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Editing the Morte Darthur, Making Malory: Canonisation, Authorial Identity, and Editorial Influence

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**Editing the *Morte Darthur*, Making Malory:
Canonisation, Authorial Identity, and
Editorial Influence**

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Doctor of Philosophy

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I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. All other sources are acknowledged by bibliographic references. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree unless, as agreed by the University, for approved dual awards.

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Finally, to my sister, Jo, and my mother, Jane, who have and continue to guide and inspire me in everything I do; thank you.

A note on editions used in this thesis

Multiple editions of the *Morte Darthur* are referenced throughout this thesis, some of which have been reprinted multiple times, and others accessible electronically. For the 1868 edition, edited by Edward Strachey, which is referenced considerably in the first chapter, all citations are to the first edition. To Eugène Vinaver's *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, all citations are made to the three-volume second edition, printed in 1967, unless otherwise stated. Occasionally, citation is made to Vinaver's 1971 single-volume paperback edition, *Malory: Works*, especially in chapter two. The appendix to P.J.C. Field's 2013 edition is cited often, but the text of this edition is cited from the 2017 paperback version. Wynkyn de Worde's 1498 edition is extant in a single copy, housed in the John Ryland's Library, Manchester, and accessible electronically. The British Library copy of De Worde's 1529 edition is also extant in a single volume, and is accessible electronically at Historical Texts Online, to which all citations are made.

Abstract

This thesis examines the post-medieval reception of Thomas Malory's late fifteenth-century Arthurian *Le Morte Darthur*, asking two questions: first, how did the *Morte Darthur* attain canonical status? and second, how does the editor shape how the text is received? I approach these questions by investigating how critical and editorial influence have been a deciding factor in how the text has been presented to contemporary readers from the early sixteenth century to the present. My analysis looks at the influence of four editors of the *Morte*, Wynkyn de Worde, Edward Strachey, Eugène Vinaver, and P.J.C. Field, questioning how their respective presentation and editorial approach has shaped the physical appearance of the text, which in turn influences reader expectation. A particular interest of this thesis is how editors and critics have shaped, and been shaped by, the idea of authorship and authorial identity. I contend that the figure of the author is a determining factor to the canonisation of the *Morte* at the beginning of the twentieth century. By examining critical engagement of the *Morte* during the nineteenth century, a crucial period when the text was revived in print after a near two-hundred year absence, I adopt a tripartite system of *retrieval*, *revival* and *consolidation*, which extends from the mid-eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. This approach allows me to examine the transformation of the *Morte* during the nineteenth century from the peripheries of critical acceptance to attaining canonical status, which I argue is largely dependent on growing interest, both philological and biographical, in the figure of the author. In contrast to other studies, which have focused on the nineteenth-century revival of the *Morte* in print, I am more interested in the revival and critical acceptance of the author.

In chapter two, I take my examination of the author further by ascertaining how Malory's two most important twentieth-century editors, Vinaver and Field, conjure the figure of the author through the presentation of their respective editions. In particular, I examine paratextual

features of their respective editions and argue that from these is the *idea* of the author presented in wholly different circumstances, which in turn shapes how the reader perceives the nature of authorship in the *Morte Darthur*.

Finally, in order to examine the role the editor has played in shaping the text for successive generations, I look back to a much earlier edition of the *Morte*, printed by de Worde in 1529. This edition, which has received only scant critical attention, is important for a number of reasons, not least because it provided the blueprint for every successive edition printed prior to Vinaver's, published in 1947. Before Vinaver, de Worde's influence on the presentation of the text was arguably the most important of any editor for over three hundred years. Specifically, I examine a unique and hitherto critically unacknowledged feature of this edition, the inclusion of parentheses. I argue that parentheses, or round brackets, were used as interpretative pointers intended to signpost to the reader passages of thematic importance, especially the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere and the idea, original to Malory, of the three best knights, Lancelot, Tristram, and Lamorak. In the conclusion to this thesis, I draw comparisons between the editions of de Worde and Vinaver, arguing that the implementation of parentheses in the 1529 edition draws attention to the thematic unity of the *Morte*, something Vinaver consistently refused to acknowledge as true, believing the *Morte* instead to be a collection of individual tales. Moreover, in my assessment of parentheses in the 1529 edition, I analyse an important but overlooked variant reading. In this edition, the passage commonly referred to Ector's threnody, which is widely regarded to be the most famous passage in the *Morte*, is given not by Lancelot's half-brother, Sir Ector de Maris, but by Sir Bors. This variant reading would thereafter feature in every edition of the *Morte* before 1817, and would be discussed at length by nineteenth-century critics. To date, the variant reading has gone unnoticed by critics.

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Introduction

We are interested in Malory because he wrote the *Morte Darthur*, not in the *Morte Darthur* because Malory was its author.¹

Malory is an unobtrusive writer with no ironic detachment towards his material to make us aware of the narrator's mind. He is reluctant ever to come forward to express an opinion, let alone browbeat the reader, and yet, at the same time, in spite of his apparent narrative reticence, his personality comes across so strongly that we feel a definite desire to know more about the man. Unfortunately, the information available is so scant that this is impossible. The *Morte Darthur* is, to all extents and purposes, an anonymous book.²

Nothing is more natural than the wish to give genius a human face.³

The first quotation here given, extracted from P.J.C. Field's seminal *Romance and Chronicle: A Study of Malory's Prose Style*, is perhaps the truest and most honest assessment yet written about the nature of authorial influence as it pertains to the *Morte Darthur*. Our interest in Malory is exclusively premised upon our interest in the *Morte Darthur*. In other words: it is the *Morte* that matters, not Malory. To scholars such as Field, who has spent the last fifty years

¹ P.J.C. Field, *Romance and Chronicle: A Study of Malory's Prose Style* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1971), p. 3.

² Terence McCarthy, *Reading the Morte Darthur* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1988), p. 171.

³ F.R.H. Du Boulay, 'The Historical Chaucer', in *Writers and Their Background: Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. by Derek Brewer (London: G. Bell, 1974), pp. 33-57, p. 55.

writing about the *Morte*, and Malory, and who holds the unique distinction of being the only scholar with both an edition of the text, published in 2013, and a biography of its author, published in 1993, such a statement is likely not without its frustration.⁴ Indeed, as the third quotation here given testifies, genius requires a human face. Not because genius cannot exist without one, but because the scholar wants always to know – who? Who is the subject on whom I have staked my professional life? Of course, sometimes the answer is not forthcoming, as with the example of *Beowulf*, or *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, neither of which have suffered for the lack of a named author. But for those texts stamped with the value of eponymy, such as the *Morte*, curiosity lends itself naturally to the search for the person behind the name, therefore applying new import to the author. For example, since the late nineteenth century, the question, ‘who was Sir Thomas Malory?’, has been a constant of Malory studies, resulting in discovery, rejection, and debate, all culminating in the publication of Field’s *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory*, the most comprehensive and authoritative biography of Malory to date.⁵ For Field, building on the work of his predecessors, the answer lies in the

⁴ Field’s edition is published twice, in a two-volume critical edition, with a comprehensive appendix, and in a single-volume student edition, in paperback; see Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. by P.J.C. Field 2 vols (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013); for the single-volume edition, see *Le Morte Darthur: The Definitive Text*, ed. by P.J.C. Field (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2017). For Field’s biography of Malory, see P.J.C. Field, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1993).

⁵ The question was first given in a pamphlet, written by Harvard scholar George Lyman Kittredge; see Kittredge, *Who Was Sir Thomas Malory?* (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1897). Thereafter, interest in this question became a mainstay of Malory studies, resulting in the publication of numerous articles pertaining to have found evidence of various identities for the author of the *Morte*. For an overview, with abstracts of the individual studies published in the early twentieth century, see Page West Life, *Sir Thomas Malory and the Morte Darthur: A Survey of Scholarship and Annotated Bibliography* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988).

Warwickshire knight Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel, identification of whom has been largely accepted within the academy. More today is known about the author of the *Morte* than at any other time in the text's more than five-hundred year history, but the adjectival negation Terence McCarthy adopts in the second quotation remains, despite this, true. Malory is 'unobtrusive', 'reluctant', and detached, and the *Morte* remains, biography notwithstanding, 'an anonymous book'. How have we arrived at this paradox, that on the one hand we know all that can be known about Malory, and on the other he remains anonymous? The answer, again, is given by Field, this time in the introduction to his edition, writing: 'Although the *Morte Darthur* [...] helps to fill out the picture of Malory's life, his life-story yields much less directly useful information about his book.'⁶ The life-records of the Warwickshire candidate tell us much about the life of the fifteenth-century gentry man Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel but little about the book for which he is known. The consequence of this is that Malory remains a remote figure, a printed name with little interpretative value for the reader. As such, we must question the point of authorial biography if the results do not inform our understanding of the text. Would we be any the worse for not knowing the identity of the man who wrote the *Morte Darthur*? If literary biography fails to satisfy an interpretative function, what then is its purpose? In short: does Malory matter, and, if so, what is his function, beyond the biographical? These questions will inform much of the following analysis, which focuses on Malory in more abstract terms than biography typically permits. My interest is not in *the* Malory, the Warwickshire man about whom much has already been written, but in *a* Malory, an idea, an authorial construct, and how such an idea, aided but not dependent upon biographical studies, has shaped the reception of the work with which we are ultimately interested: the *Morte Darthur*.

⁶ Quoted from the introduction to the paperback edition, published in 2017, p. xviii.

In what follows, then, I examine the post-medieval reception of Thomas Malory's late fifteenth-century Arthurian *Le Morte Darthur*, asking two questions: first, how did the *Morte Darthur* attain canonical status? and second, how does the editor shape how the text is received? I approach these questions by investigating how critical and editorial influence have been a deciding factor in how the text has been presented to contemporary readers from the early sixteenth century to the present. My analysis looks at the influence of four editors of the *Morte*, Wynkyn de Worde, Edward Strachey, Eugène Vinaver, and P.J.C. Field, questioning how their respective presentation and editorial approach has shaped the physical appearance of the text, which in turn influences reader expectation. A particular interest of this thesis is how editors and critics have shaped, and been shaped by, the idea of authorship and authorial identity. I contend that the figure of the author is a determining factor to the canonisation of the *Morte* at the beginning of the twentieth century. By examining critical engagement of the *Morte* during the nineteenth century, a crucial period when the text was revived in print after a near two-hundred year absence, I adopt a tripartite system of *retrieval*, *revival* and *consolidation*, which extends from the mid-eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. This approach allows me to examine the transformation of the *Morte* during the nineteenth century from the peripheries of critical acceptance to attaining canonical status, which I argue is largely dependent on growing interest, both philological and biographical, in the figure of the author.

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What Field has to say about Malory in the first introductory quotation is worth pondering a little further because it reveals something about the importance of authorial influence upon a text with an attributable authorial presence; and such a presence is shaped not through biographical research but purely through the knowledge that an author, whose name is known, once existed. What Field has to say about Malory, for example, could never be said of Shakespeare, or Milton – a fact Field himself acknowledges. Shakespeare is, arguably, more famous than any of the plays for which he is known: the name itself conjures authority, sitting comfortably atop the literary canon. We buy into the genius of Shakespeare because we know Shakespeare to be the apotheosis of excellence, the genius to whom all writers are anxious to emulate. The desire to ‘give genius a human face’ has led many scholars to unearth facts about Shakespeare’s life, led even to an often fierce debate about Shakespeare’s identity, but it is the idea of Shakespeare that matters: his influence on style and form, on high and popular culture, his wordplay and literary endurance, all of which combine to establish a whole world of meaning represented by a single name. We are interested in Shakespeare’s plays because Shakespeare wrote them, the very opposite of what Field has to say about Malory.

The ‘we’ to whom Field is referring is not just the critical ‘we’ but the collective: the average reader who, never having read a biography of the writer, or even their work, still knows implicitly who they are and for what they are known. This is the ‘we’ to whom Shakespeare is so famous, and it is the same ‘we’ for whom Malory is hardly known. There is no portrait of Malory hanging in the National Gallery, no blue plaque commemorating his birthplace, and no monument in celebration of the author who gave us the most enduring English-language

version of the Arthurian legend.⁷ Indeed, we might go so far as to say that Malory's name is eclipsed by that of his subject, King Arthur, for whom there is a widespread public awareness. Malory the author, the man, and the idea feature hardly at all in public consciousness, displaced by the idea of the legend about which he wrote.

Malory is doubly anonymous then, first to the general 'we' who are not conscious of the influence he continues to exert upon the wider dissemination of the Arthurian legend, and second to the critical 'we', the scholar, for whom the evidence contained within Malory's biography fails to reconcile man and work. Our interest in Malory is not wholly non-existent, however, merely dependent upon our interest in the *Morte Darthur*. And in this there is no dearth of critical engagement. Indeed, while not reaching the same heights of that attained by the works of Geoffrey Chaucer or William Langland, critical interest in the *Morte* remains active and productive, with new studies published yearly, including the updated *A New Companion to Malory*, published in 2019.⁸ The *Companion* is perhaps the most important

⁷ In 'Biography: Cult as Culture', Jürgen Schlaeger gives an invaluable account of the cultural value of biography as it pertains specifically to a British consciousness, arguing that, unlike in Germany and France, for example, biography has become a 'cult' to the British, as seen through the various biographical representations such as the English Heritage Blue Plaque, Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey, and the dearth of literary and historical biographies printed with English publishers each year. See, Jürgen Schlaeger, 'Biography: Cult as Culture', in *The Art of Literary Biography*, ed. by John Bathcelor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 57-71.

⁸ Megan G. Leitch and Cory James Rushton, *A New Companion to Malory* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2019). This companion is intended to be an update of the previous *Companion to Malory*, published in 1997, taking into account new critical perspectives and scholarship. See *A Companion to Malory*, ed. by Elizabeth Archibald and A.S.G. Edwards (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997). In addition to the *New Companion*, a recent volume of the journal *Arthurian Literature*, the thirty-seventh iteration, is dedicated to Malory, with the subtitle, 'Malory at

piece of scholarship on the *Morte* to have been published in recent years (Field's edition notwithstanding), offering a synthesis of the previous two decades of Malorian scholarship while introducing new and emerging pathways of critical engagement. Despite what critics such as McCarthy (and even Field, who, as biographer of Malory, commands a great deal of authority in this area) have to say on the difficulty of reconciling the work with the man, the editors of the *Companion*, Megan G. Leitch and Cory James Rushton, nevertheless maintain that 'Critical perceptions of the text have often been keyed to perceptions of its author'.⁹ Malory's 'colourful biography' — Malory was accused of, among other crimes, rape¹⁰ — has and continues to be a useful starting point to critical engagement of the *Morte*, with historical contextualisation being a primary means of interpretation, with particular focus placed on late fifteenth-century gentry, to which Malory belonged, the political and social milieu in which the *Morte* was written, and the wider literary landscape contemporaneous to Malory.¹¹

550: Old and New'. This volume is based on a conference, 'Malory at 550', held in Canada in 2019. The essays in this volume, as in those of the *New Companion*, expand and extend our knowledge of the *Morte*, introducing new topics of critical engagement. See, *Arthurian Literature XXXVII: Malory at 550: Old and New*, ed. by Megan G. Leitch and Kevin S. Whetter (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2022).

⁹ See 'Introduction', *A New Companion to Malory*, pp. 1-11, p. 2.

¹⁰ For an overview of the accusation of rape made against the Warwickshire knight, Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel, see Catherine Batt, 'Malory and Rape', *Arthuriana* 7 (1997), 78-99; see also, Field, *Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory*, esp. pp. 106 and 226. For an overview of Malory as a 'knight-prisoner', and the implications on the text, see Roberta Davidson, 'Prison and Knightly Identity in Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur*', *Arthuriana* 14 (2004), 54-63.

¹¹ For a discussion of the late-fifteenth century gentry to which Malory belonged, see Raluca L. Radulescu, *The Gentry Context for Malory's Morte Darthur* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003); see also, Hyonjin Kim, *The Knight Without the Sword: A Social Landscape of Malorian Chivalry* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000). For an insightful account of the political and social context in which the *Morte* was written, see the essays in *The Social and Literary Contexts of*

The enduring appeal (and, indeed, the utilisation of) Malory's biography contradicts with the near anonymity discussed by McCarthy in the second introductory quotation. Malory matters because scholars continue to contextualise the *Morte* within the historical milieu in which Malory was writing; and his life-records provide fertile ground for such an analysis. When McCarthy refers to the *Morte* as being a near anonymous book, however, he is referring less to the life, of which we know, as Leitch and Rushton write, more 'than is usually the case for medieval authors', but of the personality.¹² Whether it be in Malory's preoccupation with the 'lusty' month of May, 'whan every harte floryshyth and burgenyth', a matter that has been written about at length, or in his concern for fellowship and good lordship, in which Field finds 'the nearest thing to a clear motive apparent' in the life records, Malory's personality is unquestionably so strong 'that we feel a definite desire to know more about the man'.¹³ The problem, however, is that the life records do not meet such a desire. How we perceive Malory solely from our reading of the *Morte Darthur* is frequently absent from, or even contradicted by, the image of Malory contained within the biographical evidence. That is to say, our *idea* of Malory, which comes only from the text, is not mirrored in what we know about *the* Malory,

Malory's Morte Darthur, ed. by D. Thomas Hanks Jr and Jessica G. Brogdon (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000); also, Thomas H. Crofts, *Malory's Contemporary Audience: The Social Reading of Romance in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006); see also, Felicity Riddy's seminal monograph on Malory, *Sir Thomas Malory* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1987); see also, for an in-depth look at the social and literary contexts of romance in fifteenth-century England, including the *Morte*, Raluca L. Radulescu, *Romance and its Contexts in Fifteenth-Century England: Politics, Piety and Penitence* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013), esp. ch. 4. For an overview of the wider literary landscape in which Malory was writing, see Miriam Edlich-Muth, *Malory and His European Contemporaries: Adapting late Arthurian Romance Collections* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2014).

¹² See 'Introduction' to *A New Companion*, p. 3.

¹³ See, for instance, Stephen Atkinson, 'Meaning "sprynghyth, burgenyth, buddyth, and florysshth": Reading Malory's May Passages', *Arthuriana* 25 (2015), 22-32.

of Newbold Revel. This is the anonymity of which McCarthy is discussing: Malory's 'reluctance ever to come forward to express an opinion', the absence of an overt narrative presence, mutes our perception of the author, which in turn leaves the reader wanting to know more about the man than the evidence can give.

The search for Malory's identity and his personality are not wholly indivisible; indeed, the 'desire to give genius a human face' is as much a desire to know who wrote the text, the man, as it is a desire to know why they wrote the text, the author's motivation. However, the object of biography is to separate fact from fiction, to give an overview of the author's life and milieu, evidence permitting, from which the text can then be better understood as indicative of the contemporary moment at which it was written. The idea of capturing the author's personality through biography for the purpose of interpretation is, though appealing, wholly unrealistic, especially when taking into account the distance in time and the general dearth of material. The purpose of Malory's biography then is to furnish our understanding of the time in which he lived, not to enhance our perception of the author, who exists solely within the pages of the *Morte*. This version of Malory, the author as opposed to the man, is the *idea* of the author, and it can be found only by assessing what (and how) Malory did, not why. Indeed, we might go so far as to say that the *idea* of the author is not born out of biography but out of our desire to know how and with what they composed the work for which they are known. Indeed, Malory as author was not born out of some obscure archival records offering scant evidence that a man named Malory once existed and therefore that this same man might be he who wrote the *Morte Darthur*. These biographical records certainly enhance the idea of the author, but they are not its creation. Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel is not the author of the *Morte*; he is man who probability suggests wrote the *Morte* in the last decades of the fifteenth century. The author did not live, he is made, and his creation depends on the mutability of literary posterity.

