

Essay: Comparison between Malory and Gottfried about Love Themes in the Tristan Story

The ancient legend of Tristram and Isolde is a tragic love story. This well-known, old Celtic legend has enchanted readers for centuries, probably because of the magical theme of the love potion. The love potion gives this story a unique quality that lends itself easily to the imagination. This, no doubt, is part of the fascination for so many people over many hundreds of years, and that the story was translated into many languages.

When I read a full account of the Tristram story, I was quite surprised to find that it was nothing like Malory's version. I probed into the matter a little further and found that neither Gottfried's nor Malory's versions were very true to the original legend. Because the Tristan saga is a love story, this paper will compare how both Malory and Gottfried handle the theme of love, how they deviate from the basic story, why the authors decided to change their stories.

The original Tristan saga consisted of three parts: 1) The wooing of the princess, 2) the slaying of the giant, Morolt, and 3) the story of Isolde of the White Hands. The first part contains two subordinate motifs. The first is that the hero must make a precarious journey to win a bride. The second is of the young man's secret love for the bride of his uncle, who is also his king.

In the second part, the hero is victorious in killing the giant, but is seriously wounded. He's set adrift in a rudderless boat and journeys to fairyland where he hopes to be cured. Then finally, third the section is the story of a girl with the same name as the hero's lost love and the tale of the black and white sails (Zeydel 6). Some versions tell of a happy ending, while others tell of the couple's tragic death. Beyond these very basic elements, many variations of the legend have evolved, with numerous new features added to the story.

Both Malory and Gottfried follow the most basic structure, but that's where the similarity ends. Each author begins his story with a tale about Tristan's parents. Gottfried carefully presents the man and woman who become Tristan's father and mother, Rivalin and Blanche-flou. A rather detailed description is given of Rivalin's personality, his various traits—even his bad points—and also his image by his peers and countrymen. For example, the narrator says, "He was a delight to all, a paragon of chivalry, the glory of his kinsmen, the firm hope of his land ... [but] he over-indulged himself in pleasures dear to his heart and did entirely as he pleased" (Gottfried '88 7). Rivalin's exploits are also described in fair detail. His exploits show him to be a noble knight, and his personality reveals a passionate and heartfelt nature, but also one that is impetuous and feckless, which is revealed in an ominous tone.

When the narrator introduces Blanche-flou, the descriptions of her are much more general. She is described more by the effect she has on men, than by any kind of personality trait. The narrator comments, "This heavenly vision made many a man ... gay and mettlesome, and exalted many a noble heart" (Gottfried '88 12). By giving a less detailed description of her personality, he shows only a sensuous woman as she appears to men. Without personality traits, she is less likely to be "flawed." Actually, she's more of an apparition than a person. This woman, then, becomes the mirror twin of the fair Isolde.

When Rivalin and Blanche-flou finally come together as lovers, the focus is on their feelings, feelings of love, pain, joy, and sorrow. The language to describe their feelings is often sensuous, although always within the realm of good taste. For example:

When he considered the marvel that had befallen him in his Blanche-flou and went through it all in detail from beginning to end, her hair, her brow, her temples, her cheeks, her mouth, her chin, the joyous Easter Day that lurked smiling in her eyes, Love, the one and true incendiary, came and

kindled her flames of desire, the flames that set his heart on fire and revealed to him in a flash what keen sadness the lovers' pining are! (Gottfried '88 53)

By focusing on the couple's feelings, the narrator creates an image of longing, desire, and passion. The all-consuming love that grows between this couple is the same love that will resonate through the lives of the two main characters, Tristan and Isolde. Tristan will inherit his father's impetuous, passionate nature, as well as the intensity of the love and the tragic end of his parents. The love affair between Rivalin and Blanche-flou is a mini-version of the Tristan/Isolde story, foreshadowing their fate.

