geres hym sone” (18701872).¹⁰⁶ In both scenes, Gawain is able to get out of bed only once the Lady has chosen to leave and there is a certain urgency suggested in his quick rising at the first such opportunity and in his first action of immediately putting on clothes. Until his chamber is vacated by an aggressive, if beautiful, feminine presence, Gawain is forced to remain in a state of undress that confines him to his bed and prevents him from leaving when he wishes. This is reflective of the way in which the Lady exercises her authority over the private space of the castle, for although Gawain’s physical entrapment is by no means

¹⁰⁶ On the second day as well Gawain’s rising out of bed occurs only after the Lady has left, although in this instance there is no reference to him getting dressed as there is on the first and third days.

permanent, it remains in effect until such a time when the Lady chooses to end it by taking leave of the knight. Figuratively, Gawain remains entrapped by the Lady's desire to continue this love-siege on a daily basis until she wears down the knight's resistance, the ultimate result of which is Gawain's acceptance of the girdle on the third day.

Nimiane's tempting of Merlin follows a similar pattern, for in order to create a predicament from which he may not refuse her suggestions, she must first seduce him over an extended period of time. Merlin, unlike Gawain, comes and goes from the presence of his young lady, yet the plot in this instance is not driven by temporal necessity as it is in *Gawain and the Green Knight*. Nimiane has the luxury of a slow seduction; the Lady has only three days in which to persuade Gawain to do as she wishes. Nevertheless, Nimiane's mode of applying her charms and new- found knowledge has a similar, premeditated flavor:

And Merlin wente a grete sped that neuer he stinte till he com to the reame of Benoyk, and yede to Nimiane his love that sore desired hym for to seen, ffor yet cowde not she of his art of that she desired for to knowe. And she made hym the grettest ioye that she myght; and [thei] ete and dranke and lay in oon bedde. But so moche cowde she of his connynge that whan he hadde will to ly with hire, she hadde enchaunted and coniured a pelow that she kepte in his armes; and than fill Merlin aslepe. And the storie maketh no mencion that ever Merlin hadde flesshly to do with no woman, and yet loved he nothinge in this worlde so wele as woman; and that shewed well, ffor so moche he taught hir oo tyme and other that at laste he myght holde hym-self a fooll; and thus dide he soiourney with his love longe tyme. And ever she enquired of his connynge and of his maistries ech thinge by himself. And he lete her all knowe; and she wrote all that he seide, as she that was well lerned in clergie, and lerned it lightly all that Merlin hir taught. And whan he hadde soiouredn with hir longe tyme, he toke his leve and seide that he sholde come a-gein at the yeres ende; and so eche of theym comaunded other to God full tendirly (634).

As this passage suggests, Nimiane freely invites Merlin to her bed so that they might lie in it together, yet detains him from actually possessing her physically by employing the very magic that he has taught her. This appears to be a deliberate ploy on her part, an exchange of her physical nearness for further knowledge and power. Nimiane's upper hand in this relationship is evident, for Merlin is giving up his very essence to please her, to the point (as suggested by the author) of being entirely foolish, whereas she gives him only the false implications of a physical relationship without giving herself to him completely. Her actions, therefore, are cunningly calculated, for she tempts him enough to stay interested by inviting him to bed with her, yet withholds the ultimate prize until she has gained all the knowledge that he has to give her. In retrospect, her reasoning is sound-- were she to indulge her fervent teacher prior to receiving all his knowledge, there is no guarantee that he would keep his end of the bargain. It is thus necessary to prolong the consummation of his desire until such a time that she feels she no longer needs to use her body as a bargaining chip. Once Nimiane possesses all the knowledge that she wants, her own power over Merlin will be cemented and the physical act of love will no longer be of much consequence.

Essential to the comparison of these two texts is consideration of the fact that Gawain's obliviousness to the reality of his circumstances contrasts with Merlin's knowledge of the deception Nimiane is playing out. The nature of the narrative of these two tales calls for this difference. In order that Gawain's actions may be dictated by his circumstances, and thus by the Lady, he must not know the truth until the very end. On the other hand, Merlin's entrapment by Nimiane is symbolically relevant in this context only if he freely chooses to give up his agency to her. That he knows she will imprison him is evident