As we will see in this thesis, the revival of the *Morte* in the early nineteenth century, after an absence in print of nearly two centuries, precipitated the revival of its author, Malory, but they are not indivisible. That is to say, the revival of the text did not result in the automatic revival of Malory. Early nineteenth-century editors and critics of the *Morte* failed to acknowledge Malory's authorship, actively conspiring against such a concept, in fact, which in turn undermined Malory's status. Such censure was the result of critical opinion of the *Morte* as a translation, and therefore of Malory as a translator, lacking in originality. This view proliferated for much of the nineteenth century, until, in 1868, one editor, Edward Strachey, revised critical opinion and arrived at an entirely different conclusion: the *Morte* is not lacking in originality, and Malory is undoubtedly an author.¹⁴ This view, in turn, led to a re-evaluation of the *Morte* towards critical acceptance, and marks the beginning of the *idea* of the author of the *Morte* – that is, the *idea* of Malory. In this thesis, I provide an in-depth assessment of how Strachey arrives at this conclusion. I contrast editorial practice of Malory's early nineteenth-century editors with that of Strachey, posing the question: what are the implications of nineteenth-century criticism and editorial practice on the presentation of the author of the *Morte*? To answer this question, it is necessary to address critical perceptions of Malory's composition of the *Morte*. I examine, for instance, why some nineteenth-century critics judged him to be a translator and others an author. The answer, I maintain, lies in how critics perceived Malory to have handled his French and English sources, a matter that has received more critical interest than almost any other element of study of the *Morte Darthur*.

¹⁴ Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur. Sir Thomas Malory's Book of King Arthur and of his Noble Knights of the Round Table*, ed. by Edward Strachey, Bart. (London: Macmillan and Co, Limited, 1868).

Questions pertaining to what Malory did, how he composed the *Morte Darthur* and with what, have been a commonplace component of Malory studies for the last hundred years, much of which is built on the foundational work done by nineteenth-century editors and critics. Throughout the *Morte Darthur*, frequent reference is made to the French book ('as the freynshe booke sayth'), an oft-discussed phrase in the text with which Malory makes repeated reference to an earlier, antecedent source in an attempt to, as Robert H. Wilson has written, 'bolster a statement which might not be believed'.¹⁵ Of the more than seventy references to the 'French book', most are fictitious, that is, as Malory's most important twentieth-century editor, Eugène Vinaver, has written, Malory's frequent appeals to a French source represent 'a device which he shares with many medieval writers, that of concealing his originality by alleging non-existent sources'.¹⁶ Some of these appeals are, as Wilson maintains, accurate insofar that they correspond closely to an antecedent source, but most are of Malory's own invention. For the present purpose, however, the importance of such an appeal to a French source is in what it tells us about the composition of the *Morte Darthur*. Malory drew from a wealth of sources, in both English and French, most of which pre-dating the *Morte* by over a century.¹⁷ At the time Malory came to compose the *Morte* (indeed, his reason for doing so) the Arthurian legend was known through tales circulating in manuscript, such as the anonymous Alliterative *Morte Arthure* and the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*, both of which Malory used in his composition of the

¹⁵ Robert H. Wilson, 'Malory's "French Book" Again', *Comparative Literature* 2 (1950), 172-181 (176); see also, Roberta Davidson, 'The "Freynshe booke" and the English Translator: Malory's "Originality" Revisited', *Translation and Literature* 17 (2008), 133-49.

¹⁶ Vinaver, *Works*, III, p. 286; see also p. 913.

¹⁷ For an overview of Malory's sources, see Ralph Norris, *Malory's Library: The Sources of the Morte Darthur* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), and also P.J.C. Field, *Malory: Texts and Sources* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1998). Norris's full-length monograph is the first place to begin an exploration of Malory's source. For a condensed version of Norris's argument, however, see his essay, 'Malory and His Sources', in *A New Companion*, pp. 32-53.

Morte.¹⁸ The French tradition, too, of which Malory made ample use, is replete with versions of the Arthurian story, including the long *Vulgate Cycle*, featuring tales such as the *Queste del Saint Graal* and *La mort Artu*, both prominent sources for the *Morte*. The popularity of the Arthurian legend in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Europe is measured by the quantity of manuscripts circulating that give some version of the legend.¹⁹ By the 1460s, however, the decade in which Malory began to compose the *Morte*, what was missing was an account of the Arthurian story, from beginning to end, adapted from the French romance tradition for the English reader. With the various sources from the French and English tradition at his disposal, Malory endeavoured to fill this gap. As Ralph Norris has written:

Arthurian literature did contain a gap, however, which Malory filled admirably. As Caxton notes in his preface to the *Morte Darthur*, the whole story of Arthur's life as it appears in the French romances had never been presented in English. In producing what is essentially a brief English Arthurian prose cycle, Malory retold the old story in a way that incorporated elements from many strands of Arthurian legend and therefore brought a measure of hitherto unrealized harmony to this diverse body.²⁰

'Translator', 'compiler', 're-teller', 'storyteller', 'adapter': all of these have been used to characterise Malory's handling of his sources, and each of them, with their focus on adaptation

¹⁸ For an overview of Malory's use of these sources, see the special issue of the journal *Arthuriana* dedicated to re-evaluating Malory's use of the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* and the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*: *Arthuriana*, 28 (2018).

¹⁹ For an overview of Arthurian literature pre-dating Malory, see Richard J. Moll, *Before Malory: Reading Arthur in Late Medieval England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

²⁰ Norris, *Malory's Library*, pp. 3-4.

rather than originality, subtly undermines Malory's status as author. But can the same not be said of Tennyson, or of Edmund Spenser, both of whom adapted Arthurian and non-Arthurian sources, the *Morte* in particular, in the composition of their own Arthurian-inspired work: the *Idylls of the King* for Tennyson, and *The Faerie Queene* for Spenser? How do critical perceptions of authorship in Tennyson and Spenser influence similar such perceptions of Malory, a question that will be addressed in chapter one. My conclusion in chapter one is that the reading of Malory's sources by Strachey in 1868 — not just knowledge of them, as earlier nineteenth-century editors have already proved, but a close reading, conducted alongside the *Morte* — influenced critical appraisal of the *Morte*, opening a space in which Malory as author, rather than just compiler, could begin to be considered. This philologically derived author-figure, dependent entirely on the editor or critic, was then, as the century progressed, strengthened by the advances made in biographical criticism to provide Malory with a real identity. I contend that Malory the *writer* (who lived) and Malory the *author* (who is made) are two entirely different concepts. However, knowledge of both lends itself to the corroboration of the author-figure, meeting the critical desire to 'give genius a human face'. As the twentieth-century opens, Malory's authorship is largely accepted, and his identity is known, both of which, when combined, endorse the *Morte's* entrance into the literary canon.

Indeed, one of the primary objectives of this thesis is to address how the *Morte* attained canonisation by the beginning of the twentieth century. That the *Morte* is today canonical is in no doubt, being one of the most important works of late medieval literature. But texts and authors do not become canonical simply because they are read. Canonicity is the ultimate indication of critical acceptance, and for much of the nineteenth century, the *Morte*, while read, failed to attain critical acceptance, largely, I am arguing, due to the perceived shortcomings of its 'compiler'. Before any discussion of Malory takes place, however, another factor must be

addressed, which also influences the *Morte*'s slow progress to canonicity: at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the *Morte* was virtually unknown, except by a handful of learned critics.

The print history of the *Morte* has been much discussed, particularly by Barry Gaines and Siân Echard, among others, but it is worth giving a brief overview, as the background to this thesis lies in the timeframe in print of the *Morte*.²¹ Printed first by William Caxton in 1485, this was then followed by five black-letter editions over a 150 year period, with two editions printed by Caxton's successor, Wynkyn de Worde, in 1498 and 1529, the latter the subject of chapter three of this thesis. A further two editions were printed in the sixteenth century: in 1557, by William Copland, and 1578, by Thomas East. The last of the black-letter editions, printed by William Stansby, appeared in 1634.²² After the Stansby Malory, 182 years would pass before the *Morte* was revived in print. In 1816, two editions were printed simultaneously, edited by Alexander Chalmers and Joseph Haslewood respectively.²³ This was then followed,

²¹ Barry Gaines, *Sir Thomas Malory: An Anecdotal Bibliography of Editions, 1485-1985* (New York: AMS Press, 1985). This is an indispensable resource, giving an in-depth overview of every edition published since 1485. See also, Siân Echard, 'Malory in Print', in *A New Companion to Malory*, pp. 96-125.

²² For the Caxton Malory, see *Le Morte D'Arthur Printed by William Caxton 1485: Reproduced in Facsimile from the copy in the Pierpoint Morgan Library, New York, with an introduction by Paul Needham* (London: The Scolar Press in association with the Pierpoint Morgan library, 1975). For the 1634 edition, see Sir Thomas Malory, *The Most Famous and Ancient history of the Renowned Prince Arthur, King of Britaine*, ed. by William Stansby (London: Printed by William Stansby for Jacob Blome, 1634).

²³ For the two 1816 editions, see Sir Thomas Malory, *The History of the Renowned Prince Arthur; with his Life and Death, and All His Glorious Battles. Likewise the noble Acts and Heroic Deeds of his Valiant Knights of the Round Table*, ed. by Alexander Chalmers, II vols (London: J. Walker and Co, 1816); Sir Thomas Malory, *The most ancient and famous History of the Renowned Prince Arthur, and the Knights of the Round Table. By Sir Thomas Malory*,

in 1817, by another edition, edited by William Upcott and with an introduction by Poet Laureate Robert Southey.²⁴ Four decades would pass before the next edition, printed in three volumes and edited by Thomas Wright, was published in 1858.²⁵ This is followed, in 1868, by the aforementioned Strachey edition, published by Macmillan, and reprinted continually thereafter. By the end of the nineteenth century, more editions are printed, ranging from a three-volume critical edition, edited by H. Oskar Sommer in 1889-91, to mass-market single-volume editions, such as that edited by Ernest Rhys, and deluxe editions, most famously that of 1893-94, with illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley. Many of these editions will be referred to throughout this study. What is important for now, however, is that the *Morte* was out of print for nearly two-hundred years.

Knt, ed. by, Joseph Haslewood, III vols (London: R. Wilkes, 89, Chancery Lane, 1816). For an overview of these two 1816 editions, see Barry Gaines, 'The Editions of Malory in the Early Nineteenth Century,' *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 68 (1974), 1-17. For an updated overview of these editions, see the introduction to the facsimile edition of the 1816 and 1817 editions, printed with an introduction by Yuri Fuwa: *The Morte Darthur: A Collection of Early Nineteenth-Century Editions*, ed. by Yuri Fuwa (Tokyo: Edition Synapse, 2017)

²⁴ Sir Thomas Malory, *The byrth, lyf, and actes of Kyng Arthur; of his noble knyghtes of the Rounde Table, theyr merveyllous enquestes and adventures, thachyeung of the Sanc Greal; and in the end le Morte Darthur, with the dolorous deth and departing out of thys world of them al*, ed. by Thomas Upcott with an introduction and glossary by Robert Southey (London: Longman, 1817).

²⁵ For the 1858 edition, see Sir Thomas Malory, *The History of King Arthur and of the Knights of the Round Table. Compiled by Sir Thomas Malory, Knt. Edited from the text of the edition of 1634, with an introduction and notes by Thomas Wright*, III vols (London: John Russell Smith, 1858).

The coincidence of three separate editions printed within a two-year window after such a long absence in print has not been lost on critics, although most critics, the most important of whom is Gaines, whose *Anecdotal Bibliography of Editions of the Morte* remains an indispensable resource, tend to discuss the circumstances of how the *Morte* was revived in print, rather than the context precipitating its revival. By this I mean that the *Morte* needed first to attain some level of critical consciousness before it could be revived. Such consciousness I refer to as *retrieval*. I argue that *revival* requires *retrieval*. The first is witnessed by a physical appearance of the text, in print, for instance, after a prolonged absence, at which time it is *revived*. The second refers more to the *idea* of the text: retrieval is suggestive of a state of consciousness. The critic is conscious of the text, reads it, writes about it, and therefore ensures peripheral acknowledgement, not enough to provoke immediate revival, but enough to precipitate a revival. To make this point, I draw on the work of eighteenth-century critic Thomas Warton, whose 1754 *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser* provided the impetus for the *Morte's* retrieval, which in turn began a sixty-year process of revival.²⁶ Warton's influence on the *Morte*, especially in relation to his *Observations*, has been written about at length, particularly by Arthur Johnston and David Fairer, both of whom stress that Warton's study represents the first critical appraisal of the *Morte*.²⁷ Warton's reading of the text was not due to its innate literary qualities – such a view would come much later. He wanted to know more about Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, specifically how and with what he composed

²⁶ Thomas Warton, *The Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser* (London: printed for R. and J. Dodsley; and J. Fletcher, 1754); all references to the *Observations* follow the online edition accessible via 'Eighteenth Century Collections Online' <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/ecco/004884515.0001.000?view=toc>.

²⁷ Arthur Johnston, *Enchanted Ground: The Study of Medieval Romance in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Athlone Press, 1964); David Fairer, 'The Origins of Warton's *History of English Poetry*', *The Review of English Studies* 32 (1981), 37-63.

his epic allegorical poem. Consequently, Warton endeavoured to unearth those texts Spenser used as a source in the composition of his poem, the *Morte Darthur* included. Previous criticism has discussed the influence exerted over the *Morte* by way of the *Observations*, but detail is lacking, especially in regard to Malory's new-found connection to Spenser. During the eighteenth century, Spenser was regarded as being at the apex of the literary canon, and his work was continually printed, as Hazel Wilkinson has observed in her book *Edmund Spenser and the Eighteenth-Century Book*.²⁸ My contention is that Spenser's status, not enough to lead to a direct revival of the *Morte*, nevertheless raised it to the peripheries of the literary canon, with Warton's *Observations* the key to such a retrieval. Malory, in short, is connected to a canonical writer, and is therefore worthy of review.

In support of this argument, I turn to studies such as Johnathon Brody Kramnick's *Making the English Canon: Print Capitalism and the Cultural Past, 1700-1770* and William Kuskin's *Recursive Origins: Writing at the Transition to Modernity*.²⁹ Kramnick contends that eighteenth-century critics constructed a literary canon that was not conducive to literary taste or accessibility, but, on the contrary, was based on those text that were regarded for their inaccessibility to the average reader. The *Faerie Queene*, for instance, is difficult to read, not only in style and substance, but because it embodies a vast store of earlier literature of which the reader must be familiar to conduct an accurate reading of the poem. The purpose of

²⁸ Hazel Wilkinson, *Edmund Spenser and the Eighteenth-Century Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

²⁹ Johnathon Brody Kramnick, *Making the English Canon: Print Capitalism and the Cultural Past, 1700-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). See also, Johnathon Brody Kramnick, 'The Making of the English Canon,' *PMLA* 112 (1997), 1087-1101; William Kuskin, *Recursive Origins: Writing at the Transition to Modernity* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007)

Warton's *Observations* was to encourage such familiarity, bringing together the majority of Spenser's sources. For Kramnick, canon building is a practice of exclusion. Not only is the critic exclusive, in their own way, being one of a small number whose influence determines the canonical from the non-canonical. But the text, too, must be exclusive; it must be difficult to read, and therefore accessible only to the critic who is capable of such an exclusive reading. Such a reading, however, requires the eighteenth-century reader to be familiar with the literature of and before the author's time. Warton reads Spenser who read Malory, and in turn, he writes about the *Morte* because Spenser knew it. This is what Kuskin calls *recursion*. Literature is not, according to Kuskin, divided into distinct periods, separate to each other, but is in fact brought together through the recursive act of reading. If an eighteenth-century critic reads a sixteenth-century poem from which he is introduced to a fifteenth-century tale, this is recursion: period dissolves in the face of only one critic's literary exploits.

By reading Warton's *Observations* in this way I advance the arguments put forward by Johnston and Fairer, arguing that Malory was retrieved through his connection to the ultimate canonical figure, Spenser. My argument is supported — and, indeed, analogous to — what Yuri Fuwa has to say about the revival of interest in Malory's first printer, William Caxton, during the eighteenth century.³⁰ For Fuwa, the revival of Caxton brought about renewed attention to Malory's text through Caxton's edition of it. Again, this is not enough to secure the revival of the *Morte*, but it is enough to ensure its *retrieval*, setting a precedent for its eventual revival. My own argument draws a parallel with Fuwa's, arguing that the revival of

³⁰ Yuri Fuwa, 'Paving the Way for The Arthurian Revival: William Caxton and Sir Thomas Malory's King Arthur in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of the International Arthurian Society* 5 (2017), 59-72.

interest in Spenser, like that of Caxton, brought Malory to the attention of those critics best placed to guarantee a small degree of literary posterity for the *Morte*.

In chapter one, I begin my second subchapter, ‘Revival’ chronologically later than is typical when discussing the revival of the *Morte Darthur*. Typically, any discussion of *revival* would begin in 1816, when the *Morte* was revived in print. I begin this subchapter in the latter half of the nineteenth century, however, because my interest in revival is less to do with the text than it is with Malory. To be sure, I argue that Malory’s reputation as *author* of the *Morte* was revived only in 1868, with the publication of Strachey’s edition. My own reading of Strachey’s editorial practice, and of his influential and to-date overlooked conclusions about the author of the *Morte*, are supported by the work of scholars such as Stephen G. Nichols, who argues that the ultimate act of the philologist is, by its very nature, the search for the author-figure.³¹ Strachey was, I contend, a philologist, and as Gaines has noted, he was a ‘most careful editor’.³² Strachey is the first nineteenth-century editor of the *Morte* to conduct an exhaustive assessment of Malory’s sources, which directed his positive opinion about Malory’s authorship. Similar to Nichols’ study on the philological construction of the medieval author, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, too, argues that the intent of the editor is to retrace the author’s steps, to ascertain what the author did: in short, to invent the author as crucial to the practice of editing.³³ This, I contend, is *revival*. It is not a literal revival, as witnessed in 1816, but a figurative revival, with the author conjured by the editor as the ultimate representation of textual authority. If Warton,

³¹ Stephen G. Nichols, ‘The Medieval “Author”: An Idea Whose Time Hadn’t Come?’, in *The Medieval Author in Medieval French Literature*, ed. by Virginie Greene (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 177-203

³² Gaines, *Anecdotal Bibliography*, p. 22.

³³ Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *The Power of Philology: Dynamics and Textual Scholarship* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

a century earlier, began the process by which the *Morte* could be revived in print, then Strachey began the process by which Malory could be revived in thought. Strachey acknowledged and celebrated Malory's authorship, establishing the beginning of critical acceptance, and precipitating Malory's entrance into the literary canon.

However, by the end of the nineteenth century, the *Morte* was a well-established and oft-printed text, and Malory's reputation had vastly improved, but there remained one drawback to final acceptance of the text into the canon: the absence of biography. Nothing was known about Malory besides his name. Of course, as I have already stated, biography itself does not create the author, but it does enhance the author, especially for the critic. Myriad studies have focused on the importance of the author as crucial to the final acceptance of the text. About the medieval author, critical studies have shown a particular interest in the nineteenth-century reception of Geoffrey Chaucer and William Langland. C. David Benson and Sarah Kelen note about Langland, for instance, who, like Malory, was virtually unknown to nineteenth-century readers, that biography was so important to (indeed, a deciding factor in) the canonisation of his fourteenth-century allegorical poem *Piers Plowman* that editors constructed a pseudo-biography based on tenuous information in order to satisfy such a demand.³⁴ This had the effect, as Benson notes, of rescuing the poet from obscurity, securing him a place in the canon. About the nineteenth-century reception of Chaucer there is no dearth of critical studies. Geoffrey W. Gust, Thomas A. Prendergast, and, in particular, David Matthews write about the various pictorial and biographical elements incorporated into nineteenth-century editions of Chaucer's

³⁴ C. David Benson, *Public Piers Plowman: Modern Scholarship and Late Medieval English Culture* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); C. David Benson, 'The Langland Myth', in *William Langland's Piers Plowman: A Book of Essays*, ed. by, Kathleen M. Hewett-Smith (London, New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 83-103; Sarah Kelen, *Langland's Early Modern Identities* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

work intended to satisfy the demand for an established authorial presence.³⁵ Indeed, Matthews notes that the author-figure was perhaps the most significant deciding factor in the canonisation of the text. The work of these critics will inform much of my argument about the nineteenth-century reception of Malory in chapter one.