In contrast to Gottfried's eloquence and attention to detail, Malory pays little attention to detail and very little time introducing the parents. Most of what he says about them is cold and matter-of-fact. To describe the love that exists between this man and woman, Malory says the following:

So when this Meliodas had been with his wife, within a while she waxes great with child, and she was a full meek lady, and well she loved her lord, and he her again, so there was great joy betwixt them. (Malory/Morte 303)

This is it! This one sentence describes the entire relationship of the two lovers. There is little resemblance to Gottfried. The difference appears even more pronounced because of the wide diversity in the style of the two writers. Malory uses simple, plain language, whereas Gottfried's language is eloquent and rich. Gottfried's style often reads like a modern-day novel. In fact, to place Gottfried's *Tristan* in true perspective, it is considered one of the four great narrative poems from Virgil to the present day. In short, it is considered a masterpiece. So, there's really no comparison in style.

Not considering the style then, why is there such a vast difference between them? Why does Gottfried take so much time and effort to develop the scene and the situation? And, why does Malory, on the other hand, spend so little time? The answer is found when the authors' motives are considered, why each is writing their story, and what message they wish to tell.

Based on the first example, one would guess that Gottfried is most concerned with the subject of love. This, in fact, is the case. In the Prologue, Gottfried explains clearly why he is writing his story and to whom, and also to whom he is not. He says he is not writing for the "many who... are unable to endure sorrow and wish only to revel in bliss... their way and mine diverge sharply" (Gottfried '88 42). So, he's not writing for people who just want pleasure and no pain. He's writing for the world of lovers who understand that "together in one heart bears its bitter-sweet, its dear sorrow, its heart's joy, its love's pain, its dear life, its sorrowful death, its dear death, its sorrowful life. ... This sorrow is so full of joy... no noble heart will forgo it!" (Gottfried '88 42).

Now we have some idea of Gottfried's motives. He says clearly that he isn't just telling a story, but that he wishes to share with only those "noble few" the story of "noble lovers who gave proof of perfect love" (Gottfried '88 43). It's obvious, then, that Gottfried intends to embellish the Tristan story. He will cast a new mold of love by a retelling of *Tristan*, for he says that, "there have been many who have told the tale of Tristan; yet there have not been many who have read his tale aright" (Gottfried '88 43). But, what method does he use to weave his special golden thread through this old story?

From the very beginning of the tale, Gottfried focuses on developing the theme of love and the love affairs, first between Rivalin and Blanche-flou, then later, between Tristan and Isolde. The omnipotent narrator intervenes and comments frequently throughout the story always drawing the reader's attention to lover, desire, and passion.

Gottfried expands his theme by elaborating and dramatizing the tortures of love, as well as the joys. Tristan and Isolde must endure much pain because of their love, as did Tristan's parents. For example, when King Mark eventually suspects their affair, he is never quite certain of it because he can't catch them at it. However, he has them watched continuously and forbids them at one point to be near each other. Tristan and Isolde aren't able to even look upon the other, much less converse. As a result, each grows more and more miserable and sickly as time goes on. The sympathetic narrator comments at

length on the cruelty of Mark's actions, which causes the lovers to suffer such tremendous anguish. He says:

"... the watch that was set on Tristan and Isolde was torment to those lovers, the royal command that they were to avoid each other so afflicted them that never before did they give such thought to their chances of a meeting, until, after all their pangs, they at last accomplished it. But they both reaped suffering from it, and mortal sorrow, too." (Gottfried '60 279)

He emphasizes the torment and despair that both experience. So, the message stresses the corresponding and equal relationship between love and torment. The narrator shares in the pity of their plight and is deeply moved. He shows complete compassion towards the lovers and distaste for Mark's actions. The last sentence foreshadows their death, which, of course, adds more pathos.

Note in the following passage how he stresses the two sides of the pair, "the woman for the man, the man for the woman." He states the union one way then reverses the order and restates it. This reinforces the notion that neither person is more or less than the other, but that they are equal as one.

