



i. Béroutl, *Tristan and Iseut*

Edited and translated by Geoff Rector

i. The Ambiguous Oath

[After a prolonged period of exile from Marc's court as a result of the accusations of adultery made by three Cornish barons, Tristan and Iseut return to King Marc's court with the advice and intercession of the hermit Ogrin. As Tristan returns Iseut to her husband and his uncle Marc, he makes a public declaration of their innocence—"Never did I love her illicitly / Nor she me, for even one day of my life" (2857–58)—and offers to justify that claim in Marc's court through judicial combat. Fearing Tristan's martial prowess, none of the Cornish barons dares to take up the challenge. Iseut is welcomed back to court but Marc banishes Tristan, who retreats into a second exile in the forest with the forester Orry.]

Now hear of those three, may God curse them,
Through whom Tristan was forced to leave:

3030 By them, the king was greatly wronged.
A full month had not yet passed
When the king went hunting
And took these traitors with him.
Now listen to what they did that day.

Out on the heath there was a place
Where peasants had burnt out a clearing.
The king had paused in the burnt lands
Having heard the cries of his fine dogs.
The barons approached him there,

3040 And began to address him:

"King, listen now what we have to say.
If the queen acted immorally,
She has never offered to defend herself.¹
Shameful things are said of you as a result.
And the barons of your lands
Have appealed to you many times
Hoping to have her defend herself
[Against the charge] that she had an affair with Tristan.
She must prove that these accusations are lies.

3050 Have her brought to trial,

Demand this of her immediately,
Privately, as you go to bed tonight.
If she refuses to defend herself in this matter,
Have her banished from your empire."
The king's face flushed as he listened.
"By God, you Cornish lords, there is no
End to your accusations!

1 The barons worry that Iseut has never offered a formal, legal justification—"escondit"—acquitting her of the accusation that she behaved "fole" (3042–43): foolishly, wantonly, immorally, or even lewdly. Throughout the romance, the author and his characters are preoccupied with legal practice, often (as we are about to see) with a smirking irony.

And now I hear you accuse her of something
 That ought better to have been left unsaid.
 3060 Tell me if you are seeking
 To have the queen sent back to Ireland.
 Each of you: what is it that you ask of her?
 Did Tristan not offer to defend her?
 But when he did, none of you dared take up arms.
 Now because of you he has left the country.
 You have taken me completely by surprise.
 He has been banished. Is my wife to be banished now too?
 A hundred curses upon the mouth
 Of the man who insisted I send him away.
 3070 By Saint Stephen¹ the martyr,
 You harass me and it weighs me down.
 Is it any wonder that it should anger me?
 If he did wrong, he suffers for it.
 You care nothing for my happiness.
 There can be no peace with you.
 By Saint Tresmor of Cahares,²
 I will set you this dilemma:³
 You will not see Tuesday pass by—
 And today is Monday—before you see him [return].”
 3080 The king so terrified them
 That there was nothing else for them to do but take flight.
 King Marc said, “May God destroy those
 Who were hoping to dishonour me in this way.
 But all of this, undoubtedly, will amount to nothing:
 I will recall that baron
 Whom you forced to flee!”
 When they saw the king so upset,
 They retreated to an oak tree
 Where they dismounted,
 3090 Leaving the king in the clearing, enraged.
 They said to one another, “What are we to do?
 King Marc is exceedingly ill-tempered.
 Soon he will summon his nephew,

And then will honour neither pledge nor vow.
 If he returns, it will be the end of us.
 If he should come across any one of us three,
 Whether in the forest or on the road,
 He will spill fresh blood from our bodies.
 Let us tell the king we will leave him in peace;
 3100 We will never speak of the matter again.”
 The king had remained standing in the clearing.
 They came to him. He sent them away.
 He was no longer interested in what they had to say.
 He swore by the faith he held in God—
 Softly, under his breath—
 That he regretted ever speaking with them!
 If only he had his forces with him, he said,
 All three of them would have been seized right there.
 “Sire,” they said, “listen to us.
 3110 You are displeased and angry
 With what we said concerning your honour.
 A man has a duty to offer his lord
 Good counsel, but you are ill-disposed towards us.
 A curse upon what hangs beneath the belt of
 Any man who hates you; let him resent you
 All he wants, but he must go.
 Whereas we, your liege-men,
 Were offering you loyal counsel.
 Since you won’t heed it, then do as you please.
 3120 You won’t hear us say another word on the matter.
 Please spare us from your anger.”
 The king listened; he said not a word.
 He leaned upon on his saddle-bows;
 And, without turning towards them at all, [he said,]
 “My lords, it was not so long ago
 That you heard the defense
 That my nephew made of my wife.
 You made no offer to take up your shields.
 Now you must go about on foot:

1 The first Christian martyr and, according to the Acts of the Apostles 6:5, one of the first deacons of the nascent Christian community. His feast day is 26 December.