Despite the breadth of studies written on the reception of Chaucer and Langland during the nineteenth century, especially on the significance of authorial identity and canonisation, there is a surprising lack of similar such analysis of Malory. To date, no study has attempted to examine how the foundation of biographical criticism of the *Morte*, beginning with Kittredge in 1894, directly impacted on the reception of the text. The argument in chapter one situates closely with what critics have to say on the construction and reception of Chaucer and Langland during the nineteenth century. Specifically, I argue that biographical criticism of Malory was useful less in what it tells us about the historical writer but more about how biography feeds

³⁵ See, for instance, ‘David Matthews, ‘Speaking to Chaucer: the Poet and the Nineteenth-Century Academy,’ in *Medievalism and the Academy, I*. Studies in Medievalism, ed. by David Metzger, Kathleen Verduin, and Leslie J. Workman (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 5-25; Geoffrey Gust, *Constructing Chaucer: Author and Autofiction in the Critical Tradition* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); for an overview of the inception of biographical depictions of Chaucer in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see David Hopkins and Tom Mason, *Chaucer in the Eighteenth Century: The Father of English Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022); Thomas A. Prendergast, *Chaucer’s Dead Body: From Corpse to Corpus* (New York: Routledge, 2009); for an insightful reading of the way scholars have, since the nineteenth century, responded to Chaucer and his work, see Kathy Cawsey, *Twentieth-Century Chaucer Criticism: Reading Audiences* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); Steve Ellis examines Chaucer’s impact on the academic and non-academic world of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; see Steve Ellis, *Chaucer at Large: The Poet in the Modern Imagination* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota press, 2000).

the critical desire to ‘give genius a human face’. In short, Malory’s biography is more useful to the direction of critical appreciation than it is to critical engagement.

Malory’s biography provides, as I am arguing, the key to canonisation, but it needs to be first accepted and second utilised for it to make any difference. For this reason, the third and final part of my argument in chapter one, ‘Consolidation’, is so called because we witness in the opening decades of the twentieth century a consolidation of Malory’s biography into critical engagement of the *Morte*. Critics not only accept Malory’s biography but they actively attempt to assimilate it into their readings of the text, the ultimate act of consolidation, which reinforces the idea of the author because the author is no longer a purely philologically derived creation, but a writer, a real person with whom the critic can, figuratively speaking, interact. By engaging with the work of literary theorists such as Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes, I consider how the name and biography of the author become sites of critical interest. For Foucault, the name of the author and, if it is available, the biography, generate the idea of the author, but the author is external to the text; no trace of the author comes from the text. When Malory names himself in a colophon to the *Morte*, this is not the author speaking, but the writer. The author is established only once the critic has accepted the name as authorial. Writers inhabit the past; authors are always situated in the present. And they evolve, too, so that, say, Strachey’s idea of Malory is not the same as a later editor’s. Working within these parameters, I define early twentieth-century scholarship on the *Morte* as an act of acceptance and acknowledgement, leading to the consolidation of Malory’s status as author, and procuring a place for the *Morte* within the literary canon.

Methodology and Approaches

This thesis addresses critical and editorial engagement with the *Morte Darthur* as indicative of reader response and as a deciding factor in both the canonisation of the text at the beginning of the twentieth century and in how the text, and with it the figure of the author, has been shaped by successive editors. The decisions made by editors as regards to the presentation of the text have profound ramifications on the future of interpretation and reader/critical engagement. The edition, in other words, is a site of interpretation, and even small details such as the implementation of modern conventions concerning punctuation or the introduction of a contents page fulfil an interpretative function. This thesis is primarily concerned with determining such a function for a selection of editions of the *Morte* printed since the early sixteenth century. While I place the figure of the author as a determinative factor in the process of canonisation, my interest too is in how the role of the editor fulfils certain requirements that also contribute to the canonical status of the text. I examine, for instance, how the *mise-en-page* of respective editions contributes to the idea of the text, which in turn adds value to the text because it encourages critical engagement, which is the foundation upon which acceptance of the text is established.

In examining various editions of the *Morte* to reveal how they have shaped critical and later editorial engagement, my choice of texts has been necessarily selective. This thesis is not intended to be an exhaustive account of the chronology of editions and witnesses to the *Morte* since its inception. The most important witnesses to the text, for instance, the Winchester Manuscript and the Caxton edition, are read only to provide necessary background to the editions under consideration. In my choice of editions to examine, I have also adopted a non-linear and occasionally divergent chronology. Chapter one, for instance, examines Strachey's

1868 edition based on my argument that it represents a turnaround in the critical reception of the *Morte*, a method of reading this edition which has hitherto been ignored. Strachey's edition, in short, rehabilitates the figure of the author, setting a precedent from which the author is re-established alongside the text, providing, as I am arguing, the first step towards canonisation. In chapter two, I review the editions of Vinaver, first published in 1947, and Field, published in 2013, with a view to examining how the *mise-en-page* of these editions reflect different notions of authorship and conjure the idea of the author in wholly divergent ways. In my assessment of these two editions, I examine how the *mise-en-page* reflects each editor's respective views regarding structural unity of the *Morte*, which in itself broaches upon the question of authorial intent, thus also adding to material notions of the idea of the author.

The 1947 edition represents a profound turning point in critical engagement of the *Morte*, as it is based on a witness, the Winchester Manuscript, that had only been discovered the previous decade. Perhaps no edition more so than Vinaver's has generated greater critical debate, which in itself is enough to secure a place for the text within the canon of medieval literature. Indeed, as Ankhi Mukherjee writes in her attempt to answer the question 'What is a classic?', 'classic and canonical works usher in a polymorphous textuality that literary cultures value, and both involve criticism or interpretative traditions that contest the definition of literary value'.³⁶ An edition is valuable to the critic only if it furnishes them with the opportunity to engage, at an interpretative level, with the practices that have informed its composition, be they ideological, methodological, epistemological, or relating to the material (visual) presentation of the text. Indeed, as David Matthews writes in his 2015 study *Medievalism: A Critical History*, 'editions [of medieval texts] which aim to reconstruct originals are themselves postmedieval artefacts.'

³⁶ Ankhi Mukherjee, "'What Is a Classic?': International Literary Criticism and the Classic Question', *PMLA* 125 (2010), 1026-42 (1028).

Their originary purity is all too easily exposed as coloured by contemporary ideologies and ways about going about things'.³⁷ This is further repeated in the introduction to a 2018 collection of essays edited by Raluca Radulescu and Margaret Connolly, *Editing and Interpretation of Middle English Texts* in which the editors define an edition as 'essentially an extended interpretation of that text, hopefully well-informed and even-handed, but inevitably influenced by individual knowledge, perspective, and cultural milieu'.³⁸ The involvement of what Mukherjee terms 'criticism or interpretative traditions' in the wider cultural creation of a 'classic' begins, I argue, especially where medieval literature is concerned, of which the original, authorial text is rarely extant, with the editor. The editor establishes the means by which an edition is received by the critic, whose role is then to identify what the editor has done in order to assess the value of the editor's practice as it colours and modifies the product that is the critic's primary concern: the work. My concern, for example, as critic, is with the *Morte*, and to arrive at my own interpretative vision, I approach the *Morte* through various editions, each of which inform my understanding, not of Malory's practice, but of the editor's. I approach the author through the editor, which is true of our reading of most texts that fall under the umbrella of medieval literature. As such, arguably, the editor's intentions are just as important as those of the author. Only by examining the influence exerted by the editor can we begin to address questions of reception and critical engagement.

Mukherjee argues, also, that the criticism and interpretative traditions 'contest the definition of literary value'.³⁹ What is this contest? My approach to reading the *Morte* suggests that it is

³⁷ David Matthews, *Medievalism: A Critical History* (Cambridge: D.S Brewer, 2017), p. 173.

³⁸ Margaret Connolly and Raluca Radulescu, 'Introduction', in *Editing and Interpretation of Middle English Texts: Essays in Honour of William Marx*, ed. by Margaret Connolly and Raluca Radulescu (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), pp. 1-21, p. 1.

³⁹ Mukherjee, p. 1028.

a contest in critical interpretation influenced by editorial practice. As I will explore in chapter one, Malory's early nineteenth-century editors based their assessment of Malory's authorship, which was wholly negative, on the results of their own uninformed and frequently prejudiced views about the nature of authorship in the *Morte*. As these editors contributed little to the wider editorial project of rehabilitating, or rescuing, the text from previous editorial shortcomings, nothing of any real value could be found about Malory. Early nineteenth-century editors of the *Morte* therefore set the scene for the majority of nineteenth-century criticism, which would recycle prejudicial views in the absence of sustained engagement. Such an engagement would only occur, in the first instance, with Strachey, whose practice, far more balanced than that of his nineteenth-century predecessors, rehabilitated the *Morte* towards a fairer and more positive view about the nature of authorial composition. This is contest. It is generational. It is witnessed by a changing tone, a critical inclination towards review and re-examination. In short, contest is the method by which the text is redefined by one critic in order to address the views of previous critics. Literary value is measured based on such an approach because it is constantly being replenished by the views of new critics who operate in accordance with differing theoretical principles. This establishes the text as a classic because it keeps the text at the forefront of critical discourse, with the edition as the focal point of such interpretative engagement.

Indeed, the edition is itself a point of contest. Field notes about his own editorial approach to the *Morte* for example that it is directly influenced by and in opposition to Vinaver's practice, writing, 'Five years of close engagement with Vinaver's editing convinced me that his editorial principles had often prevented him from recovering Malory's words from the corruptions introduced by early scribes and compositors'.⁴⁰ This, again, is contest. It is not competition or

⁴⁰ *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. by Field, p. ix.

conflict, but challenge. Field operates in accordance with an entirely different approach to methodology, which in turn challenges that seen in Vinaver's edition. As the critic engages with the contrasting practice of these two editors, they establish the edition as a site of interpretation, which in turn builds on previous criticism and opens a space for future examination. The contest, or challenge, defines literary value because it constantly opens new methods of critical enquiry. If I ask the question, as I am in fact doing in this thesis, what has Field done? I must inevitably also ask the same about Vinaver, which then leads me to look further back to establish the foundation upon which he was working. Such an analysis, as this thesis claims to be, synthesises past criticism in order to explore the changing directions in the reception of the text.

Indeed, the first two chapters of this thesis engage with notions of authorship, first to question how it is central to the canonisation of the text, and second to determine how the figure of the author is treated in the editions of Vinaver and Field. These chapters cover a period of nearly three-hundred years, from the mid eighteenth century to the publication of Field's edition in 2013. Chapter three, however, looks back to a much earlier, black-letter edition, printed by de Worde in 1529. My decision to leap back through so many centuries to an earlier edition may appear at a remove from the content of the earlier chapters. However, I contend that this edition, much like Field's, also presents a challenge to Vinaver's mid twentieth-century edition, albeit in wholly divergent ways. De Worde's edition, his second, set the blueprint for every succeeding black-letter edition, and in fact many of the material aspects of this edition, such as de Worde's distribution of Caxton's table of rubric to create chapter headings, can still be seen in late nineteenth-century editions, Strachey's included. Indeed, it would not be far from the truth to state that, prior to Vinaver's edition, de Worde's was perhaps the most influential edition on how the text was presented. As such, Vinaver's edition, based on a newly discovered

witness, represents what Kevin Grimm has noted to be a reconceptualization of the parameters set by de Worde four hundred years earlier.⁴¹ De Worde's influence, like that of Strachey's in the nineteenth century, or Vinaver's in the twentieth century, and like Field's for the twenty-first century, had far-reaching outcomes on the packaging and reception of the *Morte*. He introduced chapter divisions, punctuation, woodcuts, and book titles where they were absent in the Caxton Malory. Most of these additions, which first appeared in de Worde's 1498 edition, have been the subject of previous criticism. Another addition, however, which has yet to receive any critical notice, is the introduction of parentheses, round brackets, to the text of the 1529 edition, a unique feature of this edition. My reading of parentheses in this edition is premised less on modern definitions of parentheses, as framing material that is extraneous to the text proper, for instance, but instead argues for an interpretative function indicative of reader response. In short, parentheses are used to signpost to the reader passages of texts that are thematically important. In this way, parentheses offer a glimpse into which aspects of the text were considered significant to one of Malory's earliest editors.

De Worde's reach could still be felt well into the nineteenth century, which will be seen in my synthesis of critical and bibliographic work on the *Morte* at this time. In particular, the 1529 edition includes a unique variant reading that would appear in every edition (but one) before 1858. This reading is extremely important, but has to date been almost totally overlooked. De Worde replaced the name of the knight Sir Ector for that of Sir Bors in the famous eulogy for Lancelot at the end of the text, which is widely considered to be the most famous passage in

⁴¹ Kevin Grimm, 'Wynkyn de Worde and the Creation of Malory's *Morte Darthur*', in *The Social and Literary Contexts of Malory's 'Morte Darthur'* ed. by D. Thomas Hanks Jr and Jessica Brogdon (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000), pp. 134-55.

the *Morte Darthur*. This passage, then, which is commonly called Ector's threnody, would for over three-hundred years belong to Bors.

In chapter two, I consider the *mise-en-page* of Vinaver's and Field's editions as indicative of their respective attitude towards authorship. Also in this chapter I want to consider how paratextual aspects of the text reveal their respective notion of narrative unity, Field in favour, and Vinaver against. Of the latter, who believed the *Morte* to be a collection of individual tales, this view can be contested by what is written in chapter three about parentheses in the 1529 edition. I argue that parentheses, which appear throughout the edition, are based on specific themes, such as the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere, that are not unique to any single section or 'book' of the text, but appear throughout. I read parentheses as forming clusters from which thematic import can be ascertained. A single example in book two of de Worde's edition, for instance, relates to another example in book twenty. Is this not unity? Vinaver finds in the *Morte* as absence of thematic unity, which guides his decision to present the *Morte* as a collection of tales. De Worde, conversely, recognises the thematic unity of the *Morte* and draws attention to it through the implementation of parentheses. Again, is this not contest? A single feature of an early black-letter edition, when read critically, challenges a unique feature of a mid-twentieth-century edition. We cannot read any one edition in a vacuum. On the contrary, we must examine any one edition as belonging to a genealogical line of descent. The editor is concerned with challenging and ultimately improving the text from how it is handed down in previous editions. The literary critic, however, is concerned with the

impact these editions have on the overall reception of the text. As Vinaver himself has written, the critic is interested primarily ‘in the result, not in the intention’.⁴²

This thesis is driven more by a research question than by any methodological or disciplinary tradition, and individual chapters adhere to specific parameters and methodologies, with the whole bringing together multiple approaches to address questions relating to reception, authorial identity and editorial influence. The content of this thesis might be read within the parameters of reception studies, which is itself an important component of the wider umbrella term *medievalism*.⁴³ Indeed, in his 2017 *Medievalism: A Manifesto*, Richard Utz draws attention to the need for scholars of medieval and medievalism studies to interrogate the careers and published work of their predecessors in order to better understand their contributing ‘role in the long history of the reception of the medieval artefact or practice under investigation’.⁴⁴ The background for such an investigation is replete with studies that have attempted to situate our current understanding of medieval studies within the last two centuries of academic progress. Critics such as Jerome McGann, R. Howard Bloch, Stephen G. Nichols, Richard Utz and David Matthews among others have exerted a huge influence over the growing discipline of medievalism studies, which is the study of the reception of the medieval work across various post-medieval mediums.⁴⁵ Works such as *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper, Rethinking*

⁴² Vinaver, ‘A Letter to C.S. Lewis’, in *Essays on Malory*, ed. by J.A.W. Bennet (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963); reprinted in Vinaver, *On Art and Nature and Other Essays*, ed. by W.R.J. Barron (Exeter: Short Run Press, 2000), p. 6.

⁴³ See *Medievalism: Key Critical Terms*, ed. by Elizabeth Emery and Richard Utz (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2014).

⁴⁴ Richard Utz, *Medievalism: A Manifesto* (Kalamazoo and Bradford: Arc Humanities Press, 2017), p. 82.

⁴⁵ For an overview of the terminology of medievalism, see the various essays in *Medievalism: Key Critical Terms*.

the New Medievalism, and Matthew's aforementioned *Medievalism: A Critical History* have done much to define the parameters by which critics can evaluate the medieval artefact in accordance with multiple practices and methodological approaches.⁴⁶ But the study of medievalism is perhaps most notable for the difficulty of situating it comfortably with any single methodological or disciplinary practice. Indeed, medievalism is best understood as an umbrella term under which multiple approaches can be utilised for the purpose of critical engagement. The current study adheres to such a definition. One part a synthesis of previous literary criticism, one part analysis of the *mise-en-page* of various editions, with additional content focusing on the influence exerted over one editor, Vinaver, by his academic mentor, Joseph Bédier, this study brings together multiple approaches in its attempt to provide an answer to the primary research questions.

In chapter one, I adopt a tripartite method which synthesises critical engagement with the *Morte* from the mid eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century in order to ascertain the extent of editorial influence on critical reception. This approach is as follows:

Retrieval: being a process of recursion, from which the text breaches period boundaries to be read in disparate centuries with a view to ascertaining in the present how a text of the past recalls and is based on a text of a more distant past. Read in this way, Spenser's *Faerie Queene* is a conduit through which earlier (medieval) texts can become known. The process of *retrieval* in turn raises the text to the peripheries of literary consciousness. Retrieval precipitates revival, setting a precedent for the text to return to the literary marketplace.

⁴⁶ R. Howard Bloch *et al*, *Rethinking the New Medievalism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014); R. Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols, *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

Revival: with reference to the *Morte*, this is the moment at which the text is revived in print. For my purpose, however, *revival* refers not to the printed text but to its author. Following the revival of the *Morte*, in 1816, five decades would pass before acknowledgement of Malory's authorship began to be considered. These decades are witnessed by a recycling of the same negative views given by early nineteenth-century critics. The literal revival of the text falls at the behest of its publishers; the figurative revival, which is my interest, rests entirely with the editor. Strachey's editorial practice went further than any of his nineteenth-century predecessors, and consequently endorsed the figurative revival of a philologically derived author-figure. This revival was then enhanced, towards the end of the century, by advancements made in biographical research, which provided verifiable documents in support of the historical Malory. This new-found biography complements the *idea* of the author, because it satisfies a critical need, not only for an author persona, but for an historically verifiable writer. *Revival*, then, refers first, to the acceptance of Malory's authorship, and second, to the acceptance of Malory's biography, both of which combine to establish a secure authorial presence.

Consolidation: consolidation is security, security in knowing that all of the component pieces (biography, the author-figure, originality, the text) are critically accepted. Consolidation is witnessed through the active engagement with and implementation of biography and authorship for the purpose of interpretation. Canonisation is attained through consolidation. For the *Morte*, this process is in place by the early decades of the twentieth century. Critical opinion of the *Morte* shifts, and Malory is placed alongside major canonical figures, such as Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton, a placement that would have been unthinkable the previous century.

This approach informs our understanding of the turnaround in critical opinion of the *Morte* during the nineteenth century. We begin, for example, with Edmund Spenser, whose status and influence is enough during the eighteenth century to *retrieve* Malory to the peripheries of the canon, which leads decades later to the revival of the *Morte* in print. With Spenser, too, does this chapter partially end. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Malory is not subordinate to Spenser, but equal in status. An equal, in short, in the literary canon.

Chapter two continues with the theme of the author but moves beyond a synthesis approach to consider more material aspects, specifically how the presentation of editions either reinforces or undermines authorial influence. In this chapter I review the *mise-en-page* of the editions of Vinaver and Field as indicative of their respective views of authorship. In the first instance, I continue my argument from the previous chapter by examining each editor's critical opinion regarding biographical criticism as it informs our understanding of the *Morte*. Malory's biography, as we have seen, is useful from a practical viewpoint, as a means of establishing and maintaining critical interest, but its use is of limited value with reference to the text. Vinaver remonstrates against utilising the results of biographical studies in relation to Malory as unnecessary to critical interpretation. Field, while admitting to the restrictions biographical studies have for our reading of the *Morte*, nevertheless is in the unique position of having both edited the text and written a biography of its author. In chapter two, then, I conclude that Field's Malory represents *the* Malory, the writer as much as the author, whereas Vinaver's Malory is *a* Malory, an abstract, and frequently remote, figure.