Grief and despondency were very active between them. They suffered two kinds of sorrow... From hour to hour their strength and spirits began to flag, and they lost colour. The man grew pale for the woman, the woman for the man; Tristan for Isolde, Isolde for Tristan. This gave them both great torment... their suffering one and undivided; for there was but one heart and soul between them. (Gottfried '60 230)

The narrator, using a melodramatic but sincere tone, draws the reader deeper and deeper into pity for this poor couple's tragic plight. It is interesting to note, too, that when the narrator successfully focuses attention on the couple's misery, doing so avoids the issue of adultery. Doubt is never cast on the propriety of the couple's love affair. The fact that Isolde is a married woman has no relevance to Gottfried. What matters to him is the extraordinary love that's shared between the two lovers.

Gottfried's interest is to express the beauty of devoted love which is full of feeling. He says he disdains those who hide their feelings and exclaims, "The more they veil themselves the more they despoil themselves and adulterate joy with sorrow" (Gottfried '88 204). Apparently, the rights of lovers supersede the rights of the marriage contract. The greater sin is to adulterate joy.

Part of Gottfried's technique is to have the narrator "lecture" periodically on the theme of love, continuing to draw through his golden thread. In the following passage, he rails about how the word "love" is maltreated. He lacks patience with those who give love lip service (pardon the pun). He says:

All that we have is the bare word, only the name remains to us; and this we have so hackneyed, so abused, and so debased, that the poor, tired thing is ashamed of her own name and is disgusted at the word. She heartily loathes and despises herself. (Gottfried '88 204)

Through the love story of Tristan and Isolde, "Gottfried will resurrect the word in all its complexity. He sees beauty of language in the intimate connection between external form and the inner meaning to be sought" (Dayan 26). And the narrator seems to be the grand professor on the subject of love, gently guiding the reader towards the true way of perfect love.

Gottfried's perfect love has three components. The first, seen in the example above, is the torment of separation. True lovers cannot bare to be separated and will become ill because of the tremendous longing and stress of being apart. The second component is that of "oneness, one heart, one soul". "Oneness" means the lovers' pleasure, their pain, their life, and their death are as if woven into one unit. The third component is that the lovers' external love and internal love is united. "For Gottfried, love in its most perfect form belongs to the heart and external sense as well as to the mind and inner sense. Heart and soul, then, merge in a union which implies a state of spiritual exaltation unequaled in the courtly romance genre" (Dayan 24). It is this quality which makes the love between Tristan and Isolde transcendent. An example of "oneness," the second component, can be seen in the following excerpt when Tristan flees the country for a while to let Mark's blood pressure settle. He sails to England to see

an old friend, Duke Gilan. Tristan's misery and longing for Isolde grows worse and worse. Part of his suffering is because he feels Isolde's agony. His friend becomes concerned and to help cheer Tristan, he brings him his magic dog. The little dog has a small bell on its collar. One's sorrows disappear when they hear the sound of this little bell. Tristan is amazed at this and wants to send the dog to Isolde in order that her longing might be eased. To receive the dog as a gift, Tristan rubs out the evil giant who forced the duke to pay tribute to him. As a reward, the duke, then, gives Tristan the dog, which he promptly sends to Isolde.

Because they are one soul, Tristan can feel how much Isolde is suffering. This knowledge of his lover is the "oneness" Gottfried speaks of. Tristan and Isolde have an obsessive desire to fuse their two separate identities into one to achieve oneness. To do this, they must have shared experiences, which provides each with knowledge of the other's identity and their own, and then can lead to oneness, or the identity of the couple as a unit. If they are separated, oneness is maintained by trying to experience what the other is feeling. The attempt to become one is called "doubling" by Matilda Bruckner. Bruckner says:

"Every time one of the lovers perceives a gap between self and other—be it across time, space, or sexual identity—he or she tries to try out the other's experience of joy or suffering. [Doubling eliminates the difference of] now and then, here and there, him and her, and thus acts as a source of joy and comfort for Tristan and Isolde" (Bruckner 51).