2 Saint Tresmor—or Trémour—of Carhaix was a sixth-century Breton saint, murdered by his stepfather Count Conmore; his feast is celebrated on 7 November.

3 “Ge vos ferai un geu parti” (3077): a “geu parti”—“an even or divided game”—was originally a term describing an uncertain ending in a game, or where there were two possible and equally undesirable outcomes. (This is the origin of modern English “jeopardy.”) Marc’s dilemma here forces the barons to accept Tristan’s return (and confront his anger) or flee.

3130 Henceforth I ban you from [mounted] battle.¹
 You must quit my lands completely.
 By Saint Andrew, whom people seek²
 Across the sea and all the way to Scotland,
 You have sown a pain in my heart
 That will take a year to go away:
 I exiled Tristran from [my heart] because of you.”
 The felons had come before him:
 Godwin and Ganelon
 And Denoalan, who was so wicked.
 3140 They had put their case to the king,
 But did not find a receptive audience.
 The king left without further delay;
 They parted ways with him in anger.
 They had sturdy castles, well-enclosed by palisades,
 Sitting upon rock, high in the hills.
 They would make trouble for their lord
 If the issue was not resolved.
 The king did not linger;
 He waited for neither dog nor huntsman.
 3150 At Tintagel, beneath the keep,
 He dismounted; in he went,
 Without being seen by anyone.
 He entered the chamber, his sword at his side.
 Iseut rose to meet him.
 She approached him, unbuckled his sword,
 And then sat down at the king’s feet.
 Taking her hand, he raised her up.
 The queen bowed her head,
 Then looked up into his face,
 3160 Where she saw cruelty and anger.
 She realized he was displeased
 And had returned unaccompanied.
 “Alas,” she said, “my beloved
 Has been discovered, my lord has captured him!”
 She spoke softly under her breath.

Her blood, never slow,
 Rose quickly to her face;
 The heart in her chest went cold.
 She fell backwards in front of the king,
 3170 Having fainted, losing all her colour. ...³
 The king took her in his arms,
 Kissing and embracing her,
 Fearing that some illness had come over her.
 As she regained consciousness, [he said,]
 “My dearest friend, what is wrong with you?”
 “I am afraid, my lord.” “Do not be afraid.”
 When she heard him reassure her,
 Her colour returned, her confidence was restored,
 And so she regained her composure.
 3180 Very courteously, she addressed the king:
 “I can see from your expression
 That your huntsmen have upset you.
 You should not let hunting upset you so.”
 The king heard this, laughed, and embraced her.
 And then the king said to her, “My beloved,
 I have three felons who, for many long years,
 Have hated my success.
 But if I do not repudiate them now
 And banish them from my lands,
 3190 They will never again fear my might.⁴
 They have deceived me too many times
 And I have indulged them too much.
 There will be no more changes of heart.
 Through their persuasion, through their lies,
 I drove my nephew away from me.
 But I have no more patience for their schemes.
 Soon he will return
 And avenge me on those three felons—
 Soon he will have them hanged.”
 3200 The queen listened to this
 And would have spoken up, but dared not;

1 The prohibition against mounted battle, and the requirement that they “go about on foot”—“Querant alez a terre pié” (3129)—is a pointed challenge, not only to the barons’ sociopolitical authority but also to their honour and masculinity, which, in a chivalric culture, are integrally tied to horses; see, for example, Hugh M. Thomas, “Shame, Masculinity, and the Death of Thomas Becket,” *Speculum*, vol. 87, no. 4, 2012, pp. 1050–88.

2 The apostle and patron saint of Scotland, whose relics were, according to legend, carried from Constantinople to the Scottish town of St. Andrews.

3 There is some editorial debate about whether there is a lacuna at this point in the text.

4 Literally, they will not fear “Ma gerre” (3190): “my war,” the threat of violence upon which the king’s power and authority rest.