To reach this conclusion, I provide a series of studies on various aspects of the material composition of the editions. I begin by considering the cover-page to Field's edition, arguing that the inclusion of the Malorian coat of arms imposes a verifiable (by which I mean a

biographical) author-figure onto the text. This is *the* Malory because the coat of arms are those of Malory of Newbold Revel. Field's Malory is not an idea or concept, but a real person: the writer. No such entity exists in Vinaver's edition, however. Indeed, I address what I consider to be an irony in the title to Vinaver's edition. *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory* privileges the author, placing him front-and-centre as the authority from whom these 'works' originate. However, if Vinaver's intention as editor was to represent or redefine a version of the text closer to what the author intended, and by doing so establishing the text as genuinely authoritative, then he does so with a heavy hand. To be sure, I am less concerned with the methodological approach of each editor than I am with how the text is visually presented. Field's edition, I argue, is presented as if it were a modern novel. As such, it comes closer to what we, the contemporary, would expect of an authorial text. This establishes an authorial presence which, supported by the Malorian coat of arms appended to the cover-matter of the edition, is rooted in the biographical. Vinaver's edition, on the contrary, could only ever be called an edition, certainly nothing close in appearance to a novel. On every page is the mark of editorial intervention, from critical apparatus to basic editorial symbols, such as brackets. This, I argue, has the effect of undermining the position of the author for that of the editor. Vinaver's edition, in other words, is editorial, not authorial. The reverse is true of Field's edition.

In chapter two, then, I review notions of authorship, both abstract and biographically informed, before moving into an analysis of the paratextual features of each edition as implicitly informing our understanding of the materiality of authorship. I use this term because authorship is so often regarded in abstract terms, the author being a concept-driven creation which, as the first chapter will show, is often necessary to the overall critical and interpretative reception of the text. The materiality of authorship, conversely, takes as its focus those elements

of the edition (the title, cover-page, footnotes, endnotes, apparatus, editorial marks, headings and page breaks, etc) which, taken together, either establish or undermine the position of the author. However, these visual additions are always mandated by the editor. Therefore, an edition will by its very nature always operate as a site of interpretation. Each respective edition contests and challenges what came before, which in turn adds literary value to the work (in this instance, the *Morte*) because it directs the critical process of interpretation by which value is intrinsically applied.

In chapter three, I continue my focus on the material aspects of the edition by reading parentheses in de Worde's 1529 edition as fulfilling an interpretative function. This chapter is informed by what John Lennard has to say about parentheses in his seminal *But I Digress: The Exploitation of Parentheses*.⁴⁷ In particular, Lennard notes that parentheses in the sixteenth century operate in accordance with entirely different notions to modern definitions, showing no fixed or uniform purpose and therefore easily exploitable based on the author's or editor's intentions. De Worde's intention, I argue, is interpretative in scope. His edition represents one of the earliest examples of critical engagement with the text. Parentheses appear only sporadically in the text, and when they do it is typically in relation to events relating to 1. the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere, and 2. to the idea of the three best knights, Lancelot, Tristram, and Lamorak, which is original to Malory. My argument is premised on what critics such as Mary-Jo Arn, Howell Chickering, and D.F. McKenzie have to say on the interpretative value of punctuation.⁴⁸ Arn writes, for instance, that a 'punctuated text is a text

⁴⁷ John Lennard, *But I Digress: The Exploitation of Parentheses* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991)

⁴⁸ Howell Chickering, 'Unpunctuating Chaucer', *The Chaucer Review* 25 (1990), 96-109; Mary-Jo Arn, 'On Punctuating Medieval Literary Texts', *Text* 7 (1994), 161-74; D.F.

interpreted, or partially so; both editor and scholar should understand this'.⁴⁹ Malory's concept of punctuation, that is, of how the text should be orthographically presented, bears little comparison to our own, or even to de Worde's. As conventions and definitions in punctuation usage change, so too does the implementation of punctuation in editions. This is rarely discussed at an interpretative level, but its importance, as McKenzie notes in his seminal *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* has a determinative effect on how the text is read and therefore understood. Punctuation implies meaning, and from meaning does interpretation follow.

In my reading of parentheses in de Worde's 1529 edition, then, I establish a new and hitherto unexplored model by which to read one of the earliest and most influential editions of the *Morte Darthur*. I begin my assessment by concentrating on the distribution of parentheses in the 1529 edition. As can be seen in the appendix to chapter three at the end of this thesis, parentheses are not numerous, with only seventy-two examples across a very comprehensive text. I argue that distribution is a useful starting point for ascertaining the value of parentheses because it allows us to discover whether patterns emerge based on material aspects such as the length of individual books and chapters. We will see, for instance, that chapters as short as a single, two-sided leaf contain more example than that found across five books and over one hundred chapters. This then raises the obvious question of why? What makes this chapter or passage so remarkable to be given such a disproportionate sample? Based on my assessment, I argue that the distribution of parentheses is premised not on the material aspects of the edition, but on the thematic content of individual passages. A passage marked by parentheses in one chapter, for

McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁴⁹ Arn, p. 174.

example, directly relates to another passage also marked by parentheses in another chapter, sometimes several books later. The sheer dearth of examples is enough to suggest that such a relationship between individual pairings is not a coincidence, but is in fact intentional. Such an intent suggests that the editor saw the value of particular passages and marked them as being thematically significant. In this sense, my reading of parentheses is wholly innovative, with no study to date focusing at an interpretative level on the implementation of parentheses as indicative of meaning.

In the conclusion to this thesis I want to consider another important aspect revealed by the inclusion of parentheses in de Worde's 1529 edition. As I will discuss in chapter two, the *mise-en-page* to Vinaver's edition offers an insight into his singular view on the composition of the *Morte* as a series of unrelated 'works'. This decision is based partially on the explicit to the Winchester Manuscript, but also on his belief that the *Morte* lacks thematic unity. Parentheses, I suggest, presents an hitherto unexplored antidote to this view. The implementation and distribution of parentheses in the 1529 edition establish thematic unity for the *Morte* because they demonstrate the contextual relationship of various passages throughout the text. As such, my assessment of a single aspect of an early sixteenth-century edition allows us to reassess an important aspect of a mid-twentieth-century edition. Indeed, to return to an important argument made in chapter one, textual interpretation is always an act of recursion. Our understanding of the text is built on previous understanding, and so on, just as one edition of the text owes a good deal to those which came before. Recursion presents challenge, allowing us to contest, evaluate and build on what has come before, while, hopefully, establishing new channels of theoretical and critical engagement. I am conscious that in this thesis I am engaging in the same recursive act as the critics and editors who have come before. This is the nature of literary criticism, and it is through this constantly evolving but always recursive act that value is created and the text is rendered canonical.

I

Thomas Malory and the Canon I, 1754 to 1934:

Retrieval, Revival, Consolidation

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the *Morte Darthur* was hardly known. By the end of the century, it was widely considered to be a ‘classic’ of English literature. This chapter traces the evolution of the nineteenth-century revival of the *Morte*. Following a trajectory that begins in the Bodleian Library in the mid eighteenth century, right through to the discovery of the Winchester manuscript in 1934, this chapter focuses on the evolution of critical thought as it is guided by editorial influence. In particular, I argue that the figure of author is crucial to any appreciation of the nineteenth-century reception of the *Morte*, proving invaluable to the text’s entrance into the literary canon. By investigating the various ways by which Malory has been rejected and accepted, censured and praised, I adopt a tripartite system for reading the reception of the *Morte* (and its author), focusing on its *retrieval*, *revival*, and *consolidation*, each of which contributes to Malory’s entrance into the literary canon.

I *Retrieval*

On May 5, 1753, literary historian Thomas Warton (1728-1790) visited the Bodleian Library for the eighteenth time since New Year’s Day of 1752; his visits could continue in interludes, each time recorded in a notebook, a further thirty-six times prior to New Year’s Eve of 1754.¹

¹ A full transcription of Warton’s notebooks covering this period is given in Fairer, ‘The Origins of Warton’s *History of English Poetry*’, esp. 56-63.

During these visits, Warton ordered a total of 130 volumes, his reading comprised of classical Greek and Latin literature, contemporary bibliographies, sixteenth-century drama, and medieval romance. Of the latter, David Fairer records in his transcription of Warton's notebooks that on August 19, 1754 Warton's sole reading for the day to be '4 C39 Art Seld', a miscellany of twenty-six items, of which the Middle English romances *Syr Degore*, *Syr Tryamour*, *Syr Eglamoure of Artoys*, and *kyнге Rycharde of cuerduylon* are included.² In his seminal and pioneering three-volume work *The History of English Poetry* (1774-1781), in which Warton advocated for an Arabian origin for medieval romance, crediting the role of the Celtic people from the region of Armorica (present-day Brittany) for spreading these stories, there is included a chapter 'On the origin of Romantic Fiction in Europe', one of the first sustained engagements with Middle English literature to appear in English criticism.³

In his analysis of Warton's reading habits during his regular excursions to the Bodleian, Fairer suggests that they represent the 'origin' of Warton's *History*: 'from his notebooks and letters dating between 1752 and 1754, comes a fascinating glimpse of Warton casting around for a project which would comprehend the material he was gathering from his reading of earlier English poetry.'⁴ Warton's reading during this period reflects a growing interest in the subject of medieval literature. Included among the books ordered by Warton, for instance, are the romances *Kynge Alisaunder* and *The Destruction of Jerusalem*, 'MS Digby 171', known otherwise as *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, and *The British History; translated into English*

² Ibid, p. 63. The romances mentioned are given according to the spelling in Fairer's article.

³ For further discussion of Warton's Arabian theory, which has since been discredited, see Monica Santini, *The Impetus of Amateur Scholarship: Discussing and Editing Medieval Romances in Late-Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 61-71.

⁴ Fairer, p. 45.

from the Latin by Jeffrey of Monmouth, a translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth-century *Historia Regum Britanniae*, edited by Aaron Thompson in 1718.⁵ Warton's *History of English Poetry* was the first study of its kind to summarise the content of various Middle English romances, most of which had never been printed. Thereafter, leading writers and critics, including Joseph Ritson (1752-1803), George Ellis (1753-1815), and Walter Scott (1771-1832), would, following the success and influence of Warton's *History*, proceed to publish their own edition of Middle English romances.⁶ One such edition, *Ancient English Metrical Romanceës*, edited by Ritson and printed in 1801, would be regarded, as David Johnston concludes in his seminal *Enchanted Ground: The Study of Medieval Romances in the Eighteenth Century*, as 'the ideal [of] scholarly accuracy and honesty.'⁷ It was, however, Warton's preliminary research conducted at the Bodleian in the early 1750s that set the tone for the remainder of his career, representing the beginning of the of the slow revival of medieval literature that would dominate medieval scholarship for the next century.

The date in question, however, May 7, 1753, is of particular significance because it is the first recorded instance of Warton ordering a book over which his influence would have profound ramifications. *The Most Ancient and Famovs History of the Renowned Prince Arthvr king of Britaine*, printed by William Stansby in 1634, is the last black-letter edition of Malory's *Morte*

⁵ See Fairer, p. 60-61. For an overview of Thompson's translation of the *Historia*, see Sian Echard, 'Remembering Brutus: Aaron Thompson's *British History* of 1718', in *Arthurian Literature XXX*, ed. by Elizabeth Archibald and David F. Johnson (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013), pp. 141-61.

⁶ For an overview of the various editions of Middle English romances published during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see David Matthews, *The Making of Middle English, 1765-1910* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); also, Santini, *The Impetus of Amateur Scholarship*.

⁷ Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p. 22.

Darthur following a succession of editions, beginning with Caxton in 1485, with four further editions, printed in 1498 and 1529 (Wynkyn de Worde), 1557 (William Copland), and 1578 (Thomas East).⁸ With six black-letter editions, the *Morte* is the third most printed Middle English romance before the eighteenth century, following *Sir Bevis of Hampton* and *Guy of Warwick*.⁹ Indeed, as critics such as Carol Meale and Jordi Sánchez-Martí have noted, the textual transmission from manuscript to print of Middle English romance is remarkable for its dearth of editions following the advent of print.¹⁰ The *Morte*, as an exception, attained enough success for it to be printed by Stansby well into the seventeenth century, over fifty years after the previous edition. Stansby's Malory would, however, be the last of the black-letter editions of the *Morte* until 1816, when the text was revived in print.

⁸ For an overview of the 1634 edition, see Tsuyoshi Mukai, 'Stansby's 1634 Edition of Malory's *Morte*: Preface, Text, and Reception', *Poetica* 36 (1992), 38-54; and David R. Carlson, 'After the Revolution: The Blome-Stansby Edition of Malory (1634) and Brittain's *Glory* (1684)', in *Culture and the King: The Social Implications of the Arthurian Legend*, ed. by Martin B. Schichtman and James P. Carley (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 234-54.

⁹ For an overview of the various editions of *Bevis of Hampton* following the advent of print, see Jennifer Fellows, 'The Middle English and Renaissance *Bevis*: A Textual Survey', in *Sir Bevis of Hampton in Literary Tradition*, ed. by Jennifer Fellows and Ivana Djordjevic (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 80-113. For an overview of the post-medieval reception and print history of *Guy of Warwick*, see *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, ed. by Alison Wiggins and Rosalind Field (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2007).

¹⁰ Carol M. Meale, 'Caxton, de Worde, and the Publication of Romance in Late Medieval England', *The Library* 14 (1992), 283-98; Jordi Sánchez-Martí, 'The Textual Transition of the Middle English Verse Romance from Manuscript to Print: A Case Study', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 110 (2009), 497-525. For a general overview of printed romance in the sixteenth century, see Jennifer Fellows, 'Printed Romance in the Sixteenth Century', in *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance*, ed. by Raluca L. Radulescu and Cory James Rushton (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2009), pp. 67-79.

Despite the absence of a new edition for nearly two-hundred years, the *Morte* did not sink completely into oblivion. Indeed, how we investigate the reception of the *Morte* during this period of dormancy relies upon our understanding of how and by whom the text was read. To be exact, we must investigate the practice of bibliographers like Warton to ascertain how a long out-of-print text came to be revived in the second decade of the nineteenth century in no less than three editions. And the story of the *Morte*'s revival in print begins, partly, with Warton, on that spring day in 1753 when he sat down to read the Stansby Malory. Returning to the Bodleian Library two days later, on May 9, 1753, Warton read the *Morte* again, this time in conjunction with Robert Langham's late sixteenth-century *A Letter: Wherein, part of the entertainment unto the Queenz Maiesty, at Killingworth Castl, in Warwik-sheer*.¹¹ Laneham's letter recalls the events of a pageant held at Kenilworth Castle in 1575 in honour of Queen Elizabeth I. Warton's reading habits at this time suggest that he was already aware (or gaining an awareness) that elements of the Kenilworth pageant were based on the *Morte Darthur*, most especially the character of the Lady of the Lake, about whom Langham relates was 'famous in King Arthurz book', referring obliquely to the *Morte*.¹² Less certain is how well Warton knew the *Morte*, certainly prior to his research at the Bodleian. Warton certainly appears to have made good use of the Bodleian's copy of the Stansby Malory. Between May and November of 1753, he ordered the book six times, often in conjunction with Laneham's letter and occasionally with bibliographer Joseph Ames's (1689-1759) recently published *Typographical*

¹¹ See, Robert Langham, *A Letter*, ed. by R.J.P. Kuin (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983).

¹² See, *Robert Laneham's Letter : Describing A Part of the Entertainment Unto Queen Elizabeth at the Castle of Kenilworth in 1575*, ed. by F.J. Furnivall (London: Chatto and Windus, 1907), p. 6. Langham's name is given in many variants, with Laneham and Langham being the most common.

Antiquities, being an historical account of printing in England, printed in 1749.¹³ The *Typographical Antiquities* includes an extensive commentary on Malory's first editor, Caxton, printing the prefaces to Caxton's various editions, including selections from the Caxton Malory. As the *Morte* had by the 1750s been out of print for over a century, Ames's description and reprint of specific passages would have afforded the reader (in this case, Warton) with an overview of the first edition of the *Morte*, which in turn opened 'a window for readers onto the Arthuriad', as Yuri Fuwa has claimed.¹⁴ Warton's reading habits in the summer of 1753 certainly evince a growing interest in the *Morte Darthur*. On July 10, 1753, Warton ordered the *Typographical Antiquities*, returning the next day to read the Stansby Malory, after which follows Laneham's letter, on July 11, returning twice more to read both Ames and Malory the following week. His final recorded reading of Malory is given as late as November 9, 1753.

The research conducted by Warton at the Bodleian in the early 1750s set the scene, as Fairer notes, for the publication, two decades later, of his seminal *The History of English Poetry*. In the immediate present, however, Warton's research was conducted towards a more forthcoming publication. *The Observations on the Faerie Queen of Spenser*, printed in 1754, was Warton's first major contribution to literary criticism. As the title suggests, Warton's thesis consists of a series of observations about Edmund Spenser's late sixteenth-century allegorical

¹³ For the dates on which Warton ordered the Stansby Malory, see Fairer, 58-60. Joseph Ames, *Typographical Antiquities: Being an historical Account of Printing in England: With some Memoirs of our Antient Printers, and a Register of the Books Printed by Them, from the year MCCCCLXXI to the year MDC. With an Appendix Concerning Printing in Scotland and Ireland in the Same Time. By Joseph Ames, F.R.S. and Secretary to the Society of Antiquaries* (London: Printed by W. Faden, and sold by J. Robinson, in Ludgate-Street, 1749).

¹⁴ Yuri Fuwa, 'Paving the Way for the Arthurian Revival: William Caxton and Sir Thomas Malory's King Arthur in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of the International Arthurian Society* 5 (2017), 59-72 (60).

epic *The Faerie Queene* (hereafter *FQ*). Above all, Warton wanted to determine the ‘plan and conduct’ of the *FQ*, looking beyond Spenser’s major source, Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*, to consider Spenser’s borrowing from works that had by the mid-eighteenth century fallen out of favour, writing: ‘Although Spenser formed his FAERIE QUEENE upon the fanciful plan of Ariosto, [...] yet it must be confessed that the adventures of Spenser’s knights are a more exact and immediate copy of those which we meet with in the old romances, or books of chivalry.’¹⁵ The *FQ* was printed consistently throughout the eighteenth century, with an edition printed just three years before the *Observations*, in 1751, edited by Thomas Birch. Prefacing this edition is a letter written by Spenser to Sir Walter Raleigh, outlining his motive and sources for the *FQ*, especially his choice of the Arthurian legend: ‘I chose the historye of king Arthure, as most fitte for the excellency of his person, being *made famous by many mens former works*, and also furthest from the daunger of enuy, and suspition of present time.’¹⁶ Spenser drew heavily upon native romance in the composition of his allegorical epic; as Andrew King remarks, ‘it [the *FQ*] is composed from earlier, or self-consciously aware, of its origins in previous historical and literary traditions’.¹⁷ Warton’s reading in the Bodleian Library attests to a prolonged interest in ascertaining the exact nature of the ‘former works’ Spenser drew upon in his composition of the *FQ*. Indeed, his reading at this time documents many of the sources Spenser in fact used. And of the 130 items Warton ordered between New Year’s Day of 1752 and New

¹⁵ Warton, *Observations*, p. 13.

¹⁶ Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene By Edmund Spenser with an exact Collation of the Two Original Editions* 3 vols (London: Printed for J. Brindley, in New-Bond Street, and S. Wright, Clerk of his Majesty’s Works, at Hampton-Court, MDCCLI). vol 1, p. iv. For an overview of this eighteenth-century editions of the *FQ*, see, Hazel Wilkinson, *Edmund Spenser and the Eighteenth-Century Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), esp. ch. 3.

¹⁷ Andrew King, *The Faerie Queene and Middle English Romance: The Matter of Just Memory* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 2000), p. 1.

Year's Eve of 1754, the *Morte Darthur*, as one of the 'old romances' from which Spenser borrowed, is among the most oft-recorded.