When Isolde receives the dog, she snips off the little bell so she cannot be comforted by it. She knows "that her friend Tristan bore a load of troubles for her sake [and cannot rejoice when she knows he has] surrendered his life and joy to sorrow for [her] sake, is sad because of [her]" (Gottfried '88 256). She wishes to surrender whatever joy she has so that she experiences the same sadness of love that she knows Tristan feels. In this way, both would be one in their sorrow in separation.

The third aspect of Gottfried's love will be covered later. First, I'd like to return to Malory. Gottfried's commitment to write his version of *Tristan* is because of the importance he places on the theme of love. How does this compare, then, to Malory's version? How does Malory treat the theme of love between this tragic couple?

Whereas Gottfried spends nearly half of his story developing the background and Tristan's youth and early adulthood, by comparison, Malory spends only 3-4 pages. Malory doesn't launch into his story of *Tristram* until Tristram fights Sir Marhaus. He spends almost as much time on this one event as he does on Tristram's entire background. Malory inserts the following little snippet that doesn't exist in either of the other Tristan stories I'm aware of. So, he may have invented it.

He mentions that just before Tristram sets out for Cornwall, a messenger comes with letters from the King of France's daughter. They are letters with "many complaints of love" (Malory/Morte 310) but Tristram has no regard for the girl. Because Tristram would not love her, "she died for sorrow" (Malory/Morte 311). By this early example of love, it seems that Malory wants to establish right away that Tristram isn't very interested in matters of the heart. Instead, he quests after honor and "worship," and prefers to fight with Marhaus. It appears that Tristram prefers to be a "full noble knight" rather than a lover.

As for the love that began emerging between Tristram and Isoud, Malory states simply, "Tramtrist cast great love to La Beale Isoud, for she was at that time the fairest maid and lady of the world." "And of La Beale Isoud, he says, "and she began to have a great fantasy unto him" (Malory/Morte 317). After these two very brief comments on a supposedly blooming love affair, he undercuts it further by going on at length how Tristram jousted, particularly against Sir Palomides, supposedly his rival lover for Isoud. The suggestion is that he had more joy jousting with Palomides to secure more honor for himself than he did for any reasons of a rival lover. "Malory alters Tristram first from falling in love which rose out of desire, to ousting Palomides from Isoud's favors" (Cowan/Morte xix).

Then, after Tristram returns to Cornwall from Ireland, he sleeps with Sir Segwarides' wife, a lady whom King Mark is also in love with. Of this new affair of Tristram's, the only comment Malory ascribes to it is that they loved each other "passing well." "The fact that Tristram is involved in an adulterous relationship

immediately after leaving Ireland and La Beale Isoud, casts doubt on his continence. When he left La Beale Isoud, they exchanged rings in token of their pledge of love. Now, it seems he was just amusing La Beale Isoud and is really a cad. Additionally, Tristram is betraying his Uncle Mark, because he is aware that Mark loves Sir Segwarides' wife, too.

Later, Sir Lancelot's brother takes Sir Segwarides' wife as an adventure. Instead of going immediately to rescue the lady, Tristram fights with two proven knights from King Arthur's Round Table so he might increase his worship, "for it is many day sithen I did any deeds of arms," he says (Malory/Morte 331). Tristram finally does rescue the lady. She is given the choice of which knight she will go to, Tristram or Sir Bleobares. She turns away from Tristram saying that he is untrue because he did not come to rescue her right away.

Here, Tristram looks a bit silly since the lady, who supposedly loved him over all other knights, turns him down. He even bragged before that she was sure to choose him. So, the fact Malory emphasizes early an event of knightly prowess indicates that he has more interest in Tristram as a knight. Consequently, Malory seems intent on destroying Tristram's reputation as a great lover. If this is the case, what is the purpose for doing it? Because it isn't Malory's interest to recreate a love story. His motives are at right angles to Gottfried's.