She was wise, she held herself back,
 And said, "God has worked a miracle
 In making my lord so angry
 With those who first raised this accusation.
 I pray to God that they might be disgraced."
 She spoke softly, so that none might hear.
 Beautiful Iseut, who knew how to speak well,
 Quite innocently asked the king,
 3210 "Sire, what evil have they accused me of?
 Everyone can say whatever they think.
 Other than you, I have no one to protect me,
 And this is why they keep seeking to do me harm.
 May God, our spiritual father,
 Bring a terrible curse upon them!
 How often they have made me quake with fear!"
 "My lady," said the king, "listen to me now.
 Three of my most renowned barons
 Have stormed off in anger."
 3220 "Why sire? For what reasons?"
 "Because they accuse you." "Of what, sire?"
 "I will tell you," said the king. "It is because
 You have not exonerated yourself concerning Tristran."¹
 "And if I were to do so?" "Well, they told me ...²
 That they have already told me." "I am ready to do so."
 "When will you do it? This very day?"
 "You don't offer much time." "It's enough time."
 "Sire, by God and His names,
 Listen to me and offer me counsel.
 3230 What can this mean? How strange
 That they will not leave me an hour's peace!
 So help me God,
 I will offer no defense
 Except one of my own devising.
 If I were to take an oath,
 Sire, in your court, in full sight of all your people,
 After the third day they would return, saying
 That they want me to make yet another defense.
 King, I have no family in this land
 3240 Who, in order to defend³ my rights,
 Could mount a war or rebellion—

Although that would suit me just fine.
 But I no longer care about their idle chatter.
 If they want to have my oath,
 Or if they prefer trial by ordeal,
 They could not conceive of an ordeal so severe
 That I would not endure it. Just let them set the time
 And at the appointed hour and place, I will have
 King Arthur and his retinue [appear].
 3250 If I am exonerated in his presence,
 Then no matter who wants to accuse me afterwards,
 Having witnessed my vindication,
 They will be ready to defend me
 Against anyone, Cornishman or Saxon.
 For this reason, it pleases me to have them there,
 So that they might see my vindication with their
 own eyes.
 If Arthur the King is there in person,
 With his nephew, the most courteous Gawain,
 With Gerflet and Kay the Seneschal—
 3260 The King has a hundred vassals like these,
 Who would not lie no matter what they heard—
 They would take up arms against any slander.
 King, this is why it is good to have the defense
 Of my rights performed in their presence:
 These Cornishmen tell false tales,
 And are often deceitful in their deeds.
 Set a term, and send word
 That everyone, rich and poor alike,
 Should appear at the Blanche Lande.
 3270 And to those who aren't there, let it be known
 That you will confiscate their lands
 And be free of any obligation towards them.
 Personally, I am completely confident
 That as soon as Arthur sees
 My envoy, he will come:
 I have long known the strength of his character."
 The king replied, "You have spoken well."
 And thus the date was proclaimed
 Throughout the land: fifteen days hence.
 3280 The king wrote to the three local [lords]

1 "N'as fais de Tristran escondit" (3223): we return to the issue of Iseut's formal, legal "escondit."

2 There is a lacuna in the text at this point, but the sense seems to be that the barons have already told him what their answer would be.

3 Iseut's "desraignment" (3240)—"deraignement"—refers to the legal right to defend or prove a claim through battle or pleading. Here she laments the lack of a kinship group powerful and near enough to restrain the actions of the Cornish barons with legal battle or the threat of violence.

Who had left the court in anger:
They were very pleased, no matter how it should turn out.

ii. King Arthur's Court

Now everyone throughout the land
Knew the day set for the assembly,
And that King Arthur would be there
And that with him he would bring
Most of the knights of his retinue.
Iseut wasted no time:
Through Perinis¹ she sent word to Tristran
3290 Describing all the pain and suffering
She had endured for him over the past year.
Now let that favour be returned!
He could, if he wished, bring her peace.
"Tell him that there is a marsh, which he knows well,
At the end of the plank-[bridge] at the Malpas;²
I once soiled my dress there a little.
He is to be on the high ground at the end of the planks,
Just on this side of the Blanche Lande,
Dressed in the clothes of a leper.
3300 He should carry a cup made of hardwood,
And below that a bottle,³
Tied and knotted together with a thong.
In his other hand, he should have a crutch,
And let him learn how to use it.
At the appointed time, he is to be sitting on this mound,
His face covered in sores,
Holding his cup out in front of him,
Humbly begging for alms
From those who pass him by.
3310 They will give him both gold and silver—
Tell him to keep the silver until such time
As I can see him alone and secretly in a chamber."
Perinis said, "My lady, by my faith,
I will carefully convey your secret [plan]."