Warton's examination of the *Morte* begins in section two of the *Observations*, 'Of Spenser's imitations from Old Romances'. Of the *Morte*, he writes:

Among others, there is one romance which Spenser seems more particularly to have made use of. It is entitled MORTE ARTHUR, *the Lyfe of kyng Arthur, and of his noble knyghtes of the round table, and in thende the dolorous deth of them all*. This was translated into English from the French, by one Sir Thomas Maleory [sic], Knight, and printed by W. Caxton, 1484 [sic]. From this fabulous history our author has borrow'd many of his names, viz. Sir Tristram, Plaicdas, Pelleas, Pellenore, Percivall, and others. As to Sir Tristram, he had copied from this book the circumstances of his birth and education with much exactness.¹⁸

Quoting the *Morte* directly, Warton goes on to recount the various incidents and characters in the *FQ* analogous to the *Morte*. He notes, for instance, the similarity between Spenser's Blatant Beast and Malory's Questing Beast: 'From this romance our author took the hint of his BLATANT BEAST; which is there call'd the "QUESTING BEAST"'.¹⁹ Similarly, Warton records how the 'romance likewise supplied our author with the story of the mantle made of the beards of knights'.²⁰ Warton's reading in the Bodleian Library furnishes his analysis of Spenser's sources very well. We see, for instance, reference made to Aaron Thompson's 1718

¹⁸ Warton, *Observations*, p. 15.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 17.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 19.

translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*. Based on his analysis of the story of the 'mantel made of the beard of knights', Warton compares Spenser's version to that of a similar analogy, found in Michael Drayton's (1563-1631) topographical poem *Poly-Olbion*, printed in 1612. His assessment leads him to conclude that, where Drayton 'alludes to a passage in Geoffrey of Monmouth, Spenser having 'copied many other fiction from MORTE ARTHUR [...] drew this from thence', adding that 'Spenser's circumstances tally more exactly with those in the romance'.²¹ One further analogy Warton makes between the *Morte* and *FQ* is Spenser's brief reference to Joseph of Arimathea and the Holy Grail, about which Spenser writes (as quoted in the *Observations*): 'Hither came Joseph of Arimathie, who brought with him the HOLY GRAYLE'.²² 'What Spenser here writes GRALE', observes Warton, 'is often written SANGREAL [...] in MORTE ARTHUR. [...] Many of king Arthur's knights are there represented as going in quest [...] This expedition was one of the first subjects of the old romance'.²³

Warton's *Observations* is one of the few texts written during the eighteenth century that references the *Morte* directly, and it is the first text of its kind to emphasise the value of the *Morte* as a source for later writers. While reference to the *Morte* is given in earlier texts such as Ames's *Typographical Antiquities*, this is bibliographical, rather than critical, indicative of the author's ambition to provide an historical account of printing in England. The *Observations*, conversely, is an analysis of if not the *Morte*'s intrinsic literary value then its usefulness as a source for later writers, thereby foreshadowing by centuries the study of what today would be called 'intertextuality'. Indeed, Warton's methodological approach to reading Spenser differs

²¹ Ibid, p. 20.

²² Ibid, p. 26.

²³ Ibid, p. 26.

considerably from that of his eighteenth-century predecessors. Spenser's first eighteenth-century editor, John Hughes (1677-1720), for example, failed to situate Spenser within the context of late sixteenth-century literary culture.²⁴ While defending Spenser's 'faery way of writing' in the preface to his 1715 *Works of Spenser*, Hughes, like the majority of early eighteenth-century critics, follows a neo-classical approach to reading Spenser, emphasising the poet's classical roots and overlooking entirely his borrowing from native sources.²⁵ Conversely, Warton's approach acknowledges source study and contextualisation as crucial to understanding, and reading, the *FQ*. 'In reading the works of a poet who lived in an old age', he writes in the *Observations*:

it is necessary that we should look back upon the customs and manners which prevailed in that age. We should endeavour to place ourselves in the writer's situation and circumstances. Hence we shall become better enabled to discover how his turn of thinking, and manner of composing were influenced by familiar appearances and established objects which are utterly different from those with which we are at present surrounded. For want of this caution, too many readers view the knights and damsels, the tournaments and enchantments of Spenser, with modern eyes; never considering that the encounters of chivalry subsisted in our author's age; that romances were then most eagerly and universally studied; and that consequently, Spenser, from the fashion of the times, was induced to undertake a recital of chivalrous achievements, and to become, in short, a ROMANTIC poet.²⁶

²⁴ Edmund Spenser, *The Works of Edmund Spenser*, ed. by John Hughes (London: Printed for Jacob Tonson at the Shakespeare's Head, over against Catherine-Street in the Strand, 1715).

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. x.

²⁶ Warton, *Observations*, p. 5.

Warton's analysis of Spenser's Blatant Beast as analogous to Malory's Questing Beast is indicative of what he terms 'established objects [...] utterly different from those with which we are at present surrounded'. Spenser's reader might have established the connection because the *Morte* remained in print throughout the sixteenth century. By the mid eighteenth century, however, the *Morte* had been out of print for over a hundred years, and many of the romantic themes prevalent to Malory's *Arthuriad*, such as the Round Table, the Holy Grail, and characters like Lancelot and Guinevere, did not feature in contemporary retellings of the legend. Among these, John Dryden's (1631-1700) *King Arthur; or, The British Worthy* (1691) and Richard Blackmore's (1654-1729) *Prince Arthur, an Heroick Poem in X Books* (1695), attained some success as the turn of the eighteenth century, but were long out of print by the 1750s.²⁷ Indeed, as critics such as Roger Simpson have noted, what little Arthurian literature was published during the eighteenth century can only be called 'Arthurian' insofar that they incorporate into the narrative the figures of Arthur and Merlin; the canonical Arthurian story, as it is given in Monmouth or Malory, does not feature in any work of Arthurian fiction until the nineteenth century.²⁸ Similarly, for Arthur Johnston, Warton's explanation of 'such terms as "recreant knight" and "quest", by reference to the *Morte Darthur* [is] revealing of the state of contemporary ignorance' in which the Arthurian legend was held by eighteenth-century readers.²⁹

²⁷ For an overview of Blackmore's Arthurian-inspired poem, see Richard C. Boys, *Richard Blackmore and the Wits* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1940), and Harry B. Solomon, *Sir Richard Blackmore* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980).

²⁸ Roger Simpson, *Camelot Regained: The Arthurian Revival and Tennyson, 1800-1849* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990).

²⁹ Johnson, *Enchanted Ground*, p. 103.

Despite the general ignorance in which the Arthurian legend was held, however, Warton acknowledges that although texts like the *Morte* may have fallen out of fashion in his own era, they remained popular during the late sixteenth century when Spenser wrote the *FQ*, and therefore, Warton writes:

There is great reason to conclude, not only from what has already been mention'd concerning Spenser's imitations from this romantic history of king Arthur and his knights, but from some circumstances which I shall now produce, that it was a favourite and reigning romance about the age of queen Elizabeth; or at the very least one very well known and much read at that time.³⁰

By singling out the *Morte* as 'one romance Spenser seems more particularly to have made use of', Warton emphasizes the privileged position retained by Malory's book during the late sixteenth century. Indeed, within five years of the Kenilworth pageant, a new edition of the *Morte* would be published, by Thomas East c. 1578. Warton, too, notes that Spenser drew upon the Lady of the Lake motif not only in the *FQ* but in his 1579 pastoral poem, *The Shepheardes Calender*. In the *Morte*, not only had Warton identified Spenser's most important native source for the *FQ*, but he recognised that such 'books of chivalry' had enough capital to be appropriated – and perhaps admired – by notable writers of the day, like Spenser: 'In fact, these miraculous books were highly fashionable, and [...] chivalry, which was the subject of them all, was still practiced, in the age of queen Elizabeth.'³¹ For Warton, then, it reasons that these 'miraculous books' should be unearthed so as to better situate a text like the *FQ* within the context of sixteenth-century literary culture. Spenser read the *Morte Darthur* and therefore so

³⁰ Warton, *Observations*, p. 21.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 14.

should the eighteenth-century critic become better acquainted with the text, for, as Warton writes, a reader of old writers:

Brings to his work a mind intimately acquainted with those books, which now forgotten, were yet in common use and high repute about the time in which these authors respectively wrote, and which they consequently must have read.³²

As critics such as Fairer have observed: ‘The discovery of the *Morte Darthur* had the effect of unlocking Spenser’s Arthurian world, and as Warton turned his back on the *Faerie Queene* he could begin to understand how deeply imbued the epic was with the motifs and legends of medieval romance.’³³

Warton was not alone in beginning to appreciate the pull medieval romance had on the minds of earlier writers. Elsewhere, it is notable that the *Morte Darthur* appears in relation to another significant writer of the late sixteenth century, William Shakespeare. In a footnote to Samuel Johnson’s 1765 *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, Johnson correctly attributes the character of Sir Dagonet in Shakespeare’s *Henry IV, Part 2* to Malory, writing: ‘The story of Sir Dagonet is to be found in *La Mort d’Arthure*, an old romance much celebrated in our author’s time, or a little before it.’³⁴ Johnson read, and was undoubtedly influenced by, Warton’s *Observations*; upon receiving the manuscript to the *Observations* in July 1754, Johnson, in a letter to Warton,

³² Ibid, p. 5.

³³ David Fairer, *Spenser’s Faerie Queene: Warton’s Observations and Hurd’s Letters*, Cultural Formation: The Eighteenth Century (London: Routledge, 2000), p. xv.

³⁴ Samuel Johnson, *The Plays of William Shakespeare* 8 vols (London: printed for C. Bathurst et al, 1765), 4, pp. 300-301.

acknowledged the enormous contribution he had made ‘for the advancement of the literature of our native Country’, continuing:

You have shewn to all, who shall hereafter attempt the study of our ancient authors, the way to success; by directing them to the perusal of the books which these authors had read. [...] The reason why the authors, which are yet read, of the sixteenth century are so little understood, is, that they are read alone; and no help is borrowed from those who lived with them or before them.³⁵

Johnson’s response is indicative of the influence Warton’s *Observations* would have on late eighteenth-century literary criticism. By reading authors from the sixteenth century in conjunction with ‘those who lived with them or before them’, critics can accurately trace how the dissemination and transmission of literature during this period impacted upon the tropes, motifs and characters present within later texts.

Indeed, in the last twenty years, critics have begun to blur the boundaries that demarcate literature into distinct periods (e.g., ‘medieval’, ‘early modern’, ‘Augustan’) in order to assess how literary dissemination frequently transcends periodization. Sarah Kelen, for instance, in a study on the post-medieval reception of William Langland’s fourteenth-century allegorical poem *Piers Plowman*, argues, ‘knowing which works from earlier periods early modern readers thought were worth preserving is part of understanding how those readers conceptualized the

³⁵ ‘To Thomas Warton, July 16, 1754’, in *The Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. by Bruce Redford (London: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 81.

English literary tradition'.³⁶ Similarly, in an essay on the early modern reception of the Middle English verse poem *Of Arthour and of Merlin*, Nicola Clifton stresses the importance for critics 'to work across the traditional period boundaries in order to discover that early modern readers were still reading old romances'.³⁷ How writers like Spenser received and thereafter appropriated literature from an earlier period is crucial to determining the contextual and symbolic value of their work. In his book *Recursive Origins*, for instance, William Kuskin deploys the concept of *recursion* as a distinguishing feature of sixteenth-century literary transmission.³⁸ 'The past', he writes, 'is rewritten by the present, which itself is built on the past, creating a recursive loop in how we read the past'.³⁹ For Kuskin, recursion rather than periodization is a more useful tool by which to engage with the literary past, because, quoting Kathleen Davis, 'in an important sense, we cannot periodize the past. No longer constrained by period, we can move across literary time more fluidly'.⁴⁰ What Kuskin has to say about periodization can be aptly applied to Warton's *Observations*: 'canonical figures of the sixteenth century are intense readers of the fifteenth and consciously look back through the editions available to them in its history and poetics as they shape their own'.⁴¹ Sixteenth-century poet Spenser turned to the fifteenth-century *Morte* as a text popular in his own time, which was then

³⁶ Sarah Kelen, *Langland's Early Modern Identities* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 1.

³⁷ Nicola Clifton, 'Early Modern Readers and the Romance *Of Arthour and of Merlin*', *Arthuriana* 24 (2014), 71-94 (p. 86).

³⁸ William Kuskin, *Recursive Origins: Writing at the Transition to Modernity* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 14. See also, Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

⁴¹ Kuskin, *Recursive Origins*, p. 6.

read by eighteenth-century critic Warton because Spenser had read it; the fluidity by which time is conjoined by the reading across centuries of the *Morte* reinforces the recursive nature of literary dissemination while undermining received notions of periodization. Indeed, as the first book-length study of Spenser's *FQ*, Warton's *Observations* is as much a thesis on the sources and structure of Spenser's poem as it is a guide on how to read the *FQ*. In short, one cannot read the *FQ* without first acquainting oneself with those works themselves read by Spenser, the long out-of-print *Morte* being just one example. As Trevor Ross has written: 'On the margins of the canon [...] were a vast diversity of works once esteemed by previous generations of English readers [...], yet in whose value in relation to the present could no longer be readily proclaimed. The canon was something to be produced, not *reproduced*.'⁴² Marginal and relatively unknown, the *Morte* nevertheless sits on the fringes of the eighteenth-century canon because it is acknowledged as a source for Spenser, whose prestige is enough to lead Warton to the Bodleian Library in the early 1750s in order to ascertain those works 'yet in common use and high repute about the time in which' Spenser was writing.

The emphasis is placed exclusively on Spenser, not Malory, however. Warton retrieves the *Morte* not for its innate literary value but for its usefulness in the study of one whose value is acknowledged. I call this *retrieval* rather than *revival* because for the *Morte* to be revived, it would need to be so in print, which would take a further six decades after the publication of the *Observations*. Nevertheless, the mere fact that Spenser had read and in doing so appropriated material from the *Morte* to be used in his own poem elevates the text to the periphery of the eighteenth-century canon, at which Spenser is placed in the first position. As Warton's older brother, Joseph Warton (1722-1800), would write in 1756: 'Our English poets

⁴² Trevor Ross, 'The Emergence of "Literature": Making and Reading the English Canon in the Eighteenth Century', *ELH* 63, 393-422 (402).

may, I think, be disposed in four different classes and degrees. In the first I would place only three sublime and pathetic poets: Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton.⁴³ About this passage, Johnathon Brody Kramnick in his innovative study on the rise of the English literary canon during the eighteenth century argues that it was in the figures of Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton that mid-century critics like Warton first began to lay claim to a national canon.⁴⁴ With the growth of print capitalism expanding the market for printed books, a palpable need was felt on behalf of literary scholars to secure a national canon responsive to the ideals of literary taste. As Kramnick continues: ‘the effect of Warton’s study [the *Observations*] was less to dissolve the distance between the reader and the text than to reinforce such a distance as the condition of approaching great works.’⁴⁵ In others words, for critics like Warton, Spenser should be read not as a universal figure, as early eighteenth-century critics like John Hughes were prone to view him, but as a figure of his own time, whose poetry reflects the ‘customs and manners which prevailed in that age’. Above all, Spenser’s *FQ* is afforded literary canonicity precisely because it is not read; and it is not read due to its perceived inaccessibility to the ordinary reader. The canon, in short, is exclusionary. As Kramnick notes: ‘The public has forgotten how to read older texts; the national canon needs to be secured by specialist critics.’⁴⁶ The difference between high and low literature, then, is for critics such as Warton the difference between reading and reading *well*. To simply read is to engage with the text at a superficial level, reading for leisure rather than intellectual enrichment; to read *well*, however, requires that the reader actively assimilate oneself within the wider cultural framework from which the work was

⁴³ Joseph Warton, *An Essay on the Genius of Alexander Pope* (London, 1756), p. xi.

⁴⁴ Johnathon Brody Kramnick, *Making the English Canon: Print Capitalism and the Cultural Past, 1700-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). See also, Johnathon Brody Kramnick, ‘The Making of the English Canon’, *PMLA* 112 (1997), 1087-101.

⁴⁵ Kramnick, *Making the English Canon*, p. 141.

⁴⁶ Kramnick, ‘The Making of the English Canon,’ p. 1091.

produced. For Warton, therefore, the best poets are chosen not for their popularity but, on the contrary, for their relative obscurity, a sentiment echoed by Richard Hurd (1720-1808) in his influential *Letter on Chivalry and Romance* (1762), writing:

Poor Spenser then, ‘in whose gentle spright the pure well-head of poesie did dwell’, must, for ought I can see, be left to the admiration of a few lettered and curious men: While the many are sworn together to give no quarter to the *marvellous*, or, which may still harder, to the *moral* of his song.⁴⁷

Spenser, alongside Shakespeare and Milton, is not afforded literary canonicity by Warton and his contemporaries simply due to their aesthetic or textual merits – although these are not to be discounted. Rather, they are recognised as ‘sublime’ because their works encompass a vast bibliographic repository from which the eighteenth-century critic can perceive a tangible view of the past. As John Guillory has written: ‘canonicity is not a property of the work itself but of its transmission, its relation to other works in a collocation of works.’⁴⁸ It is because of his reading of the *FQ* that Warton proceeded to study so many works of Middle English romance: ‘Many other instances might be alleged’, Warton writes, ‘from which it would be more abundantly manifested, that the imagination of our author was deeply tinctur’d with that species of writing with which his age was so intimately acquainted, and so generally delighted’.⁴⁹ The

⁴⁷ Richard Hurd, *Moral and Political Dialogues; With Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (London: W. Bowyer, 1765), p. 344. The passage is presented as it appears in the source; see also, *Hurd’s Letters on Chivalry and Romance with the Third Elizabethan Dialogue*, ed. by Edith J. Morley (London: Henry Frowde, 1911), pp. 149-50.

⁴⁸ John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 55.

⁴⁹ Warton, *Observations*, p. 43-44.

library from which Spenser composed the *FQ* is, because of the *Observations*, no mere remnant of a distant past; rather, a ‘collocation’ of works, largely forgotten but once in ‘common use and high repute’, the *FQ* is made canonical because it is itself a canon, consisting of those works that, parallel to Hurd’s remark, were known and admired by the ‘few lettered or curious men’ of its own age. Never popular beyond a learned audience, the *FQ* had not been cheapened by a mass audience. As Kramnick attests: ‘As long as authors wrote for a small audience their works remained in the literary language of the concrete. As soon as authors wrote to “satisfy the ladies and the beaux”, their language descended into the expatiatory prose of the market.’⁵⁰ High literature, then, is distinguished from low or popular literature because of its exclusivity. For Warton, such exclusivity is a privilege that can only be bestowed within the confines of the institution – Warton was an Oxford professor – or otherwise through the judgement of those ‘few lettered or curious men’ whose active participation in the construction of a canon was at once an attempt to defy the growing market of cultural consumption with a small body of literature that, contrary to this, could not be so easily consumed.

Writing in an article appropriately titled ‘Paving the Way for the Arthurian Legend’, Yuri Fuwa ‘examines how Malory’s *Morte Darthur* re-emerged from the shadows in the eighteenth century’ as a consequence of the ‘resuscitation of Caxton’s reputation.’⁵¹ Examining antiquary John Lewis’s 1737 *The Life of Mayster Wyllyam Caxton*, ‘the first biography of Caxton in book form’, and Ames’s aforementioned *Typographical Antiquities*, Fuwa notes that the renewed interest in print history among eighteenth-century historians witnessed a revival of Caxton’s reputation, which in turn elevated the *Morte* to the peripheries of literary attention, not enough to ensure its revival, but enough to prepare the text, to pave the way, for its eventual revival at

⁵⁰ Kramnick, ‘The Making of the English Canon,’ p. 1099.

⁵¹ Fuwa, ‘Paving the Way’, quoted from abstract.

the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁵² A similar such claim can be made about what has here been written regarding the revival of interest in the *Morte* as a direct consequence of its association with the more important (and canonical) *FQ*. To be sure, the *Morte's* survival in this period owes a great deal to the loftier reputations of its first printer, Caxton, and its esteemed readers, Spenser and Shakespeare among them, than it does to any design attributable to its author. Indeed to repeat Field, who I initially quoted in the introduction to this thesis: 'We are interested in Malory because he wrote the *Morte Darthur*, not in the *Morte Darthur* because Malory was its author.'⁵³ Who could imagine, as I claim in my introduction, such a comment being made about Shakespeare or Chaucer, or Spenser, too, all of whom have an influence extending far beyond their literary output. As Kelen argues: 'Who wrote the work was [...] significant only insofar that a known author's aura devolved onto the text. [...] As more poems come under the sign "Chaucerian", the aura inherent in "being Chaucerian" expands to encompass the larger canon.'⁵⁴ To be 'Chaucerian' or 'Shakespearian' is to engage with, appropriate, and be influenced by the work of these authors, simultaneously enhancing one's own reputation by associating with canonical writers while further enhancing the reputation, or aura, of these same authors. By this definition, Shakespeare's 'aura' is the cultural phenomena based around his name, rather than the work for which he is known. The revival during the eighteenth century of both Spenser and Caxton precipitated the *retrieval* of a small body of literature that had fallen out of fashion. As Warton wished to become more familiar with accepted canonical texts like the *FQ* he ventured, like so many critics before and since, to the Bodleian Library, where he first became acquainted with the *Morte*, a text over which his influence would have profound ramifications. 'It is in Warton's *Observations on the*

⁵² Ibid, p. 66.