Malory wrote the account of King Arthur's reign for basically three reasons. One, because he wanted to show what he believed to be the causes of the decline and eventual destruction of Arthur's kingdom. Two, he wished to preserve a record of "the jentyl and vertuouus dedes that somme knyghtes used in tho dayes, by whiche they came to honour" (Malory Works vi). Malory had a deep affection for the virtues of knighthood. "He thought of [chivalry] primarily as an example of loyalty to a great cause and of Arthurian romance as a record of the heroic past of England" (Vinaver/Malory Works vi). Thus, Malory believed Arthur to have been an actual historical figure. For him, compiling this account of Arthur's reign was writing history. For those reasons, then, the matter of love has significantly subordinate interest. Instead, his focus is chivalry and history.

Malory's idea of chivalry is not the commonly held view of courtly behavior. In fact, Malory disdained the French view of chivalric honor: "A knight was ready to suffer humiliation, and any suffering that he might be called upon to bear for his lady's sake was welcome. But this kind of devotion to a sublime duty, and of an infinite sense of sacrifice was not Malory's idea of Chivalry" (Vinaver/Malory Works 768). He thought that the courtly code of self-denying devotion of the knight-lover to his lady as part of the contributing factor to the demise of Arthur's kingdom. "Of all the loyalties, that of knight to lord (the 'masculine bond of fidelity') overshadows that of knight to lady" (Bradbrook 153). The winning of "worship" is of primary importance to Malory's knights, and the winning of love is secondary, if at all.

The concept of chivalry in Malory's sources, obviously, differs from his own. In his *Le Morte d'Arthur*, he depicts a martial chivalry which emphasizes knightly prowess and "worship," as well as strong loyalties to sovereign, kin, and friend. As P. E. Tucker says in his "Chivalry in the MORTE":

He depicts a courtly chivalry, though he does not see love as its proper goal. Malory seems to view the courtly love in his sources as artificial and immoral, and he depicts a love which is natural, spontaneous, and faithful—a form of loyalty... Malory's concept of chivalry is practical, governed by Christian values, and unified by the theme of loyalty." (Tucker 164)

Knowing Malory isn't interested in sentiment in his account of *King Arthur*, why did he use the Tristram story, which was known specifically as a love story? Malory was interested in the "conflict of loyalties inherent in the traditional doctrine and practice of chivalry that arose from the incompatibility of courtly love and feudal allegiance" (Vinaver 202). He saw the failure of the Round Table, not as a gradual decay, but as the result of weakness built into the structure of the society. Thus, he wanted to depict this society, King Arthur's Round Table, that when the social loyalties disintegrate, the characters revert to the more primitive loyalties of kinship, which trigger the destruction of the kingdom.

Malory chose to use *Tristram* in a several different ways to aid his purposes. First, King Mark is used as a foil to King Arthur. There is a gradual, sinister evolution of Mark's character, eventually becoming the perfect villain, thus parading as a polar opposite to Arthur. Malory parallels Tristram with Lancelot, although Tristram is subordinated to Lancelot. In the Tristram section, it is really Lancelot who is the focus. He is continually glorified by numerous minor characters. Perhaps Malory's intent is to further prepare Lancelot's image for the Grail Quest.

Also, when compared, Tristram and Lancelot initially appear to be very similar. But by continually emphasizing their similarities, their essential differences begin to emerge. Lancelot is the ideal, loyal, heroic knight. He's King Arthur's right-hand guy and his pride and joy. Tristram, on the other hand, is an aimlessly wandering knight-errant. His relationship to his king is totally opposite that of Lancelot and Arthur. So, Tristram the knight serves to highlight Lancelot, and the *Tristram* story allows further development of the fatal factions amongst Arthur's knights. Thomas Rumble say, "The *Tristram* section provides time for the development of the 'discrepancy' between the ideals of the Round Table and the human limitations that will destroy it" (Rumble 169).