Perinis took his leave of the queen.
Through a thicket, he entered the forest
And travelled through the forest alone.
As night fell, he came to the spot
Where Tristran was hiding in that fine cellar.⁴
3320 They had just risen from the dinner table.
Tristran was delighted at his arrival.
He knew well that this noble servant
Brought news of his beloved.
They took one another by the hand
And climbed up to sit upon a raised bench.
Perinis reported everything
In the queen's message.
Tristran bowed his head for a moment
And then swore by every oath he could think of that
3330 Their plots had failed! There would be no escape,
Soon they would lose their heads
And be left hanging from the gallows' cross-beams!
"Say this to the queen, word for word:
I will be there on time, have no fear.
She is to be happy, healthy, and cheerful.
I will not have even a single hot bath
Until my sword takes vengeance
Upon those who caused her grief.
They have proven themselves wicked traitors.
3340 Tell her I will have arranged everything
So that she can save herself with this oath.
I will see her soon enough.
Go, and tell her not to fear,
Have no doubts, I will be there at her trial
Disguised as a beggar.
Arthur will see me perfectly well,
Sitting at the edge of the Malpas,
But he will not recognize me.
I will accept his alms, if I can get it out of him!
3350 You can report to the queen
Everything I said in this cellar,
Which she had so beautifully made from stone.

1 Perinis is Iseut's servant, who frequently carries messages for his mistress.

2 A riverside village in Cornwall, situated at the confluence of the Truro River and the Tresillian River; hence it may also be the name of the swampy area surrounding the village.

3 "Une botele ait de desoz" (3301): the "botele" in question is most likely a wineskin, but the tradition has been to retain the reading of "bottle," in part to make sense of Tristran's later noisy beating of his "botele" against his wooden "hanap" (see, e.g., 3691 [see main text, p. 166]).

4 Tristran has been living in hiding with the forester Orry, staying in a secret stone cellar attached to his lodgings.

And offer her more greetings from me
 Than there are berries on a may-tree!"¹
 "I will tell her everything," said Perinis,
 As he walked up the stairs to leave.
 "Now I must go to King Arthur, my lord.
 I have this message to deliver:
 That he should come to hear the oath,
 3360 Together with a hundred of his knights,
 So that in the future he can offer protection
 If those felons should ever again grumble
 In any way about our lady's loyalty.
 Is this not wise?" "Go with God."
 He made his way up the steps, one by one,
 Mounted his horse and set off,
 Never letting up his spurs until
 He arrived at Caerleon.
 (He worked hard to serve well,
 3370 And ought to be better rewarded for it.)
 He diligently sought news of the king
 Until he received a proper and welcome answer:
 That the king was at Isneldone.²
 And so the servant of the fair Iseut
 Turned his path in that direction.
 To a shepherd playing his pipes,
 He asked, "Where is the king?"
 "Sir," he said, "he sits at the dais.
 [There] you will see the Round Table,
 3380 Which revolves like the earth."³
 His household retinue is seated around it."
 Perinis said, "Then that is where I will go now."
 The squire dismounted at the stone block,

And quickly went in,
 Where he found the sons of many counts
 And the sons of rich vassals,
 All of them serving to win their arms.
 One of them took off as if in flight,
 Coming to the king, who asked him:
 3390 "Go on then, why you have come?" "I bring news:
 Outside there is a rider
 Who urgently seeks [an audience]."
 At that, Perinis appeared,
 Closely watched by the many lords.
 He came before the king at the dais,
 Where all the magnates were seated.
 The squire spoke confidently:
 "God save," he said, "King Arthur,
 Him and all his men,
 3400 On behalf of his friend the fair Iseut."
 The king rose from the table.
 "And may the Holy Spirit," he said,
 "Save and protect her, and you as well, my friend.
 God," said the king, "long I have hoped
 To hear some word from her.
 Squire, here in the presence of my barons,
 I will grant her whatever you ask.
 You and two others will be knighted
 Because of the message you bring from
 3410 The greatest beauty between here and Tudela."⁴
 "Sire," he said, "I thank you.
 Hear now why I have come
 And let your barons hear it too,
 My lord Gawain in particular.

1 "De moi li porte plus saluz / Qu'il n'a sor moi botons menuz" (3353–54): as Barbara Sargent-Baur observes, this is a much-discussed line, which seems to have perplexed both scribes and editors. The most convincing reading sees the second "moi" as "mai"—"may-tree" or "hawthorn"—and thus the "botons" as a reference to the berry-like pome fruit or "haws" that give the hawthorn its name.