⁵³ See the introduction to this thesis, p. 1.

⁵⁴ Kelen, p. 30.

Faerie Queene', writes David Nichol Smith, 'that Malory makes his entrance into literary criticism.'⁵⁵ Such an entrance constitutes a *retrieval* rather than *revival* given the absence of a new edition, but it was enough to guarantee a small degree of posterity for a text that had been out of print for over a century, lending support to the eventual revival of the *Morte* in print at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

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Between 1485, the year Caxton published the *editio princeps* of the *Morte*, and the end of the nineteenth century, all that was known about Thomas Malory was to be found in the information given by the author himself in a colophon appended to the end of the text: 'For this book was ended the ninth yere of the reygne of Kyng Edward the fourth, by Syr Thomas Maleoré, knyght. Indeed, as late as 1880, American author Sidney Lanier (1842-1881), in the introduction to his abridgement of the *Morte*, *The Boy's King Arthur*, would write of his regret 'that I can give no personal account of one who must have been an interesting man: so far as I can discover, we know absolutely nothing of him save what is contained [...] in the words, which form the last clause of the last sentence of his work.'⁵⁶ Not until 1894, when Harvard scholar George Lyman Kittredge (1860-1941) published in *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia* some preliminary remarks that traced the identity of the author of the *Morte* to the Warwickshire knight Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel was the 'first corner of the thick curtain' pulled back to reconcile the *Morte* with its author (of which more in section 2 of this

⁵⁵ David Nichol Smith, 'Warton's History of English Poetry', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 15 (1929), p. 76.

⁵⁶ Sidney Lanier, *The Boy's King Arthur* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1880), p. xvi.

chapter, 'Revival').⁵⁷ Prior to this, only two 'biographical' details were known about Malory – one of which would later be discredited: first, that he composed the *Morte* in the late fifteenth century, during the reign of King Edward IV; and second, as Tudor antiquarian John Leland (c. 1503-1552) maintained both in his *Itinerary* (c. 1538-43) and the *Dictionary of Antiquities* (1543), that 'Thomas Melorius' came from the region 'Mailoria' near the river Dee in Wales.⁵⁸ Leland's assertion led his contemporary, the historian John Bale (1495-1563), to claim that Malory was a Welsh priest – 'a Briton by race and birth'.⁵⁹ This was then repeated by Raphael Holinshead (c. 1525-1582) in his *Chronicles* (1577-1587), writing somewhat disparagingly that 'Thomas Maillorie, a Welshman born, wrote I wote not of King Arthur, and of the Round Table'.⁶⁰ Despite the total absence of any documentary evidence that Malory was a Welshman, it is telling of how little was known about him prior to the 1890s that this view proliferated well into the nineteenth century. *The British Bibliographer* (1810-14), a catalogue of old or rare books, for instance, reiterates Holinshead's remark while echoing the general ignorance about Malory's identity: 'of the translator and compiler of the Morte Arthur, little, I believe, is

⁵⁷ G.L. Kittredge, s.v., 'Malory, Sir Thomas,' *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia* (1894), 5:498; this was later published in expanded form as the article, 'Who was Sir Thomas Malory?', *Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature* (Boston: Massachusetts, 1897). Quoted from Edward Hicks, whose biography of Malory reiterated Kittredge's claim of the author of the *Morte* being Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel, providing additional biographical material to support this claim; see Hicks, *Sir Thomas Malory: His Turbulent Career* (Cambridge: University of Harvard Press, 1928), p. 3.

⁵⁸ This extract from Leland's *Itinerary* is taken from Parins, *The Critical Heritage*, p. 54.

⁵⁹ John Bale, *Scriptorum Illustrium Mairoris Britanniae* (Basel, 1557-59), p. 629; see also, Parins, *The Critical Heritage*, p. 55.

⁶⁰ *Holinshead's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland. In Six Volumes* (London: Printed for J. Johnson, F.C and J. Rivington, T. Payne; Wilkie and Robinson; Longman, Hurst, Orme; Cadell and Davies; and J. Hawman, 1808); quoted from Parins, p. 88.

known.⁶¹ Much later in the century, German scholar H. Oskar Sommer, in the introduction to his three-volume critical edition of the *Morte*, printed between 1889 and 1891, casts doubt on Leland's assertion of Malory as a Welshman on account that 'I can find no reference to this fact in Leland's works'.⁶² Sommer's commentary on Malory comes closest to suggesting disbelief in the sixteenth-century view of Malory as Welsh or a priest, although, given the absence of any new evidence, he offers no alternative perspective. Writing again in a letter to *Academy*, printed in 1890, he stresses in stronger terms than is found in his introductory essay to the edition that 'there is no reason to suppose [...] that Malory was a Welshman'.⁶³ It is telling of how little was known of Malory as late as 1890 that all Sommer, whose edition was the most authoritative and exhaustive yet printed, could do was to dispel this tenuous origin of Malory as a Welsh priest rather than add anything more concrete. Within four years, Kittredge would offer the first identification of an historical Malory, and within forty, enough would be known of Malory to fill a biography.⁶⁴

The near anonymity of Malory does not appear to have negatively impacted on the success of the *Morte* during the nineteenth century. Indeed, the sheer breadth of editions, adaptations, and works based on the text are enough to suggest that the *Morte* was obviously popular with nineteenth-century readers, a fact that has been commented on at length by critics such as Inga

⁶¹ Samuel Egerton Brydges, *The British Bibliographer*, 10 vols (London: Printed for R. Triphook by T. Bensley, 1810-14), I, p. 48.

⁶² Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur by Syr Thomas Malory. The Original Edition by William Caxton now reprinted and edited with an introduction and glossary by H. Oskar Sommer*, 3 vols (London: David Nutt, 1889-91), ii, p. 2.

⁶³ Sommer, 'Letter', *Academy* 1890, pp. 11-12, p. 11.

⁶⁴ See Hicks's biography, *His Turbulent Career*, published in 1928.

Bryden and Elly McCausland.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, focus on the *Morte* during this period tends to be on the popular reimagining of the text, from Tennyson to Swinburne, for instance, or on adaptations for children, which were numerous, or else on its relation to the pre-Raphaelite movement. What is lacking is an analysis of the critical reception of the text and, more importantly, of its author, during the nineteenth century. Malory's identity (or lack thereof) is crucial to any such analysis, as his anonymity during this time should be considered alongside what critics had to say about the composition of the *Morte*, examination of which was often negative. The *Morte*, though popular and well read, even by learned critics, was not immediately appreciated, and Malory's authorship was frequently dismissed as lacking in originality. In 1890, Sommer wrote of Malory's authorship that he 'impressed upon the whole the stamp of his own individuality.'⁶⁶ Such a comment would have, as we will see, been unthinkable earlier in the century, when the view of Malory was that he did nothing more than redact and translate from his French sources. The combination of critical censorship of Malory's authorship with his almost total biographical anonymity places Malory in a strange (almost unique) position when compared to the nineteenth-century reception of, say, Chaucer. Malory was read and consistently reprinted, but he was not respected, and his authorship was barely acknowledged. As such, while the revival of the *Morte* took place in 1816, Malory (the author rather than just an unidentifiable name) took much longer to meet with his own revival. Such a revival occurred twice for Malory: a revival of his authorship, witnessed by the critical acceptance leading to appreciation of Malory's handling of his French and English sources as indicative of originality and therefore akin to authorship, and latterly, in 1894, with the first

⁶⁵ Inga Bryden, *Reinventing King Arthur: The Arthurian Legends in Victorian Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2005); Elly McCausland, *Malory's Magic Book: King Arthur and the Child, 1862-1980* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2019).

⁶⁶ Sommer, *Academy*, p. 12.

identification of the historical Malory. By the end of the nineteenth century, then, critical acceptance of Malory's authorship alongside biographical verification of his identity combine to establish his presence within the literary canon. To reach this conclusion, however, we must first assess how the views of early nineteenth-century critics largely decided the negative reception of Malory's authorship for at least the next half century.

Throughout much of the nineteenth century, editors, critics and poets were unanimous in their dismissal of Malory's authorship. 'It is [...] of no authority *whatever*, being merely the shadow of a shade, an awkward abridgement of prose romances,' wrote Walter Scott in 1804, a criticism that would reverberate throughout the nineteenth century.⁶⁷ About Scott's reaction to the *Morte*, however, Jerome Mitchell notes that Scott 'began to relent' on his position, writing later in the introduction to his edition of *Sir Tristram* (1807): 'It is [...] a work of great interest, and curiously written in excellent old English'.⁶⁸ Although Scott's position on the text itself may have softened (Scott was by 1807 planning his own, unrealised, edition of the *Morte*) his attitude towards its author remained firmly resolved in the negative. The *Morte* was, Scott writes, 'extracted at hazard, and without much art or combination'; he warned the reader to 'beware trusting to this work, which misrepresents the adventures, and traduces the character of Sir Gawain and other renowned knights of the Round Table.'⁶⁹ While it is certainly true that

⁶⁷ Walter Scott, 'Letter to Richard Polwhale, 27 January, 1804', in *The Letters of Walter Scott*, ed. by H.J.C. Grierson (London: Constable, 1932-37), p. x.

⁶⁸ Jerome Mitchell, *Scott, Chaucer, and Medieval Romance: A Study in Sir Walter's Scott's Indebtedness to the Literature of the Middle Ages* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1987), pp. 18-19.

⁶⁹ *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart. In Twelve Volumes; with All His Introductions and Notes, Various Readings, and the Editor's Notes*, 12 vols, ed. by Robert Cadell (London: Houlston and Stonement, 1848), p. 81.

the *Morte* was, in 1804, of little ‘authority’, having been out of print since 1634 and therefore unknown beyond a small coterie of learned men, such as Scott, it is questionable whether Scott is here referring to the work itself, which had yet to impact upon the eventual revival of interest in Arthurian literature, or to questions pertaining to authorship. Certainly, as Mitchell has found, despite his ‘mixed feelings’ about the *Morte*, Scott ‘quotes from it in several notes to *Sir Tristram* and seems much impressed with Sir Ector’s well-known and moving eulogy of Sir Lancelot.’⁷⁰ Of the eulogy, however, Mitchell notes that Scott’s familiarity with the text could only have come from the Stansby, rather than an earlier, edition, ‘because he attributed it [the eulogy] to Sir Bors’.⁷¹ Every edition between 1529 and 1816 attributed the eulogy to Sir Bors, a matter that will be discussed at length in chapter three. Praise for the eulogy notwithstanding, Scott refers to the *Morte* as being of no ‘authority’ because it is perceived as having no reliable author, being regarded as merely a compilation of French sources, translated and compiled, rather than authored, by Malory. Ironically, the eulogy, which Scott finds so impressive, is regarded as being proof of Malory’s originality, as there is no verbatim antecedent witness to substantiate Malory’s borrowing from any particular source, except for a very loose textual parallel in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, which, according to Norris, Malory ‘uses as the basis for Ector’s lament for Lancelot’.⁷² In the character of Sir Gawain, too, Scott recognises only traducement, finding Malory’s characterisation to stray too far from his sources. Such a criticism was, as we will see, not uncommon in connection to the *Morte* and is in direct opposition to modern scholarship. That is, where nineteenth-century critics found Malory’s handling of his sources and his drawing of characters such as Gawain to be proof of his haphazard handling of the sources, modern critics find this to be, conversely, proof

⁷⁰ Mitchell, *Scott, Chaucer, and Medieval Romance*, p. 19.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 19.

⁷² See Norris, *Malory’s Library*, p. 33.

of his originality, with Malory adapting his sources for the requirements of his own age. From the revival of the *Morte* in print, in 1816, another half century would pass before editors and critics began to question the views of influential scholars such as Scott, whose view of the *Morte* is shaped, I argue, by the dubious claim to authorship of its author, Malory.

For literary theorists such as Michael Foucault, an author's name is 'functional in that it serves as a means of classification. A name can group together a number of texts and thus differentiate them from others.'⁷³ Unlike the majority of (anonymous) Middle English romances edited in the early nineteenth century, the *Morte* has an author: Malory. However, Malory's claim to authorship in this period is not, like Chaucer's, established. Chaucer's reputation as the 'father of English literature' had long solidified by the time William Godwin (1756-1836) published his groundbreaking *Life of Geoffrey Chaucer* in 1803.⁷⁴ Godwin's intention for his multi-volume, thousand-page biography of Chaucer was, in his own words, to 'erect a monument to his name.'⁷⁵ Though wildly inaccurate, incorporating 'more fiction than fact', as Geoffrey W. Gust has noted, Godwin's biography nevertheless serves to highlight an important factor that led to the popularisation of Chaucer in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: chiefly, that 'Chaucer the man, and in essence, Chaucer the author, can be

⁷³ Michael Foucault, 'What is an Author?', in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. by David F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 123.

⁷⁴ William Godwin, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer, the Early English Poet: including Memoirs of His Near Friends and Kinsman, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster: With Sketches of the Manner, Opinions, Arts and Literature of England in the Fourteenth Century*, 4 vols (London: Printed by T. Davidson, White-Friars; For Richard Phillips, No, 71, St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1803).

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 419.

recovered.’⁷⁶ As Derek Brewer has written in his influential study on the medieval and post-medieval uses for the ‘images of Chaucer’: ‘It is well known that a great work of art, or, as we may say, the writer (meaning his works), shows different faces to different ages.’⁷⁷

Since the sixteenth century, editors of Chaucer have published alongside the text small biographical details, giving the reader an idea of the author’s life. Thomas Speght, for example, in his 1598 edition, included information pertaining to Chaucer’s education, friends, and place of birth. By the eighteenth century, it had become commonplace to publish Chaucer’s work alongside brief extracts recounting his life. Eighteenth-century anthologies, such as Elizabeth Cooper’s 1737 *The Muses Library, or, a Series of English Poetry*, printed alongside extracts from Chaucer’s work brief accounts of the men contemporary to, or influenced by, Chaucer. Among them, ‘Robert de Langland’, ‘Sir John Gower’, ‘Sir John Lidgate’, and ‘Thomas Occleve, or Okeleafe’, are included by Cooper only as a conduit through which ‘the first master of his art’ can shine.⁷⁸ By the beginning of the nineteenth century, biographical material — of which there is an abundance, although much of it fabricated — was beginning to be analysed more carefully to get a clear sense, unhindered by ‘fiction’, of the real Geoffrey Chaucer. Beside Godwin’s aforementioned romanticised biography of Chaucer, the next authoritative treatment of Chaucer’s life was Sir Harris Nicholas’s memoir, published in Thomas Wright’s

⁷⁶ Gust, *Constructing Chaucer*, p. 69. See also, David Hopkins and Tom Mason, *Chaucer in the Eighteenth Century: The Father of English Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

⁷⁷ Derek Brewer, ‘Images of Chaucer, 1386-1900’, in *Chaucer and Chaucerians: Critical Studies in Middle English Literature*, ed. by D.S. Brewer (London: Nelson’s University Paperbacks, 1970), pp. 240-270, p. 240.

⁷⁸ Elizabeth Cooper, *The Muses Library, or, a Series of English Poetry from the Saxons to the Reign of Charles II* (London: Printed for J. Wilcox in the Strand; T. Green at Charing Cross; J. Brindley in New-Bond Street; and T. Osborn in Gray’s-Inn, 1737).

1845 *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*.⁷⁹ Referred to by Brewer as ‘the first time the life [of Chaucer] is scientifically examined’, Nicholas’s memoir represented a substantial addition to nineteenth-century scholarship on Chaucer.⁸⁰

Aside from the published material on Chaucer, a number of other mediums can be taken into account in a consideration of how post-medieval (and specifically nineteenth-century) readers reconstructed the biographical persona of the medieval author. For instance, David Matthews has written at length on the visual representations of Chaucer as they are found in portraits such as the famed Hoccleve portrait of 1412.⁸¹ Matthews notes that the Hoccleve portrait was a common feature of nineteenth-century editions of Chaucer’s work, which ‘satisfied the need of a generation of scholars for an author-persona’.⁸² An edition of Chaucer in the nineteenth century, then, included not only a biography of the author but a portrait also, both of which combined to bring the figure of Chaucer alive for nineteenth-century readers. Moreover, had the reader felt inclined to do so, as Samuel Johnson was prone to do, they could have visited Chaucer’s burial site in Poet’s Corner, Westminster Abbey and read the inscription on his tomb, which, writes Philip Connell, ‘merits consideration as an important expression of eighteenth- [and nineteenth-] century patriotism, alongside other engines of “canon formation” such as

⁷⁹ For an account of Nicholas’s memoir of Chaucer and its influence on nineteenth-century Chaucerian scholarship, see Gust, *Constructing Chaucer*, pp. 72-76.

⁸⁰ Derek Brewer, *Chaucer: The Critical Heritage*, 2 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 37.

⁸¹ Matthews, ‘Speaking to Chaucer’, pp. 5-26.

⁸² *Ibid*, p. 15.

editorial scholarship, the rise of the anthology, and the development of English literary pedagogy.’⁸³

Thus, from just a small consideration of the biographical details, both visual and literary, about Chaucer, we can see that, from the sixteenth century onwards, editors, anthologists, and literary critics have actively attempted to explicate Chaucer’s work in relation to an author-persona. Chaucer’s name, in turn, functions, in Foucauldian terms, as a ‘means of classification’, acting as a synecdoche for the entire corpus of medieval literature. Why Chaucer should have been singled out in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the dominant literary figure of the Middle Ages has been written upon at length. What matters here, however, is that the biographical constructions of Chaucer, be they romanticised or ‘scientific’, have contributed much to the post-medieval reception of Chaucer’s work, allowing readers to place the figure of Chaucer, biographical and visual, alongside his works. To repeat a quote I began this thesis with, by F.R.H. Du Boulay, who is writing specifically on the historical representation of Chaucer: ‘Nothing is more natural than the wish to give genius a human face’.⁸⁴

What if there is no face to give, however? Unlike Chaucer, about whom there is an abundance of biographical material, virtually nothing was known about Malory at the beginning of the nineteenth century when the *Morte* was revived in print. Thus, when three editions of the *Morte* appeared consecutively, two in 1816 and one in 1817, and even later, when another, three-

⁸³ Phillip Connell, ‘Death and the Author: Westminster Abbey and the Meanings of the Literary Monument’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38 (2005), 557-85 (p. 559). For Chaucer’s burial site at Westminster Abbey, see E. P. Kuhl, ‘Chaucer and Westminster Abbey’, *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 45 (1946), 340-43.

⁸⁴ See the Introduction to this thesis, p. 1.

volume edition appeared, in 1857, Malory was nothing more than a name; with little else known about the author of the *Morte*, it is easy to see how Malory might have been dismissed to the peripheries of literary authority.

Indeed, nowhere is the rejection of Malory's authorship more apparent than in the preface to the 1817 edition, written by Poet Laureate Robert Southey (1774-1843). Like Scott, despite admitting to a great fondness for the *Morte* in his youth, Southey's opinion of the text, and more importantly, of Malory, remained fundamentally negative. From his analysis of a number of Malory's French sources, 'that I have been able to obtain', for instance, Southey concludes:

There are other Romances which I have not met with, from whence the materials for the *Morte Arthur* have been drawn; but these are the principal sources, Lancelot, Tristan, and the *Saint Greaal* [sic], having furnished nearly two thirds of the whole. Whether this compilation was made originally by Sir Thomas Malory, or translated by him from a French compendium, has not been ascertained; nor is it of importance, as there is not claim to originality on his part. The compiler seems to have altered the incidents as freely as the arrangement, and may perhaps have made some additions of his own.⁸⁵

It is apparent from the language Southey employs to describe Malory's handling of his French sources that he thought the *Morte* to be nothing but a hastily compiled derivative lacking in both artistic merit (authority) and, as critics such as Marylyn Jackson Parins and Andrew Lynch

⁸⁵ See Southey's introduction to the 1817 editions, p. xxvi.

have written about, morality.⁸⁶ From his reading of the medieval French *Histoire du tres-vaillanr, noble et excellent chevalier Tristan. Fils du Roi Meliadus de Leonnois*, for example, Southey writes of his consternation ‘that so many of the leading incidents should shock, not merely our ordinary moral [...] but those feelings which belong to human nature in all ages.’⁸⁷ This in turn influenced Southey’s view of Malory, with the author/compiler of both the *Tristan* and the *Morte* being accused of misappropriating their material ‘to great excess’.⁸⁸ Writing about the medieval French *Tristan*, for example, Southey proclaims:

An author may do what he will with the creatures of his own creation, - they are as clay in the potter’s hand, - but it is a foul offence in literature to take up the personage whom another writer has described as a knight of prowess, and engraft vices upon him, and stain him with dishonour. Who could bear to see Desdemona represented as an adulteress?⁸⁹

Ironically, and as we have already seen with similar such censure of the *Morte* from Scott, Southey is here criticising the very practices that imbue authors like Malory with a degree of originality: that is, the appropriation and reinterpretation of characters and events reflective of

⁸⁶ See Parins, ‘Two Early Expurgations of the “Morte Darthur”’, *Arthuriana* 7 (1997), 60-77; also, ‘Malory’s Expurgator’, in *The Arthurian Tradition: Essays in Convergence*, ed. by Mary Flowers Braswell and John Bugge (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1988), pp. 144-63. Andrew Lynch has argued that nineteenth-century editors of the *Morte* ‘abridged and misleadingly moralized the fight to let the *Morte* become an exemplar of Victorian “chivalry”’; see Lynch, ““Malory Moralise”: The Disarming of “Le Morte Darthur”, 1800-1918’, *Arthuriana* 9 (1999), 81-93.