Malory also uses Tristram as a lead-in for the Grail story. Tristram's running feud with Palomides the Saracen, Tristram's rival lover of Isoud, is a theme that runs throughout the *Tristram* section. The animosity between them provides continuity. That Palomides is a Saracen allows for the baptism of a pagan by Tristram at the end, thus, providing a natural transition into the quest.

Regardless whether Malory uses Tristram as a knight, he still has to deal with the subject of love and the love potion. One of the most well-known features of the *Tristan* story involves this scene. Knowing Malory has little interest in the theme of love, it is curious to compare how he and Gottfried handle this scene.

Gottfried, as expected, takes this particular scene very seriously. After Tristan and Isolde drink the potion, in an instant they feel the stirrings of love. After the drink, the narrator expounds endlessly about the agony the two young people are experiencing because of their sense of honor. They are honor-bound because Isolde is to wed the king, Tristan's uncle. So, each of them is in torment to realize they have fallen in love with the other. This theme of torment, as we've already seen, is an essential ingredient to Gottfried's idea of love. The narrator plays heavily on the paradox that love causes torment. He notes the pitiful pair as their love becomes progressively stronger, and of course, more tortuous. For example, he says:

The loyal man was afflicted by a double pain: when he looked at her face and sweet Love began to wound his heart and soul with her, he bethought himself of Honour... [but] Honour and Loyalty harassed him powerfully, but Love harassed him more. Love tormented him to extreme... etc. (Gottfried '88 196)

The drinking of the potion is an important scene for Gottfried because it gives birth to the love he wishes to recreate for the reader. The narrator, then, continues to intensify the theme of torment. Here, too, the first notion of oneness emerges when their two hearts become "a single heart." Tristan and Isolde cannot escape this destiny and it will be the driving force in their lives. This is a powerful scene because it begins with two people who are merely acquainted with each other and ends with two people who are fighting forceful internal feelings of love, guilt, and torment.

Malory, on the other hand, devotes a scant three short paragraphs to describe the entire incident. It barely takes up half a page. He says:

Then they laughed and made good cheer, and either drank to other freely, and they thought never drink that ever they drank to other was so sweet nor so good. But by that their drink was in their bodies, they loved either other so well that never their love departed for weal neither for woe. And thus, it happened that love first betwixt Sir Tristram and La Beale Isoud, the which love never departed the days of their life." (Malory/Morte 346)

This is the end of Malory's reference to the love potion and its effects. Tristram goes from there immediately to the adventure of the Weeping Castle. Malory undercuts the potency of this love potion by referring to it so lightly. It seems more like they're in a bar somewhere raising a glass after having raised a few already. The scene is diluted even more because he had depicted Tristram and Isoud in love long before they drank the potion! And he dilutes the effect still further by having Tristram involved immediately afterwards in a knightly adventure.

After the adventure, Tristram and Isoud proceed on their way to Cornwall and Tristram hears of Lancelot's exploits. He exclaims, "Alas! ... and I had nat this messayge in hande with this fayre lady, truly I wolde never stynte or I had founde sir Lancelot!" (Malory/Morte 353). The "message" is the task of bringing Isoud to Cornwall to marry King Mark. But for this, Tristram would have gone in search of Lancelot, leaving Isoud and all else behind. It seems to make no difference that just a short while before, he and Isoud drank the love potion and that "when that drynke was in their bodyes they loved aythir other so well that never hir love departed" (Malory/Morte 346). So much for love potion.

Nothing, not even love potion, can interfere with the customs of knight-errantry. Malory's Tristram values above all, not the presence of his beloved, but the high privilege of fighting in her name. "Fidelity to their lady loves is but another illustration of the dedication to the 'High Order' [of knighthood]" (Malory Works 750).