2 Some translators have followed Froissart's identification of Isneldone—variously written as Snaudune, Snauedoun, Senaudon, etc.—with Stirling in Scotland; however, Loomis and Ewert object to the idea as baseless and argue instead that Isneldone should be identified with the ancient Welsh city and hill fortress of Snowdon. See Alfred Ewert, *The Romance of Tristan, Vol. II: Introduction, Commentary* (Basil Blackwell, 1970), p. 231; see also Roger Sherman Loomis, *Wales and the Arthurian Legend* (U of Wales P, 1956), pp. 1–18. Yet even with this clarification Bérout's geography seems confused here.

3 "Ja verroiz la table reonde / Qui tornoie conme le monde" (3379–80): on the idea that the Round Table "revolves like the earth"—unique to Bérout—see Emmanuèle Baumgartner, "Jeux et rimes et roman Arthurien," *Romania*, vol. 103, 1982, pp. 550–60. Note as well, at 3395–96, that when Perinis enters the court at Isneldone, Arthur and his magnates are sitting at a dais and there is no Round Table to be found.

4 A city in Spain.

The queen has been reconciled
 With her lord—this is no secret.
 Sire, when she was reconciled with him,
 All of the barons of the realm were there.
 Tristan offered to clear his name
 3420 And to defend the queen
 Before the king on the matter of her fidelity.
 But not one of those liege-men
 Would take up arms [against him].
 Now, my lord, they are insisting to King Marc
 That he should hear her defense.
 But there is no nobleman of her lineage—
 Whether French or Saxon—in the king’s court.¹
 I have heard it said that a person swims more easily
 When they have someone to hold up their chin.²
 3430 King, if any of this is untrue,
 Then take me for a liar.
 King [Marc]’s heart is fickle:
 It quickly jumps from here to there.
 The fair Iseut has told him that
 She will only make her defense in your presence.
 Thus, she appeals to you and beseeches you
 As your very dear friend
 To come to the Perilous Ford³
 And appear there at the appointed time
 3440 With a hundred of your friends.
 She knows your court to be so loyal,
 The men of your retinue so kind,
 That if she can prove her innocence in your presence—
 And may God save her from misfortune!—
 You will thereafter act as her sureties⁴
 And will never fail her in anything.
 The time is set for eight days from today.”
 Those who were there wept profusely;

There was no one whose eyes
 3450 Did not shed tears of pity.
 “God,” they all said, “what do they want from her?
 The King has done everything they asked,
 Namely, to banish Tristan from the land.
 Then, if these are the King’s wishes, may he
 Who fails to go there and rightfully support her⁵
 Never enter Paradise.”
 Gawain rose to his feet
 And spoke as a cultivated man:
 “Uncle, if you will grant me permission,
 3460 This trial that has been arranged
 Is going to turn out badly for those three felons,
 The worst of whom is Ganelon.
 I know him well, as he does me.
 I once knocked him down into the mire
 During a bitter and violent joust.
 If I get a hold of him, by Saint Richier,⁶
 There will be no need for Tristan to come!
 If I can get him my hands on him,
 I will make him suffer
 3470 And then hang him on the top of a hill.”
 Gerflet rose after Gawain,
 And took him by the hand:
 “King, they have hated the queen—
 Denoalan and Godwin
 And Ganelon—for a very long time.
 May God relieve me of my senses
 If I should encounter Godwin
 And the tip of my great ash lance
 Is not driven right through him—
 3480 And may I never again embrace a beautiful lady
 In the nude behind the curtains [of a bed].”⁷
 Perinis heard this; he bowed his head.

1 In the logic of the narrative, this is a very odd remark: Marc’s court is presumably populated by Cornish lords, while Iseut’s “lignage” (3426) should be Irish. However, the idea that the court is composed of “François [e] Saisne” (3427)—French and Saxon—does reflect the social makeup of the contemporary Anglo-Norman court, and so the potential audiences of Béroul’s text.

2 Proverbial.

3 “Gué Aventuros” (3438): the “fateful,” “dangerous,” “eventful,” or, conventionally, “Perilous Ford.”

4 “Garant” or surety (3445): a pledge or bond given as a guarantee of the fulfilment of certain duties; another of Béroul’s many legal terms.

5 “Et qui par droit ne l’aidera” (3455): the phrase “par droit” carries both a general sense of doing what is right and proper, and a narrower sense of what is legally just and correct. Some re-arrangement of the line order in 3454–56 has been required by the translation.