⁸⁷ See the introduction to the 1817 edition, p. xv.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. xvi.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. xvi.

a wholly different premise and cultural milieu of that found in the source material. Southey goes on to question Malory's authorship, writing, 'the compiler seems to have altered the incidents as freely as the arrangement, and may perhaps have made some additions of his own.'⁹⁰ Again, Southey dismisses Malory's authorship because of his perceived mishandling of his source material; Southey's censure of Malory is presented almost as a form of literary vandalism rather than anything bordering on originality. A generation later, in 1868, another editor of the *Morte*, Edward Strachey, would base his argument in support of Malory's originality on the same evidence given by Southey in censuring Malory: that is, for Strachey, how Malory handles his source material, his selection and omission of particular episodes, themes, and characters, and how he structured the material are what imbue the *Morte* with originality (of which more in section two of this chapter, 'Revival'). Despite commenting on the 'additions' Malory made to his source material, which themselves constitute a degree of original composition, Southey fails to enumerate on what these might be. Indeed, Parins has identified a number of inaccuracies in Southey's preface, which, she states, were 'no more so than other commentaries of this period'.⁹¹ For instance, he incorrectly assumed that Malory drew on 'late compilations like that of Rusticien', who composed the thirteenth-century *Roman du roi Artus*, a supposition later adopted by Frederic Madden (1801-1873) in his 1839 edition of *Sir Gawayne*. Parins also notes that Southey mistakenly attributes Ector's lament for Lancelot at the end of the *Morte* to the French prose *Lancelot*, when it is in fact original to Malory.

Southey was not the only critic of this period to accuse authors of medieval romances of 'great excess' in their handling of their source material. Joseph Ritson, too, writing in his

⁹⁰ Ibid, p. xxvi.

⁹¹ Parins, *The Critical Heritage*, p. 95.

Ancient English Metrical Romanceës, one of the earliest collections of Middle English romances, casts doubt upon the authority of a number of *supposed* thirteenth-century authors of the romances:

The authors of the earliest French *romans* in rime, generally declare their names in the course of their own works [...] Of the authenticity of these names there can be no suspicion; but those whose name appear, now and then, in the old prose romanceës, printed or manuscript, are mostly, if not constantly, men of straw; such, for instance, as *Robert de Borron*, the pretended author of translator of “Lancelot du Lac” [...] *Lucas* [or *Luces*] *chevalier* [...] the pretended translator [...] of “*Le roman du Tristan*”; [...] *Maistre Gaultier Map* [...] of the “*Histoire de roy Artus*” [...] and *Rusticien de Pise* [...] who translated *Gyron le courtois*.⁹²

What Ritson here says was reprinted in Scottish historian John Colin Dunlop’s (1785-1842) hugely influential account of early prose literature, *The History of Fiction* (1814; repr. 1816), with Dunlop further elaborating on Ritson’s comment, offering a warning to the reader to approach the question of the authorship of medieval prose romances with ‘great suspicion’:

It is in the prefaces alone that any notices can be found with regard to the old romances or their authors; but it requires some discernment to discover what is true, and to distinguish correct information from what was merely thrown out in jest, or intended to give the stamp of authority with the vulgar. In general the account given in their

⁹² Joseph Ritson, *Ancient English Metrical Romanceës* (London: Printed by W. Bulmer and Company, in Cleveland-Row, 1802), pp. xliii-xliv.

prefaces by the romancers concerning their fellow-labourers is accurate, but every thing relating to themselves, or their own works, must be received with great suspicion.⁹³

Despite the comprehensiveness of the *History of Fiction*, Dunlop gave little room for discussion of English prose romances after the fourteenth century, such as the *Morte*, focusing instead on a number of French medieval romances, among which *Merlin*, *L'Histoire out e Roman du Saint-Greal*, *Lancelot du Lac*, and the prose *Tristan* that had received little prior critical attention. In turn, Dunlop's resuscitation of these French Arthurian romances set a precedent, which critics such as Southey would later follow, for the editor and literary critic to examine the English romance tradition in relation to the French tradition, on which a number of English romances are based. Thus, in writing the introduction to the 1817 edition of the *Morte*, Southey drew upon various French romances, the Vulgate *Merlin*, *Lancelot*, the prose *Tristan*, and a prose *Perceval* among them, summarizing the content of these romances while *claiming* to have analysed the *Morte* in relation to the French tradition. There is little evidence to suggest that such an analysis was anything but superficial, however. Certainly, as Parins's aforementioned remark demonstrates, Southey's failure to recognise Ector's lament as original to Malory, referring to it instead as being extracted from the French prose *Lancelot*, demonstrates the general negligence by which medieval texts were treated in this period.

⁹³ John Colin Dunlop, *The History of Fiction. Being a Critical Account of the Most Celebrated Prose Works of Fiction from the Earliest Greek Romances to the Novels of the Present Age* (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1814), p. 200-01. Daniel P. Nastali and Phillip C. Boardman refer to Dunlop's *History of Fiction* as being as 'enormously influential account of early literature which provides a comprehensive treatment of the Arthurian romances of the Middle Ages.' They note that Dunlop's study was 'used as a sourcebook by many 19th-century writers', and was reprinted throughout the nineteenth century. See Nastali and Boardman, *The Arthurian Annals: The Tradition in English from 1250 to 2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 81.

Indeed, expediency combined with a general distaste for the literary value of medieval literature (except, perhaps, for Chaucer) often directed the decisions of early nineteenth-century editors regarding their choice of copy-text and editorial practice. As Tim William Machan explains:

If Middle English textual criticism was informed by the principles of textual criticism in general, then one of the informing principles was that works of the Middle Ages were inherently and variously inferior to those of the Antique or the Renaissance. Hence, there could be little artistic or moral reason to devote a great deal of attention to the editorial theory or practice of these works.⁹⁴

In the view of critics like Southey, the fifteenth century produced no author or work of literature that could compete with either that which followed, in the Renaissance, or what came before, Chaucer in particular. As Southey writes in his 1807 *Specimens of Later English Poets*:

Old poets in general are only valuable for their antiquity; Chaucer, on the contrary, is prevented only by his antiquity from being ranked among the greatest Poets of England; far indeed below Shakespeare and Milton, perhaps below Spenser, for his mind was less pure, and his beauties scattered over a wider and more unequal service, - but far above all others.

[...]

⁹⁴ Tim William Machan, *Textual Criticism and Middle English Texts* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994), p. 47.

From Chaucer to the days of Henry VIII, no progress was made in literature; in those days it could not flourish without patronage, and the man of rank who should have patronized it perished by the sword, or by the axe [...] No improvement was made, no innovation attempted; the several species of poetry in use continued, without alteration, being wither such as were common to all countries, and borrowed from the French, or dulle moral ballads, virelays, and roundelays, perhaps borrowed from the Spaniards.⁹⁵

Southey's commentary here echoes the canon first formed by eighteenth-century critics such as Warton: Chaucer, as a medieval writer, is ranked far beneath Shakespeare, Milton, or Spenser, but represents the best (in the early nineteenth-century view, *the only*) writer pre-1500. Those who follow Chaucer but precede the Renaissance cannot be considered authorial because, as Southey remarks, they did not imbue their work with the stamp of authority befitting the 'improvement' or 'innovation' of Shakespeare. Such works as the *Morte* are merely 'borrowed from the French', a fact that would prove decisive in the poor reception they would receive for much of the nineteenth century.

From the aforementioned commentaries given by Ritson, Southey and Dunlop can the prevailing early nineteenth-century attitude about late medieval literature such as the *Morte* be ascertained. Attitudes towards medieval modes of authorship in relation to prose romance was, by the time Southey came to write the introduction to the 1817 edition, decidedly negative. It is uncertain whether Southey knew of the respective argument made by Ritson and Dunlop; he references neither of them in his Introduction to the 1817 edition. Southey was an avid and influential literary critic and sometime editor of medieval literature, however, having edited

⁹⁵ Robert Southey, *Specimens of Later English Prose Poets, with Preliminary Notes*, 3 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1807), p. xvi-xvii, xix.

Amadis of Gaul in 1807; and it is therefore probable, given his critical interests, that he would have been familiar with the work of Ritson and Dunlop. By considering the work of early nineteenth-century figures such as Southey and Dunlop, a clear picture emerges: that the author-figure was for those few romances attributable to a single authority (Malory, Gaultier Map, Rusticien, etc.) regarded to be nothing more than indistinct ‘men of straw’ whose lack of innovation combined with an almost total absence of biography led to their being marginalized to the peripheries of English literary history. In the absence of an acceptable and accepted author-figure, then, the *Morte* was revived not as a classic of English literature, which would come later in the century, but as a monument of a bygone age, to be told, as Malory’s first nineteenth-century editor, Alexander Chalmers, writes, ‘with a simplicity bordering upon the sublime’.⁹⁶

II Revival

In 1858, literary critic David Masson (1822-1907), in *British Novelists and Their Styles*, encapsulated the contemporary appeal for the *Morte Darthur*, which had recently been edited in a three-volume edition by Thomas Wright, by attributing its success not to any authorial design, but rather to its function as an encyclopaedia of Arthurian material from which the writer can appropriate freely.⁹⁷ Despite acknowledging Malory’s ‘service to posterity by recompiling the whole in connected English’, Masson nevertheless undermined Malory’s authorship by declaring the book to be universal in its composition and national in its subject:

⁹⁶ See the preface to the 1816 edition of the *Morte*, edited by Chalmers, p. 14.

⁹⁷ David Masson, *British Novelists and Their Styles: Being a Critical Sketch of the history of British Prose Fiction* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1858).

It is as if the book were the product of no one mind, nor even of a score of successive minds, not even if any one place or time, but were a rolling body of British-Norman legend, a representative bequest into the British air and the air overhanging the English Channel, from the collective brain and imagination that had tenanted that region through a definite range of vanquished centuries.⁹⁸

For Masson, the appeal of the *Morte* is its timelessness. It belongs to all time, not to any single moment, such as the author's time. It is imbued with a collective impulse, representing the evolution of the Arthurian legend from its earliest origin and across the medieval landscape from which the legend grew. Above all, the *Morte* is categorically English, an embodiment of the English geographic and cultural landscape that gave rise to the Arthurian legend out of which Malory 'did his service to posterity' by bequeathing unto the post-medieval reader a final compilation, a tangible representation of the 'vanquished centuries'.

Specific to my argument, however, is what Masson has to say (or, rather, not say) about the author of the *Morte*. 'It is as if the book were the product of no one mind', he writes. Malory hardly seems to matter in Masson's commentary. He did his 'service to posterity', but there is a sense in what Masson writes that Malory is perceived as being a mere conduit through which the Arthurian legend passes, one of a number of compilers whose 'service' does not extend to an acknowledgement of true authorship. Indeed, Masson goes on to question the very nature of the *Morte* as a useful source for writers *because* the text is unhindered by the aura of an established authorial presence:

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 63.

It is the kind of book into which a poet may go for hints and fancies already made to his hands, in dealing with which by way of elaboration and expansion he may follow his own free will without sense of constraint, evolving meanings where they seem concealed, or fitting his own meaning to visual imaginations which start out of their apparent arbitrariness into pre-established connexion with them. Accordingly, the body of Arthurian legend here locked up has served as a magazine of ideal subjects and suggestions to some of the greatest poets of our nation, from Spenser and Milton to our own Tennyson. No wonder that to so many in these days Malory's *King Arthur* has become once again a favourite pocket volume.⁹⁹

Most telling in this passage is Masson's definition of the *Morte* as a text towards which the writer can approach of 'his own free will without a sense of constraint'. Masson's use of the noun 'constraint' is crucial to our understanding of the way Malory's authorship continued to be dismissed, even by the mid-nineteenth century. There is no 'constraint' precisely because there is no author – or at least no recognisable author. As we have already seen, for much of the nineteenth century, Malory lacked both a biography that would satisfy the desire for scholars to reconcile the author with the text and also recognition of his own authorship – that is, he is censured for being a 'mere compiler'. As such, the nineteenth-century writer who appropriates material from the *Morte* can do so without 'constraint' of an authorial presence. The same nineteenth-century writer, however, could not so unrestrainedly appropriate the work of Chaucer or Shakespeare because, as we have seen, these authors are imbued with an aura rendering both their work and any work falling under their influence to fall under the remit of 'Chaucerian' or 'Shakespearian'. To produce a work of literature based on or inspired by Chaucer, therefore, immediately constrains the writer to 'being Chaucerian'. This is less true

⁹⁹ Masson, p. 66.

of Malory because he is not imbued at this time with the same degree of influence by which a writer such as Tennyson, who indeed did based his famous work, the *Idylls*, on Malory, could be constrained by the aura of ‘being Malorian’. One cannot be ‘Malorian’, in other words, because Malory has yet to attain either an identity, biographically speaking, or the respectability that comes from the recognition of true authorship.

To repeat Masson’s above-quoted text, then: without the ‘constraint’ of an established authorial presence, the ‘body of Arthurian legend here locked up’ within the *Morte* is nothing more than a ‘magazine’ of ideal subjects and suggestions for the writer to borrow from at leisure. Herein lies the paradox by which the *Morte* is received by nineteenth-century readers. On the one hand, the *Morte* is popular (‘once again a favourite pocket volume’, to quote Masson) because of its proven popularity among the most celebrated writers of English literature, Spenser and Tennyson among them. This alone establishes the presence of the *Morte* in nineteenth-century print. If the text is read by those writers recognised as canonical then it must be worthy of being read by the literate class. On the other hand, the *Morte*’s contemporary popularity comes at the cost of its author. The *Morte* is popular despite Malory not because of Malory. For as long as nothing continues to be known about Malory, and while the critical censure we saw from the likes of Southey and Dunlop continues, Malory cannot be reconciled with the text. The *Morte*, therefore, remains a ‘magazine of ideal subjects’ from which the writer can go without ‘constraint’ for ‘hints and fancies.’¹⁰⁰ But as critics such as Assmann have written about the consecration of texts within the literary canon, ‘literary works [...] lack any innate ability to last. They therefore depend on a social construction, on a pact across generations that will lend them support. It is not [...] the immanent power of texts but the

¹⁰⁰ Masson, p. 66.

decision of posterity that will ensure whether they survive or not.¹⁰¹ The *Morte*, as we have already established, is conserved precisely because of its connection to canonical figures like Spenser. This connection precipitated the text's revival at the beginning of the nineteenth century while keeping the memory of the text alive in the minds of those 'few lettered and curious men' whose 'honour and rejection' were central to the establishment of the literary canon. Consequently, the *Morte* attains recognition and a certain degree of esteem due to its status as a text popular with canonical figures, without necessarily being considered itself canonical. Its place within the canon is peripheral rather than central because it will, in the absence of an established author, always be regarded as a 'magazine' from which canonical writers can extract at will, rather than specifically as a standalone text.

Much later in the nineteenth century, in 1894, Strachey, whose own edition of the *Morte* was printed in 1868, published a semi-autobiographical account of his life as a lettered gentleman entitled *Talk at a Country House*.¹⁰² In this book, Strachey introduces his own literary views by creating a fictional scenario in which two figures, *Foster* (an interviewer) and the *Squire* (the interviewee, who is Strachey) enter into a book-length discussion which, as the title of the book suggests, is intended to produce the image of a long discussion taking place in a country house. In chapter seven, 'Riding Down to Camelot', Strachey's discussion focuses exclusively upon his long acquaintance with the *Morte Darthur*. Echoing what is said above by Masson, Strachey contrasts the *Morte* with Tennyson's *Idylls*, declaring the *Idylls* to be stylistically superior while nevertheless inferring that Tennyson's poem, like Spenser's, is indebted to

¹⁰¹ Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilisation: Function, Media, Archive* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 191.

¹⁰² Edward Strachey, *Talk at A Country House: Fact and Fiction* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company; Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1894).

Malory, in which case the *Morte* stands alone as the text to which these authors are bound. The following text, extracted from Strachey's *Talk at a Country House*, is quoted at length so as to fully engage with what Strachey has to say about the *Morte*, which is central to the analysis that follows. Thus, in their fictionalised, fireside discussion, the *Morte* is defined as follows:

The Squire An artist is one who recognizes bounds to his as a necessity, and does not overflow illimitably to all extend about a matter. [...] To get the workmanship as nearly perfect as possible is the best change for going down the stream of time. A small vessel on fine is less likely to float further than a great raft.

Foster And so you contrast these small vessels, the "Idylls", with Malory's great raft "Le Morte Darthur?"

The Squire Yes. [...] Each generation has its own authorities and teachers. I quote Tennyson now; fifty years ago I though Coleridge's distinctions of poetry and romance, prose and verse, the best possible.

Foster [...] Judged by Coleridge's standards, is not Malory's book a romance rather than a poem?

The Squire Perhaps it is. I am not at all willing, even for Malory's sake, to break down the distinction between prose and verse [...] I will content myself with saying that it [the *Morte*] is a work of art, real though rude; and for this I have the voice of the world of letters, gentle and simple, on my side. [...] Whatever sidelights their learning may

have supplied to Spenser, Milton, and Tennyson, there can be no reasonable doubt that the Arthur and his knights whom they knew are the king and knights of Malory.¹⁰³

This is, arguably, the closest Malory comes to attaining an ‘aura’ similar to that enjoyed by Chaucer and Shakespeare. By contrasting the *Morte* with the *Idylls*, Strachey paints a picture from which we learn that the *Morte* is a ‘great raft’ upon which the ‘small lines’ of the *Idylls* must float. As a ‘great raft’, the *Morte* encompasses every text based upon it. But the ‘raft’ is stylistically imperfect; hence, it is left to the erudition of Tennyson or Spenser to produce the ‘fine lines’ from which literary ‘perfection’ can be enjoyed. Strachey’s definition of a ‘great raft’ conveys a similar meaning to what Masson would forty years earlier write about the *Morte* being akin to a ‘magazine’. The difference between the two, however, though subtle, is striking. Masson’s ‘magazine’ is at once a figurative item, to be plundered by the writer at leisure; the *Morte* is invested with no determinate agency of its own – a consequence, as I have been arguing, of its little-known and poorly received author. It can, then, be ransacked ‘without constraint’. To operate a ‘great raft’, however, requires a good deal of ‘constraint’. Indeed, while the magazine sits dormant, awaiting its reader, the great raft continues on its voyage, awaiting the time when the poet will steer the raft upon ‘fine lines’ to its destination. Strachey’s metaphor encompasses everything I have thus far written about the retrieval of the *Morte Darthur*. The raft cannot be steered without a captain, just as the *Morte* cannot attain canonical status without an author. In Malory’s absence, the raft must therefore be steered by the poets whose work forges a path through which the *Morte* can more easily reach its destination. Spenser’s *FQ* unlocked the *Morte* for it to be retrieved by Warton, beginning the process of revival. But the raft, or work, is as much steered by the critics as it is by the poet. Indeed, critical opinion is crucial to how a text will be received by its audience. As we have seen, the

¹⁰³ Strachey, *Talk at a Country House*, pp. 175-76.