from his parting words to Arthur and Blase in the closing section of the *Prose Merlin*: “this is the laste tyme that I shall speke with yow eny more, ffor fro hens-forth I shall soiourne with my love, ne neuer shall I haue power hir for to leve ne to come ne go” (679). Merlin knows that his upcoming visit to Nimiane is one from which he will never return, yet he resolves to go anyhow, claiming that he is “so supprised with hir love that I may me not with-drawen” (679). From this it may be concluded, however strangely, that Merlin in fact desires this type of entrapment which only Nimiane can create for him. This desire may be likened to the concept of claustrophilia, aptly described by Carry Howie as “a particularly intense and necessarily ambivalent erotic relationship with enclosed space.”¹⁰⁷ That Merlin's experience is ambivalent is obvious from the statement that he departs the company of his friends “sore wepinge” (679); the magician does not want to leave Arthur, nor his other acquaintances, and the thought of being sealed off from the world quite evidently grieves him. However, he cannot help himself, for his love of Nimiane leads him to yearn for any possible means of realizing the erotic consummation of this love-- a consummation that may only take place in an enclosed space of her crafting. In longing for her, Merlin craves his own entrapment.¹⁰⁸

This entrapment, in turn, corresponds to his relinquishing the entirety of his power to

¹⁰⁷ Carry Howie, *Claustrophilia: The Erotics of Enclosure in Medieval Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 40. Howie does also specify that this relationship is metonymic, which in the case of Merlin is not the case.

¹⁰⁸ Miranda Griffin also applies the concept of claustrophilia to Merlin, specifically in the context of the Post-Vulgate cycle in her article “Space of Transformation.” The Merlin of this version takes Viviane into the tomb of two lovers, wherein she eventually traps him as he sleeps. He is likewise aware of what is to happen to him; however, he knows that Viviane will not reciprocate his feelings and thus he is doomed to be trapped alone. Needless to say, Merlin appears to possess this strange trait of claustrophilia in several of the versions-- at least in the ones wherein he is given insight into what happens in the future. Miranda Griffin, “Space of Transformation: Merlin Between Two Deaths” in *Medium Aevum* 80, no.1 (2011): 89-90.

Nimiane, a process which becomes symbolically accentuated by the enchanted castle of which Merlin spoke to her at their first meeting and which she now wishes to make herself:

Whan that he hadde hir taught all that she cowde aske, she be-thought hir how she myght hym with-holde for euer more; than be-gan she to glose Merlin more than euer she hadde do even be-forn and seide, "Sir, yet can I not oon thinge that I wolde fain lerne, and ther-fore I pray you that ye wolde me enforme." And Merlin, that well knewe her entent seid, "Madame, what thinge is that?" "Sir," quod she, "I wolde fain lerne how I myght oon shet in a tour with-outen walles or with-oute eny closure be enchauntement, so that never he sholden go oute withouten my licence." And whan Merlin it herde, he bowed down the heed and be-gan to sigh; and [whan] she it aparceived, she asked whi he sighed. "Madame," seide Merlin, "I shall telle yow. I knowe well what ye thinke, and that ye will me with-holde; and I am so surprised with love that me be-houeth to do youre plesier." And than she caste hir armes a-boute his nekke and hym kiste, and seide that wele he ought to be hirs seth that she was all his (680).

Although Nimiane does appear to love Merlin, she thinks of her love in terms of the sort of power that she may gain from it. As such, the ultimate expression of this love, aside from a physical union, would be rendering her lover unable to do anything without her permission. This she can only do if she can shut him away in a castle, or *tour*, of her own making. Merlin is sad, yet resigned to his fate, once again showing his ambivalent feelings toward his entrapment, as he is simultaneously reluctant yet desirous to do as she pleases. He knows what Nimiane is going to do and that in giving her this last bit of crucial knowledge he is divesting himself of his power and giving it entirely to her. Yet the tower of imprisonment is the prize he himself implied and promised upon their first meeting, a contractual token of a relationship that does not carry the benefits of a marriage and thus must simulate them through magic. That Nimiane is aware of this may be discerned when she states that "the grete love that I haue to you hath made me forsake

all other for to haue yow in myn armes” and further, “in you haue I sette all my hope” (680). Aside from being a declaration of love, Nimiane's words remind Merlin that in choosing to be his lover, she has given up marital prospects which would have provided her with their own share of power and authority. As such, since her aspirations are intrinsically tied up with the knowledge which he gives her, Nimiane gently but firmly suggests that Merlin must fulfill his end of the bargain in entirety before she gives him what he wants.