6 Saint Richier founded a monastery in Picardy in the seventh century; a frequent subject of oaths in medieval French texts.

7 “Ja nen enbraz soz le mantel / Bele dame desoz cortine!” (3480–81): literally, Gerflet swears never to embrace a lady “under her dress” in a curtained bed.

Evains, son of Urien, spoke next:
 "I know Denoalan quite well;
 He thinks of nothing but making accusations
 And knows well how to fool the king.
 But I will tell him something that he might well believe:
 If we should ever again cross paths,
 As happened once before,
 3490 [I will] let neither law nor faith restrain me,
 If he cannot defend himself against me,
 From stringing him up with my own two hands.
 We ought to punish felons like these
 Who so deceitfully toy with a king."
 Perinis then said to Arthur:
 "Sire, I am perfectly confident
 That those felons, who sought to quarrel
 With the queen, will suffer losses.
 Never has anyone been threatened in your court,
 3500 No matter how distant their homeland,
 But you have resolved the matter justly:
 In the end, anyone who deserved it
 Was left grieving."
 The king was pleased; he blushed a little.
 "Sir squire, go eat.
 These men will consider how to avenge her."

The king had a great joy in his heart.
 He spoke, hoping that Perinis would hear him:
 "Noble and esteemed company,
 3510 At the upcoming assembly take care
 That your horses are well fed,
 Your shields new, your clothes magnificent,
 For we shall joust before that beauty
 About whom we have just heard this news.
 A man heedless about how he carries himself at arms,

Must love his life very little."¹
 The king summoned his men.
 They hated that the appointed day was so far off—
 They wished it were tomorrow!
 3520 Hear now of that high-born squire:
 Perinis asked for permission to leave.
 The king mounted [his horse] Passelande,
 For he wanted to accompany the squire.
 They spoke to one another as they rode along;
 All their talk was of that beauty,
 Who would bring about the smashing of lances.
 Before their conversation was done,
 The king offered Perinis
 The emblems of knighthood,²
 3530 But he was not yet ready to accept them.
 The king rode on with him a little further
 For the sake of that faired-haired beauty,
 In whom there wasn't a drop of ill-will.
 They spoke much of her as they travelled.
 The squire had a rich escort
 Of knights and the noble king.
 They deeply regretted their parting.
 The king called out to him, "Good friend,
 Go on, delay no more.
 3540 Greet your lady for me,
 On behalf of her personal servant,
 Who comes to her to bring her peace.³
 I will fulfill all her wishes—
 For her, I will do it most eagerly.
 She will have good reason to favour me later.
 Remind her of the throwing spear,
 When it was embedded in the stake—
 She will know well where this was.⁴
 I pray you tell her everything just like this."

1 "Molt porra poi sa vie amer / Qui se fandra d'armes porter" (3515–16): the MS offers "sanie amer," which has been variously amended to "sa vie amer" or, as Sargent-Baur does, to "s'amie amer." Given Arthur's careful instructions to his men to prepare and clean their arms, I prefer the former as a quasi-proverbial remark about a knight's duty to take care of his arms.

2 Arthur offers to make Perinis a knight by giving him the trappings—"les garnemenz" (3529)—belonging to and signifying membership in that occupation: a sword and armour.

3 An example of the ambiguities and double-entendres Bérout's text is famous for: Arthur casts himself as a "soudoier" come to Iseut to bring her whatever is signalled by the verb *apaier*. This could be a description of either a "servant coming to bring her peace" or a "mercenary coming to her to for compensation."

4 As Bérout's editors have observed, the incident referred to here is not clear; it may refer to a spear-throwing competition, but no such event appears in Bérout's version of the story. Regardless of the specifics, it almost certainly refers to an anecdote of the type we see in (continued ...)

3550 “King, so I will, I swear to you.”

At this he spurred his horse,

While the king set off on his return.

So back he went, his message delivered,

This Perinis who had endured so much

In the service of the queen.

As quickly as he could, he travelled on,

Without stopping once to rest

Until he arrived at the place he had departed from.

He recounted everything about his journey

3560 To [Iseut], who was very pleased [with the news]

About King Arthur and Tristan.

Marie de France's *Chevrefoil*: a brief, narrative unit set within the Tristan and Iseut story-world, without a specific or necessary place in a unified narrative and yet familiar enough to both Iseut and the reader to require no further explanation. Alternatively, a secret story shared between Arthur and Iseut—especially one marked by erotic innuendo—would similarly fit with Béroul's taste for disguise and secrecy.