The subject of knighthood comes up in Gottfried's story only two or three times. It is something mentioned in passing without much significance. Fighting does occur on four occasions and Gottfried does spend some time describing details. But, whereas Malory would make a full description for the glorification of knighthood, Gottfried does so simply to add interest and to move the story along. He doesn't wish to compete with "knightly poets in descriptions of arms and battles" (Hatto'60 11). This is left to Malory. So, their two goals run counter to each other. Gottfried's goal is to reveal the ultimate moment of perfect love: The couple's union in death.

Tristan and Isolde's death are the culmination of everything their love is, was, and will be. Love's devotion will find that final element of Gottfried's perfect love. At the parting scene, just before Tristan must flee forever because they are discovered lying together by Mark, Isolde says to Tristan:

When I am orphaned of you, then I, your life, will have perished. I will guard myself, your life, with jealous care, not for my sake but yours, knowing that our two lives are one... Let me see my life again, in you, as soon as ever possible; and may you see yours in me! The life we share is in your keeping. (Gottfried '88 282)

Their love, at this point, transcends physical boundaries since one lives within the other. The life of one becomes the life of the other to live in the present, "assert[ing] its eternal renewal" (Lewes 68), even though physically they are separated. By Isolde's words, their love is extended into the future, and also lives continually in the past through memory. Lewes says that:

Isolde fervently asserts that each body serves the other's will, not its own. When Isolde declares triumphantly, 'that I am yours, that you are mine, steadfast till death, but one Tristan and Isolde!' a complete intermingling of self and lover has taken place." (Lewes 69)

The parting ends in serenity and the lovers are upheld by an absolute trust, and an almost mystical bond. This is Gottfried's love in its most perfect form, that which belongs to the heart and external sense as well as to the mind and inner sense. It is a union of heart and soul, a state of spiritual exaltation. This remarkable conception of the lover's bond was entirely new for Gottfried's time.

Tristan dies before ever seeing Isolde again. She comes too late to where he lay dying. When she sees his body, she places her body next to his, "takes him in her arms, lying at full length, she kisses his face and lips and clasps him tightly to her. Then straining body to body, mouth to mouth, she at once renders up her spirit and of sorrow for her lover dies thus at his side" (Thomas 353). Isolde has the last vision of their love, one of complete fidelity and unity, and thus, the lover's ultimate desire to fuse into one.

Gottfried's story ends in an element of mysticism and spirituality. It brings together in a final unity Gottfried's vision of perfect love. In Gottfried's hands, this legend masterfully attains its supreme place in literature.

As might be expected, Malory's ending for the Tristram story isn't even remotely similar to Gottfried's, or even to the basic saga. Malory, in fact, doesn't even complete the story. There are several possibilities why he didn't. One of the simplest reasons is that Malory simply became overwhelmed with the size of the Tristram book and lost patience to continue with it. It was necessary, after all, for him to rewrite much of the *Tristram* story. This seems to be a reasonable conjecture. However, there may be other factors that affected his decision, as well.

It's possible that since Tristram's character in Malory's book isn't suitable for the quest, he naturally wouldn't use him in the grail story. Then, after the quest concludes, Malory's focus and primary interest is the final breach of internal allegiances and the kingdom's destruction. Tristram could have been worked into this story, but there really is no particular need for him. In addition, an account of Tristram and Isolde's death would take away from the more important objective of the ending story. Therefore, from the standpoint of the plot, it doesn't make sense to include Tristram or Isoud. Any one of these reasons is logical, and Malory's decision to discontinue *Tristram* may have included a little of each of them.

Unfinished by design or not, the important thing to understand is that Malory used the saga of Tristram not to repeat an old legend. And neither did Gottfried. Each author took the seeds of an old story and grew them in new soil. Each story was successfully grown in its own garden. The color and shape of the blossoms put forth by each depended on many factors. Each author had different tools and different talents. Each had different motives and outlooks. And since the sun slants differently into each garden, so should the blossoms not be compared one to the other. The unique creation of each author stands on its own. I looked into each garden, smelled the blossoms, and took home a lovely bouquet.

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