In this text, what both characters want is represented by the enchanted castle, a *representational space* which to Nimiane symbolizes a new-found authority and power and to Merlin becomes the erotic enclosure wherein the *spacial practice* of their physical union may finally take place:

and whan she felt that he
was on slepe, she a-roos softly and made a cerne with hir wymple all a-boute the
bussh and all a-boute Merlin, and began hir enchauntementez soche as Merlin hadde
hir taught, made the cerne ix tymes and ix tymes hir enchauntementes; and after that
she wente and satte down by hym and leide his heed in hir lappe and hilde hym ther
till he dide a-wake; and than he loked a-boute hym, and hym semed he was in the
feirest tour of the worlde, and the moste stronge, and fonde hym leide in the feirest
place that euer he lay be-form; and than he seide to the damesell, "Lady, thou hast me
disceived but yef ye will a-bide with me, for noon but ye may undo this
enchauntementes;" and she seide, "Feire swete frende, I shall often tymes go oute, and
ye shull haue me in youre armes, and I yow. And fro hens-forth shull ye do all youre
plesier;" and she hym hilde wele couenaunt, ffor fewe hours ther were of the nyght ne
of the day but she was with hym. Ne neuer after com Merlin oute of that fortresse that
she hadde hym in sette, but she wente in and oute whan she wolde (681).

Their new relationship is defined by a clear role reversal; whereas before Merlin was constantly coming and going whilst Nimiane remained forever in one place waiting for him, now she may come and go as she chooses as he remains bound to one place. What

he receives in return is Nimiane finally satisfying his physical desire, the urge for which has driven him to crave the enclosed space of the prison in which she has now placed him. Nimiane, on the other hand, has gained the full power of Merlin's magic and knowledge, which culminates in her erecting the castle that the magician first spoke of when they met and set up as the figurative symbol of what she might attain through a union with him. By this token, the magical castle acts in a similar way to a *de facto* castle for a married woman, becoming a space wherein she may exercise the power granted to her by marriage. However, as Merlin's power and authority may not be symbolized by a castle in the same way as a knight's or a lord's may, the magician cannot retain them in the same fashion. Whereas a knightly castle is a *representational space*, Merlin's enchanted castle is not *representational* in as much as it is metaphysical; it exists because of his magic and its entire existence is related to his wielding of magic. For this purpose, when Merlin allows Nimiane to construct a castle he is giving up his own identity as a magician, because he is no longer the source of the castle's construction, and hence its being and the magic associated with it become the domain of someone else. There can be no even ground between them after that; Nimiane appropriates not part, but all, of his power.¹⁰⁹

Once the enchanted castle has been appropriated as the physical manifestation of Nimiane's full power, it becomes the *representational space* evocative of her authority.

¹⁰⁹ Notably, in Malory, Nimue usurps both Merlin's power and is also seen to marry the knight Palleas later in the story. In this variation, Nimue uses her power to become an active part of Arthur's court, thus publicly exercising the knowledge that she has gained and also, hypothetically, gains the marital rights that grant her some authority over her husband's estates. In the case of Nimiane, however, she appears to want to use her new power only for the subjugation of Merlin and has no interest in the wider, political sphere.

Simultaneously, it becomes the setting for the *spacial practice* of Merlin's entrapment. This imprisonment itself is characterized by Merlin's reluctant desire to be enclosed within it in order to realize his erotic fantasy with Nimiane. At this point, Nimiane, having first given the magician what he wants, impresses upon him that she has the full authority in this new space and will come and go as she pleases, whereas he must remain forever locked within. Unlike Nimiane's permanent entrapment of Merlin, the Lady's entrapment of Gawain has a strict time limit since the knight must soon depart castle Hautdesert. She has three days to discern his weakness and get him to make a mistake which will then blemish his otherwise untouchable chivalric fame. For this purpose, the Lady must continue to infiltrate Gawain's bedroom before he rises and dresses, so that she might confine him to his bed for the duration of her visit, thus prohibiting him from leaving the room while she is there and avoiding her seductions. At first, it may appear as though Gawain's predicament does not have a resolution, yet this is not the case. Although he cannot tell the Lady to leave outright, as that would impugn his reputation for courtly manners, he does have the option of not being there at all when she comes. Bertilak leaves to hunt early in the morning each of the three days, and it is an odd thing for Gawain not to partake in this masculine activity, instead remaining at the castle with the women and servants. Fisher points out that, as a trend, chivalric romance suggests that when a knight exchanges public life for a private one it generally creates a disturbance.¹¹⁰ In this case, the public function would be the activity of hunting, whereas the private one is the act of courtly play that Gawain engages in with the Lady. In choosing to remain in the bedroom, Gawain is actively selecting the private space of the

¹¹⁰ Fisher, "Leaving Morgan Aside, 85.

castle and the erotic enclosure it provides. In this fashion, his choice contributes to the gender role reversal taking place between him and Lady.

The simplest way for Gawain not to compromise his honor and not to offend the Lady is to avoid the chance of encountering her in his bedroom once again. This would be prevented if Gawain were to go out on the hunt with her husband, an activity which would remove him from the private spaces of the castle wherein the Lady reigns. Gawain does not make that choice, although he does briefly propose leaving after the second exchange of winnings. When Bertilak proposes the two men resume their contract for a third day, Gawain “craved leve to kayre on the morn/ for hit was negh terme that he to shulde” (1670-1671). This passage seems to indicate Gawain’s desire for immediate withdrawal from the space of the castle; however, the matter which concerns him is reaching the Green Chapel in due time for the predetermined exchange of blows. This matter is rectified when Bertilak gives Gawain his word of honor that Gawain will reach his destination in a timely manner, thus alleviating any doubts the knight has about spending another day at Hautdesert. This is evident in that Gawain “graythely graunted” Bertilak’s request (1683), thus dismissing the notion that he is reluctant to stay within the confines of the castle. The word *graythely* can imply “quickly, readily, willingly, or straightway,” any of which meanings would accentuate Gawain’s generally positive attitude toward staying.¹¹¹ Taking his leave in the morning would prevent any more potential encounters with the Lady, yet Gawain is easily persuaded otherwise. Not only does Gawain prolong his stay with an awareness of what the following morning will likely bring, he also readily commits to continue the exchange game with his host,

¹¹¹ For the definition of *graythely* or *greithly*, refer to the MED.

implying that he is not repelled by the notion of further intimate contact with Bertilak's wife. After all, Gawain is not aware of Bertilak's knowledge pertaining to the identity of the Lady he has been kissing, and here Gawain shows no moral qualms about continuing this deception, nor about further engaging in risqué discourse with the Lady.

At the same time, it is evident from Gawain's conduct that he does experience a level of discomfort from the Lady's advances. When Gawain sees her suggestive glances during the feast on the second day of the hunt, he is said to be "wroth with hymselven" for allowing the situation to get out of control (1660). It is therefore strange to consider that Gawain would actively seek out an enclosure wherein he would repeatedly be made uncomfortable, yet this is precisely what happens, which implies that a certain level of pleasure is derived from these encounters. Geraldine Heng offers a good perspective on this dilemma, suggesting that Gawain's pleasure is directly related to his causing displeasure to the Lady.¹¹² Heng re-analyzes the discourse between Gawain and the Lady, aptly showing the way in which his allegedly courtly behavior contains obvious and sharp rebuttals of her seductions. Even as he complies with her wishes for love-talk and kisses, Gawain makes it obvious that he is only doing so because the standards of courtly conduct make it impossible for him to refuse. In so doing, he effectively undermines any genuine pleasure that the Lady might enjoy as a consequence of their encounters. One such example that Heng points to is when the Lady demands that Gawain ought to treat her like his lady-love, unless there is already someone else, and Gawain makes clear that no such lady exists nor will exist by retorting: "in fayth I welde right non/ne non wil

¹¹² Geraldine Heng, "A Woman Wants," 105-107.

welse the while" (1790-1791).¹¹³ In so doing, Gawain denies the Lady the pleasure of playing out her love-siege fantasy by having him surrender. This, Heng argues, is representative of ideas of pleasure and unpleasure as described by Freud, wherein a repetitive pattern of distress-building action can eventually result in a pleasure of another kind.¹¹⁴ Gawain receives pleasure from frustrating the Lady's repeated advances and, through his repetitive and thinly-veiled denial, conveying the impression that he does not reciprocate her desire. Since this interaction of pleasure and unpleasure is dependent upon the discourse of desire, it is itself a form of erotic exchange. For this purpose, Gawain's entrapment within the chamber transforms the space into one of a sexualized encounter, which in turn makes it possible to propose that he, like Merlin, craves the forced entrapment within his bedroom, as it is then transformed into a space of erotic enclosure and pleasure.¹¹⁵

Both Gawain and Merlin's enclosures within a castle resonate with the idea of the castle of love, allowing them to engage in this courtly fantasy in a much more literal sense. As has been explained in Chapter 1 in relation to *The Knight's Tale*, the image of the love- siege is two-fold. On the one hand, it encompasses the depiction of the lady being besieged by the advances of her lover in a tower resonant with her virtue, an example most evident in Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose*. On

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ And since no actual sexual relationship takes place (as opposed to what seems to happen between Nimiane and Merlin), then this erotic enclosure follows the metonymic paradigm specified by Howie. Howie, *Claustrophilia*, 40. This is due to the fact that, like suggested by Heng it is the word play in which the Lady and Gawain engage stands in for physical union, "Speech then occurs... in the place of sex.. and acts as the form of medium of the sexual relation: love- making composed as speech-making." Heng, "A Woman Wants," 104.

the other hand, as Hebron has successfully shown, contemporary troubadour lyrics speak also of a reverse siege, one wherein the male lover is shown as being besieged by the image of his beloved and yearns to yield to her and thus be “accepted by her in an act of mercy.”¹¹⁶ However, the latter variant of love-siege still denotes a degree of passivity from the woman herself as it is her looks that assault the lover, not her actions or words. Yet the Lady and Nimiane both take on the active role of besiegers, rather than the passive role of objects of desire. Their physical appearance certainly plays a role in keeping the men entranced, yet only serves to strengthen their verbal requests, as the real assaults are encrypted in their speeches. On the third morning, when the Lady comes into Gawain’s chamber, she is consciously dressed to provoke desire:

No howe goud on hir hede bot the hagher stones
Trased aboute hir tressour be twenty in clusters; Hir
thriven face and hir throte throwen al naked, Hir
Brest bare bifreo, and bihinde eke (1738-1741).

The Lady’s appearance is a premeditated attempt at disarming Gawain in order to make him more susceptible to accepting the girdle.¹¹⁷ This premeditation is evidenced in a line immediately preceding her physical appearance which states that “the purpose to payre that pyght in hir hert” (1734). As the words imply, the Lady would not let the purpose in

¹¹⁶ Hebron specifically mentions that this is, in fact, the opposite of what is proposed by Ovid in the *Ars Amatoria*. Ovid’s model proposes that the woman should eventually yield to the lover’s advances, whilst in this depiction it is the man who wishes to surrender and sees himself as the victim of the assailing beauty of his lady. Hebron, “Allegorical Sieges,”¹⁵²

¹¹⁷ Near the end of the narrative, Bertilak reveals that “myn owen wyf hit [the girdle] thee weved, I wot wel for sothe/now I know wel thy cosses, and thy costes als/and the wowyng of my wyf: I wroght hit myselven” (2359-2361). Since, according to Bertilak, the Lady’s seduction is his plan to test Gawain, the girdle should be considered as part of that plan, one that tempts him with the promise of life. Knowing Gawain’s predicament, both Bertilak and the Lady would be aware of the enticement such a magical item would hold for the knight. For this reason, its acceptance would be one of the ultimate goals of the Lady’s seduction. ¹³⁸MED defines *payre* as “diminish”.

her heart diminish.¹³⁸ Since that purpose is the deliberate tempting of Gawain, she acts upon it by dressing in a way that best presents her to the knight's gaze, thus actively attacking him with her appearance before proceeding with the discourse that ends with his acceptance of the girdle. Nor are the Lady's efforts in vain, as when Gawain "sey hir so glorious and gayly atyred/ so fautles of hir fetures and of so fyne hues/ wight wallande joye warmed his hert" (1760-1762). The Lady is the first thing Gawain sees upon being startled from unpleasant dreams of the Green Chapel and he is obviously struck by her appearance. As such, the Lady succeeds in her task, for Gawain sees and recognizes her beauty and, most importantly, he enjoys looking at her.

The Lady dominates the space of the castle chamber by making it into a setting wherein her looks and words assault Gawain in a relentless mimicry of a love-siege. The Lady's final intent is to have Gawain yield to her, for that would be the expected outcome of the love-siege as proposed by Ovid, although with the genders reversed. She thus offers him the girdle as the final temptation, notably bound around her waist and once more drawing Gawain's gaze toward her body, which bluntly exhibits the offered gift: "ho laght a lace lightly that leke umbe hir sydes/knit upon hir kyrtel under the clere mantyle" (1830-1831). After first drawing attention to where the girdle is located on her person, the Lady proceeds with the verbal tempting, "for what gome so is gorde with this grene lace/ ther is no hathel under heven tohewe hym that might/ for he might not be slain for slight upon erthe" (1853-1854). As Fisher points out, Gawain will not yield to the mere temptations of the flesh, yet he does yield "to the desire to save his life," and the means

for this are provided by the Lady in the form of the girdle.¹¹⁸ In the end, it does not matter which desire Gawain yields to, only that he yields, and in so doing surrenders to the power of the Lady within her private and enclosed domain wherein she keeps him entrapped until her exits permit him to leave the bed and the chamber. However, Gawain is in one sense, responsible for the outcome of this besieging, as he receives a degree of pleasure from his interaction with the Lady, even as this pleasure arises out of denying pleasure to her, as suggested by Heng. It is precisely this experience of pleasure, erotic in its essence, that makes Gawain crave the enclosure provided by the chamber, even as he is made uncomfortable by the suggestive advances of the Lady. Gawain becomes morally entrapped by the desire of the Lady to lay siege to him, commingled with the overarching desire of Morgan to display her external power to the court of King Arthur. This moral entrapment is the result of the dilemma placed upon Gawain when his promise to Bertilak brings him to the castle over which Morgan reigns, but which is dominated internally by the Lady, and wherein his resolve to remain true to the ideals of chivalry is tested. By yielding, Gawain relinquishes an aspect of his masculinity in the form of his knightly *trowthe* to the private realm dominated by the Lady.¹¹⁹ In so doing, Gawain reaffirms this enclosed *representational space* as resonant with the Lady's power and, by extension, acknowledges Morgan's superiority as the overlord of Hautdesert. In turn, the castle symbolizes Morgan's power and wealth, thus challenging the power of Arthur's masculine, chivalric court by presenting an alternate form of authority, that of a female

¹¹⁸ Fisher, "Leaving Morgan Aside," 88.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

feudal overlord who is both independent and wealthy enough to pose a threat to the king's empire-- a message that, no doubt, would be sent back with Gawain.¹²⁰

Conclusion: The Castle as a Gateway to Understanding Gender Relations

The physical castle, as Matthew Johnson shows, conveyed through its architectural design certain understandings about the performance of social roles.¹²¹ Owing to a complex number of coded visual cues, a person navigating the castle space would know to adhere to specific rules regarding his or her conduct. These, in part, were based upon a broader idea of what the castle meant. Yet how, Johnson asks, do castles mean things?¹²² To answer his own question, he proposes that understandings of what a castle meant would have differed depending on who was deciphering it and that, among other classifications, "understandings varied according to gender."¹²⁴ On the one hand, the image of the castle was most frequently intertwined with the image of a knight and his authority and power, which endowed it symbolically with a sense of chivalric masculinity. On the other hand, the knightly castle was also a space inhabited, and even at times controlled, by women.¹²³ This would imply that castle spaces traditionally

¹²⁰ Schiff, "Destabilizing Arthurian Empire," 98-99.

¹²¹ Matthew Johnson, *Behind the Castle Gate*, 82.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 89.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 90.

inhabited by women may too be viewed from the perspective of power and authority, even while being perceived as private and romanticized enclosures meant to stand apart from the male-dominated spheres of habitation.

The literary castle is elusive, as it is not always clearly identifiable. What is considered a castle, within the context of this literature, is, according to Lefebvre's model, a *representation of space*, or that which somehow represents the manifestation of its physical counterpart. Sometimes, as with *Floris and Blancheflour*, the reader is graced with copious detail as to the castle space's nature and composition evocative of power and authority. At other times, a castle is implied through the mention of interconnected parts-- the towers, battlements, spires, walls-- any and all elements that can make up a castle space. Yet at other times still, the presence of a castle is a mere shadow implied by the descriptions of spaces associated with it, such as the orchard in *Sir Orfeo*. Castles are named and nameless, strong or weak, functional or ineffectual, but, most importantly, they are always symbolic. When a castle takes on symbolic functions, it becomes a *representational space*, as per Lefebvre, a space that embodies any and all connotations associated with it. *Representational spaces* are dependent upon *spacial practices*, or the various actions, that take place within the castle space. In turn, *spacial practices* are often reflective of gendered conduct, resulting in a gendering of the castle's space. Lefebvre himself does not attend to the idea of this spacial gendering, yet other scholars have explored the concept that social spaces could be gendered. Barbara Hanawalt, for example, suggests that "space was very gendered in the Middle Ages" and that this was

“not an unconscious aspect of medieval society.”¹²⁴ Hanawalt’s primary focus is gendered space within the urban boundaries of the city or village and she argues successfully that women were confined to the domestic sphere and that public spaces wherein they could move were very limited.¹²⁵ However, Hanawalt’s study does not give due consideration to the castle as a gendered space and treats it only as another place of domestic confinement to which noble women were tethered.¹²⁶

Roberta Gilchrist, on the other hand, broadens the ideas proposed by Hanawalt by focusing on the multidimensional aspects of gendering within the castle space. Gilchrist contends that specific male and female spaces existed within the castle, with the male spaces being primarily associated with warlike, external sections of the castle such as the walls and battlements, whereas the female spaces were internal, protected and secure.¹²⁷ The female body and the internal spatial arrangement of the female quarters within the castle were symbolically linked. The woman could see and observe from her space yet often could remain safe and unseen. An internal garden within the castle was the domain of the woman and held a symbolic connotation of the woman's body as a secret and enclosed garden, the idea of the *hortus conclusus*.¹⁵⁰ Relating this back to Lefebvre and the construction of social space, one can see how particular spaces were constructed to be feminine or masculine. Such spaces as the internal chambers and the enclosed gardens alongside castle walls and great halls, for example, were coded through architectural manipulation to be deciphered as spaces where either male or female social roles were to

¹²⁴ Barbara Hanawalt, “At the Margins of Women’s Space in Medieval Europe,” in *Of Good and Ill Repute: Gender and Social Control in Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 84.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹²⁷ Roberta Gilchrist, “The Contested Garden,” 121.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 141.

be acted out. For example, when a reader came across a private garden in text, s/he would arguably decipher it as a *representational space* associated with the feminine. A female character inhabiting this space may thus be expected to act in a way that is dictated by her surroundings, thus adhering to her prescribed gender role and vice versa for the male spaces and characters. For this reason, castles within literature, both as whole structures or as collections of single or interconnected parts, may be studied in order to understand the various ways real castle spaces might have been understood by contemporary individuals. This did not imply, however, that men and women were bound to any one place simply because of its associative *representational space*. This did not happen in life and, as such, this sort of ideal could not be portrayed effectively in literature.

Yet references to literature in these studies of castle space have been scarce at best. Hanawalt states briefly that the action of a literary narrative in the French *chansons de geste*, for example, gravitates toward the castle when a female character is involved.¹²⁸ Both Gilchrist and Johnson include some references to medieval texts, Chaucerian and Arthurian respectively, to emphasize their points about the inherent gendering of the architectural structure of the castle and the castle's symbolic connotations of power and authority. However, literary examples serve only as accentuations to primarily historical and archaeological evidence, never as the focal points of the broader discussion.¹²⁹ On the other hand, whereas the castle as religious and love allegory has been studied extensively, the castle as a gendered *representational space* has been largely absent from

¹²⁸ Hanawalt uses this as a way to imply that castle spaces were domestic, feminine domains that were very distinct from external spaces that were the settings for battles and adventures associated with masculine enterprises. This does not take into account, however, instances wherein castles themselves are the settings for the action of battle. Hanawalt, "Margins of Women's Space", 80.

¹²⁹ Abigail Wheatley also attests to this in her "Introduction" to the *Idea of the Castle*.

literary scholarship.¹³⁰ Outside the boundaries of allegory, the castle has been studied as a manifestation of the Celtic Otherworld and as a reflection of chivalric or lordly integrity.¹³¹ Furthermore, although gendered power dynamics are often the subject of scholarly study, both in literature and other fields,¹³² there has not been an attempt to merge them with gendered understandings of castle space, as per archaeological evidence, and the depiction of castle space in Middle English narratives.

The merging of these complementary but previously uncorrelated factors has been the aim of this thesis. At the core of this discussion is the castle as a symbol of power, either feminine or masculine, as it manifests itself in the action of entrapment. Entrapment is important to study in this context as it is the ultimate exhibition of the captor's power and authority, the exercising of his or her will over the body of another. Entrapment is a prevalent theme in medieval literature and it happens, more often than not, within a castle, which points to the importance of both action and setting in the elaboration and exploration of ideas of power and control. Despite this, no study exists that uses entrapment as the central definitive action in negotiating the terms of power relations, and thus no study of entrapment, castle space, and gender power relations exists either.

¹³⁰ For an example of a recent study on castle love allegory see Nicolay Ostrau, "Enclosures of Love: Locating Emotion in the Arthurian Romances *Yvain/Iwein*", in *Locating the Middle Ages: The Spaces and Places of Medieval Culture* eds. Julian Weiss and Sarah Salih (London: King's College Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 2012), 175-184. For a discussion of the castle as religious allegory see Hebron's "Allegorical Sieges" in *The Medieval Siege*.

¹³¹ See Muriel Whitaker, "Otherworld Castles in Middle English Arthurian Romance," in *The Medieval Castle: Romance and Reality*, eds. Kathryn Reyerson and Faye Powe (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1984), 27-43, for a discussion of the Otherworld castle motif and Andrew Cowell, "The Subjectivity of Space: Walls and Castles in *La Prise d'Orange*", in *Locating the Middle Ages: The Spaces and Places of Medieval Culture* eds. Julian Weiss and Sarah Salih (London: King's College Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 2012), 185-194, for one depicting the function of the castle as a symbolic space of chivalric integrity.

¹³² As has been observed with the works of Geraldine Heng and Roberta Gilchrist presented in this thesis.

This thesis has sought to study how literary castle space, as a setting for entrapment, facilitates and shapes the exercise of power by members of different genders in various ways. Literary depictions of the castle have an important role to play in the enactment of gendered power dichotomies and this role deepens previously proposed understandings about what it meant to exercise power, either as a man or a woman, during the medieval period. This is largely due to the evocative nature of the castle's literary presence, as the castle, whether amply described or merely referenced by a word, can produce an abundant array of symbolic connotations that serve to enhance and complicate the gendered interactions for which it serves as a setting. Moreover, the castle not only enhances these interactions, therefore broadening notions about enactments of male and female authority, but also works together with such interactions in a partnership that often reinstates or subverts ideas about dominance and power. These ideas are relevant not only to interpretations of the past, but also to understandings of how space affects gendered interactions today and how these can be comprehended as displays of power.

Gendered interactions often help shape and define space in the modern world, for example in relation to the work place environment. There exists an image on the internet depicting a blackened and soiled hand with the caption reading "if your boyfriend's hands never look like this then you have a girlfriend."¹³³ This one image and caption speaks volumes about modern conceptions of distribution of work among genders by implying that real men do hard, manual labor and that women do not. This in turn suggests that these men should inhabit places which become the *representational spaces*

¹³³ "Boyfriend Memes." *Sizzle*. <https://onsizzle.com/i/if-your-boyfriends-hands-never-look-like-this-then-you-2306065>. Accessed on March 20th, 2017.

associated with their masculine identities as manual laborers. The converse supposition implied by this is that women inhabit spaces that are distinctly different from these allegedly masculine ones. In turn, the image and caption point to the oftentimes unconscious ways in which men and women adhere to spacial codes implied by the constructed spaces they inhabit and how they interpret the meaning of these spaces as either reflective of either masculine or feminine identities. Automatically, questions should arise as to how these *representational spaces* should be reconceptualized once the *spacial practices* they evoke change. For example, what can be said of a woman who works in a predominantly male environment, or of a man who does not? How should their femininity or masculinity be thought of in relation to the space they work in and inhabit? What does that say about their ability to exercise authority over their surroundings and dictate the kinds of actions going on within social spaces? Do the same gendered segregations of space happen in the domestic sphere, as well as, in the external spaces of the work place? Finally, and most importantly, what historic precedent is there for the gendering of external and internal spaces and how does it contribute to the way in which gendered space is thought of today?

This last question naturally returns the discourse back to the idea of castles as gendered *representational spaces*. This study does not propose that all gendered associations of space stem from medieval conceptions of the castle; however, it does propose that these conceptions are one historic example of space gendering and power symbolism, conceptions that are still present in various forms in the modern world. Moreover, this study proposes that space should have a much more prominent place in the studies of gendered interactions in literature than it is often accorded as it is not

simply a passive background for the action of the narrative, and mentions and references to space are never accidental. This has been shown here with the castle, which, depicted as a *representation of space*, and functioning as a *representational space*, works together with the *spacial practice* of entrapment to convey contemporary medieval understandings of masculinities and femininities, of how these were endowed with their own symbolic attributes, and of how these attributes related back to gendered castle spaces and the exercise and subversion of power. By this token, a gendered castle space was one laden with symbolisms pertaining to both the masculine and the feminine, and the performance of gender roles within the confines of castle space correlated directly to how this symbolic, gendered space could be read, interpreted and portrayed. For this reason, attention to castle space in medieval literature can provide the means by which *representational spaces* in the modern world can be better understood, for many spaces continue to be shaped by masculine and feminine *spacial practices* and thus contribute to the way in which men and women exercise power and authority over their surroundings through their daily interactions with one another.

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