Morte, alongside other medieval romances, did not fare well in the opinion of leading critics at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Critics of the calibre of Southey, the Poet Laureate, Scott, the leading and best-selling writer of his age, and Dunlop, whose opinions set precedents, largely decided, if not the marketability of literature, then its respectability. The 1816 editions, for instance, did sell, and well, especially the first edition, edited by Chalmers, as Gaines and Fuwa have both noted.¹⁰⁴ How a book sells, however, does not decide how it will be received, certainly not its critical reception. The *Morte* was perceived to be naive in composition and wholly lacking in originality; and these critical views would thereafter continue well into the nineteenth century. In his fictional conversation, however, Strachey alludes to a generational shift in attitude. As an old man (Strachey was 82 when he wrote *Talk at a Country House*), Strachey comments on the poets, like Coleridge, he read in his youth, suggesting that their influence has been displaced by more recent poets: ‘I quote Tennyson now’, he writes, ‘fifty years ago I thought Coleridge’s distinctions [...] the best possible’. Literary reception is generational, a fact that is not lost on Strachey. Coleridge is displaced by Tennyson because ‘[e]ach generation has its own authorities and teachers’. Therefore, according to Strachey, Malory, once censured by an earlier generation, can now be praised by the current generation, but only if the latter sets aside preconceived ideas and reviews the *Morte* afresh. For Strachey, to appreciate the *Morte* the reader must:

Look at this book of Malory’s “Morte Darthur,” as it actually is, and not as the critics say it ought to have been, if he had properly followed his sources. You will find on

¹⁰⁴ See especially Barry Gaines, ‘The Editions of Malory in the Early Nineteenth Century’, *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 68 (1974), 1-17; see also the introduction to Fuwa’s edition of the *Morte: The Morte Darthur: A Collection of Early Nineteenth-Century Editions*, ed. by Yuri Fuwa (Tokyo: Edition Synapse, 2017).

every page the marks of a work of true though early and somewhat rude art; and then, if you will look again with your own eyes, and not with those of the critics, you will see that his art is all his own, and not to be found in the older legends which he has used as materials.¹⁰⁵

Strachey is here answering a question put to him by the fictional Foster, who asks:

Do you hold to that eulogistic designation of Malory's "Morte Darthur," in face of the half-patronizing, half-contemptuous language in which the Caxtons of the present day have described the very book on which they have just lavished all the learning, labour, and cost of many years, - a work which very few will care for or appreciate at its proper value, though many may enjoy the popular fruits of it all?¹⁰⁶

The 'Caxtons of the present day' refers to the dismissive remarks made by Southey and other critics nearly eighty years earlier. In Strachey's opinion, by looking at the *Morte* as it really is and not 'as the critics say it ought to have been' the reader can gain a fresh appreciation of its literary value, and thus a wholly new recognition of the literary practice of its author, Malory. Indeed, to appreciate the *Morte* as a work of literature is to recognise Malory's authorship: only an author, not a compiler, could create something that is 'all his own, and not to be found in the older legends.' Thus, for Strachey, the *Morte* bears the undeniable marks of authority.

By the time Strachey came to edit the *Morte* in the 1860s, he was no stranger to literary criticism. A member of the minor aristocratic Strachey family, occupying the seat of Sutton

¹⁰⁵ Strachey, *Talk at a Country House*, p. 169.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p. 168.

Court, Somerset, and holding a hereditary baronetcy, of which Edward Strachey was the third baronet, succeeding his uncle in 1858, Strachey was active in literary circles and a frequent contributor to esteemed periodicals such as *The Spectator* and *Blackwood's Magazine*.¹⁰⁷ Fluent in several language, including Hebrew and Arabic, Strachey published, in 1848, a commentary on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and wrote books on politics, science, and contemporary events. Commissioned sometime in the 1860s by Macmillan to edit the *Morte Darthur* for its Globe Series of Classic Books, a wildly successful venture that sold hundreds of thousands of copies within a decade, thus ensuring immediate popularity for any selected text, Strachey set to work collating the previous editions of the *Morte*. Having examined at length all previous nineteenth-century editions, in addition to the black-letter editions, alongside Malory's major sources, Strachey came to an immediate and important conclusion: that previous editors had been unfair and short-sighted in their dismissal of Malory's authorship. Although Strachey's edition is not a critical edition, but was marketed by its publisher to the general reader, Strachey's analysis of the text was nevertheless the most extensively conducted yet by an editor of the *Morte*, certainly in comparison with his nineteenth-century predecessors. Strachey's conclusion, based on his examination of the *Morte* and Malory's sources, is that

It has been usual to assume that because Caxton says that Sir Thomas Malory took his work 'out of certain books of French and reduced it into English', he was a mere compiler and translator. But the book shows that he was its author – its 'maker', as he would have called it. Notwithstanding his occasionally inartificial manner of

¹⁰⁷ Perhaps the most famous member of the Strachey family is the writer and critic Lytton Strachey (1880-1932), whose books *Eminent Victorians* (1918) and *Queen Victoria* (1921) envisioned a new form of biography, one founded on psychological insight. For further information on the Strachey family, see Barbara Caine, *Bombay to Bloomsbury: A Biography of the Strachey Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

connecting the materials drawn from the old romances, [...] there is an epic unity and harmony, and a beginning, middle, and end, which, if they have come by chance and not of design, have come by that chance which only befalls an Homeric or Shakespeare-like man.¹⁰⁸

Strachey was able to arrive at this conclusion from a systematic, philologically derived investigation into Malory's handling of his sources. This same subject had been commented upon by Southey in the introduction to the 1817 edition. Where Southey censures Malory's representation of Gawain as deviating too far from his source material, declaring it to be an act akin to literary vandalism, Strachey on the contrary notes that Malory's Gawain in fact testifies to his authority over the sources, writing:

Modern critics of great name agree in censuring Sir Thomas Malory for departing from the old authorities who represented Gawaine as the very counterpart of Launcelot in knightly character: but I rather see a proof of Malory's art in giving us a new Gawaine with a strongly individual character of his own. Gawain's regard for his mother's honour, his passion for Ettard, and his affection for his brothers, are savage impulses driving him to unknighly and unworthy deeds, yet he is far from being represented as a mere villain. If Malory depicts him thirsting to revenge upon Launcelot the unintentional killing of Gaheris and Gareth, he depicts also his long previous affection for Launcelot and his opposition to the hostility of his other brother, Mordred [...]¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Strachey, *Le Morte Darthur*, p. viii.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. ix.

Such changes, for Strachey, qualify Malory for consideration as a ‘Shakespeare-like man’. The reference is poignant, particularly if we remember (as quoted earlier) Southey’s admonishment of medieval romancers’ handling of their source material by declaring: ‘Who could bear to see Desdemona represented as an adulteress?’ Further proof of Malory’s art is given by Strachey in his reference to Malory’s excision ‘of much of the story relating to Merlin’:

we see at once how [Malory] has converted that prose into poetry, giving life and beauty to the coarse clods of earth, and transmitting by his art the legends which he yet faithfully preserves. For the long and repulsive narrative of Merlin’s origin he substitutes a slight allusion to it [...]¹¹⁰

For Strachey, it is in Malory’s characterisation, his free arrangement and frequent abandonment of his sources to paint a portrait of the various knights of the Round Table that is wholly his own, which imbues Malory with the unmistakable quality of authorship. Malory found ‘many of these men and women already existing in the old romances’, Strachey writes about Malory’s characterisation, ‘but we may believe that those earlier books were to him something of what the pages of Plutarch and Holinshead were to Shakespeare.’¹¹¹ Again, by painting Malory as a ‘Shakespeare-like man’, Strachey affirms his authorship, stating categorically that Malory’s handling of his sources is exactly what imbues the *Morte* with the stamp of authorship, as it does for Shakespeare, also.

Strachey had certainly read the previous criticism written by Southey and Scott, going so far as to reference them in his Introduction, adding the refrain that they are ‘only attractive to the

¹¹⁰ Strachey, *Le Morte Darthur*, p. viii.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p. x.

antiquarian student'.¹¹² He even refers to the 'account of the principal early prose romances' given in Southey's introduction to the 1817 edition.¹¹³ That he disagrees almost entirely with Southey's conclusions about Malory is obvious; and such a disagreement is based solely on the practice of the individual editors. Southey listed, and may have read, Malory's sources, but there is little evidence to suggest that he conducted a thorough collation of them alongside the *Morte*. Strachey, conversely, did just that, and in doing so was able to reach the balanced conclusion thus far seen. To be sure, Strachey revives Malory's reputation because he is the first nineteenth-century editor of the *Morte* to conduct a thorough analysis of Malory's sources, the only way to properly ascertain an overview of Malory's composition of the *Morte*. Indeed, I begin section 2 of this chapter, 'Revival', with a discussion of Strachey's edition to demonstrate that it was in this edition that Malory, as author, was revived. While *revival* is typically used to describe the publication of the 1816 editions, through which the *Morte* was revived in print after two centuries, my definition of revival is less concerned with the *Morte* than it is with Malory. In other words, the *Morte* may have been revived in print in 1816, but it would be a further fifty-two years before Malory met with his own revival. As such, Strachey's edition marks the beginning on the road to canonisation.

Despite the continued absence of any biographical evidence that would succeed in reconciling the Malory with the *Morte*, Strachey's examination succeeded in conjuring a figurative authorial presence for the text. In order to arrive at the conclusions so far shown, it was necessary for Strachey to retrace Malory's steps — that is, to deconstruct the *Morte*, placing the constituent pieces alongside the relevant source, only to then reconstruct it with the newly acquired insight into Malory's practice. Such an endeavour in turn influenced Strachey's

¹¹² Ibid, p. x.

¹¹³ Ibid, p. x.

positive view of Malory's authorship. Indeed, in his aptly titled, 'The Medieval "Author": An Idea Whose Time Hadn't Come?', Stephen G. Nichols argues that the modern concept of the medieval author is evidenced by the emergence of textual philology in the latter half of the nineteenth century:

[...] philology had, of necessity, to take as its corollary the search for a stable text, the quest for its originator. That is, the "author", the poet viewed not as authorial agency, but as a "person" in the metaphysical sense of the term; in short, the active "presence" in the text of both body and mind.'¹¹⁴

'Textual philology', he continues, 'requires an author. Without an author there can be no philology'.¹¹⁵ It was G. Thomas Tanselle who famously claimed that, regardless of methodology, the goal of textual criticism is to 'discover exactly what an author wrote and to determine what form of his work he wished the public to have'.¹¹⁶ The chief concern of the editor, to construct from the extant material a version of the text representative of authorial intention, or else embodying the closest possible witness to those intentions, presupposes the existence of an author, because there must be an author for there to be intention. Read this way, the philologically constructed author satisfies certain ontologically derived anxieties about the status of authorship by superimposing onto the text an equivalent, albeit metaphysical, author-figure. The *real* author, that is, the historical person who wrote the text, remains unharmed by textual philology, which instead produces an imagined author subject entirely to the mutability

¹¹⁴ Nichols, 'The Medieval "Author"', p. 79.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 179.

¹¹⁶ G. Thomas Tanselle, 'The Editorial Problem of Final Authorial Intention', *Studies in Bibliography* 29 (1976), 167-211 (p. 167).

of textual philology. The author, in other words, is created by the editor, who requires the author to make sense of their work. Indeed, the imagined author requires neither a name nor a reliable biography to carry out its intended purpose. It exists purely as a conduit through which the editor can pursue their task safe in the knowledge that an author once existed and therefore intention — or, at the very least, what the author did — is retrievable. As Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht remarks: ‘Text editing [...] conjures up the desire of embodying the text in question, which can transform itself into the desire of also embodying the author of the text embodied.’¹¹⁷ The action of deconstructing the text to perform a comparative analysis between witnesses or sources, only to then reconstruct the text with a new-found knowledge into the inner workings of the author’s practice, reinforces the nature of authorial production, therefore establishing the presence of an author-figure.

The primary argument of this chapter is that the preoccupation with authorial identity and biography among late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars of medieval – and, more generally, of English – literature contributed directly to the selection and dissemination of texts for which an established authorial presence could be attributed. So strong was the desire to anchor literary texts within the confines of biographical contextualisation that the one was rarely used in isolation from the other, with the text being read as indicative of the author’s life, and vice versa. Strachey’s analysis does not produce a biographical profile for Malory, which would come later, but it does produce an imagined author, from which the editor can ascertain important details about the composition of the text. ‘Malory has re-cast the old story’, writes

¹¹⁷ Gumbrecht, *The Powers of Philology*, pp. 6-7.

Strachey, ‘and all the poetry is his own.’¹¹⁸ Such a conclusion can only be reached, as Nichols argues, by establishing in the first instance an authorial presence. When considered in the light of what critics such as Nichols and Gumbrecht have to say on the subject of a philologically derived author-figure, the 1868 edition reveals an awareness on behalf of its editor for the philological complexities present in the preparation of a text that 1) is a composite of numerous French and Middle English sources, thus complicating the matter of authorial originality, and 2) was subject to nearly three centuries of ‘inaccuracy and slovenliness’ from editors and critics in the ‘habit of putting second-hand guesses in the place of verified facts.’¹¹⁹ In Strachey’s edition more than any preceding it, philological scrutiny replaced dilettante guesswork. By ascertaining how and with what Malory composed the *Morte Darthur*, his selection and omission of episodes and characters, for example, Strachey anticipated the work of future critics of the *Morte* by almost a century. It is perhaps no coincidence that the nineteenth-century revival of interest in the medieval author coincided (or perhaps precipitated) with the implementation of textual philology as an academic (rather than amateur) discipline during the 1860s – the decade in which the Early English Text Society first became active.¹²⁰

Strachey’s edition re-set the parameters by which Malory is represented and deserves to be considered as among the most important nineteenth-century editions of the *Morte*. While the importance of the edition lies, for my part, in what Strachey has to say about the author, it is

¹¹⁸ Strachey, *Le Morte Darthur*, p. x. Quoted from the 1893 edition. Strachey revised the introduction to his edition following the publication of Sommer’s three-volume critical edition, in 1889-91, updating the bibliography to take this into account.

¹¹⁹ Strachey, *Talk at a Country House*, p. 174.

¹²⁰ For a history of the Early English Text Society, see Anthony Singleton, ‘The Early English Text Society in the Nineteenth Century: An Organizational History’, *The Review of English Studies* 56 (2005), 90-118.

equally significant for the influence it had on the popular recognition of the *Morte*. Affordable and mass-produced, Strachey's edition, as I have already discussed in the introduction to this thesis, reached a wider audience than any previous edition, based primarily on the phenomenal success of the Macmillan Globe Series of Classic Books.¹²¹ The success of the edition is evidenced through the number of reprints, more than twenty, and its longevity in print, printed well into the 1930s. Indeed, Strachey's edition set the standard by which later, cheaply produced editions of the *Morte* would be published. Within just twenty years of its publication, the *Morte* had undergone a transformation: from the beginning of the nineteenth century, when it was known by only a select group of literary enthusiasts, to the end of the century, when its popularity was such that it was being ranked among the top works of English literature.

Thus, in 1885, philanthropist and amateur archaeologist Sir John Lubbock (1834-1913), who is best known today for having coined the terms 'Palaeolithic' and 'Neolithic', and for his work to promote archaeology as a scientific discipline, delivered a lecture before the Working Men's College in Great Ormond Street, London, titled 'The Choice of Books', which would later become known by the more contentious title of 'The Best Hundred Books'. His intention for this lecture was simple: he desired to compose a list of the best 100 books, not just in the English language, but internationally. This list was intended for the growing number of working class men and women whose improved education and economic prospects allowed them for the first time to participate in the rapidly expanding literary marketplace. Among the works included in Lubbock's list, theology and philosophy dominate, as do the classics: the Bible takes first place, followed by the *Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*. With the exception of John Bunyan's 1678 Christian allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, appearing at number 16 on

¹²¹ For the influence of Strachey's edition, including some of its esteemed readers, such as A.W. Pollard, Mark Twain, and Oscar Wilde, see Gaines, *Anecdotal Bibliography*, pp. 23-24.

the list, works of English literature do not feature at all in the top 30. When Lubbock's list was originally published in 1885, the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, responding to the controversy it had generated, 'undertook the task of submitting Sir John's list to a variety of men eminent in society and literature, and asking them for their opinions and criticisms.'¹²² In its survey, the *Gazette* asked the reader to consider two questions: 'Have I read, not these hundred books, but any hundred books?', and 'Do I know anyone who has read a hundred books?' Lubbock's list was, according to the *Gazette*, intended for the working man, whose knowledge of so-called great literature was hindered by their limited means and education. The list of books was vilified by a number of learned men and women, both during and after its publication. Most vociferous of all are the comments made by English critic and historian George Saintsbury (1845-1933), regarded as being one the most influential literary critics of the late nineteenth century, who condemned the sheer presumptuousness of such a list, writing thirty years after its publication:

"The Best Hundred Books" notion is, of course, an absurdity — if it ever had been accepted (and it never was) by "Victorians" who "counted" in the slightest degree, Victorianism would deserve the worst that has been, or could be, said of it. [...] In one sense there may be ten best books, in another ten thousand; but attempting to number them deserves worse curses than those from which King David had to choose.¹²³

Others criticised the content of the list as unsuitable for the working man. Indeed, in her correspondence with the *Gazette*, 'Lady Dilke', known otherwise as the feminist author and art

¹²² Unsigned article, 'Art. VI. – What and How to Read,' *Westminster Review* (January, 1887), 99-118, p. 102.

¹²³ George Saintsbury, *A Scrap Book* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1922), p. 213.

historian Emilia Dilke (1840-1904), called attention to the didactic nature of Lubbock's list as wholly improper for all but the scholar:

To be in a position to properly understand and appreciate the works of Sir John's list, I undertake to say that one must have spent at least thirty years in preparatory study, and have had the command of, say, something more than a thousand volumes.¹²⁴

For Dilke, the content of Lubbock's list is problematic because, first and foremost, it is indicative of a reading that only the academic or learned person could understand, therefore unsuitable for the working man, who had neither the means to acquire all of these volumes nor the education to understand them. Lubbock reputes this, however, with his contention that the working man is as equally deserving as the scholar to read the literature that has, for centuries, been unavailable to all but the learned few. Dilke's assertion as to the inaccessibility of Lubbock's list to all but the learned is again repeated by another commentator to the *Gazette*, 'Mr. Quaritch', a Piccadilly bookseller, who writes, 'Sir John's working man is an ideal creation. [...] I have known many working men, but none of them could have digested such a feast as he has prepared for them.'¹²⁵ Quaritch's remark is supported in the *Gazette* by the chief librarian of Darlington, who notes that, of those 100 books on Lubbock's list, only nine are frequently perused by his (largely working class) clientele.

Lubbock's working man might indeed be called 'ideal', and it is unlikely that any working man in England read the entire contents of Lubbock's list for simple edification. His intentions, however, are indicative of a wider cultural movement in England that began in the 1860s with

¹²⁴ 'What and How to Read', p. 108.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 114.

classic reprint series such as Macmillan's Globe Series and proliferated throughout the 1880s and 1890s. The introduction, in 1870, of the Elementary Education Act, which brought education to millions of working class children, ensured that, by the 1880s, when the first generation to benefit from the Act reached adulthood, for the first time in English history, a huge number, millions, were literate. Consequently, demand for affordable books reached new heights, and a mass market for cheap literature emerged. This in turn precipitated a substantial cultural awakening as millions of literate adults sought to understand, and by doing so participate in, their political and cultural history. As literary critic John Churton Collins (1848-1908) would write in his *The Study of English Literature: A Plea for its Recognition* (1891):

[the people] need political culture, instruction, that is to say, in what pertains to their relation to the State, to their duties as citizens; and they also need to be impressed sentimentally by having the presentation in legend and history of heroic and patriotic example brought vividly and attractively before them.¹²⁶

In other words, English people needed an English legend to be 'impressed sentimentally' by their own national history. In this need, Lubbock recommended to the working man the most famous and oft-adapted legend in English, the Arthurian legend, of which, placing at number 34 in his original list, and then number 29 in his revised list, published in 1886, he included the most famous English-language version of the Arthurian legend: *Le Morte Darthur*. Excepting Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the *Morte* is the highest ranked work of English literature to be included in Lubbock's list. Indeed, those four authors, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton, so often quoted as sitting atop the literary canon, are ranked considerably lower. So as

¹²⁶ J.C. Collins, *The Study of English Literature: A Plea for its Recognition* (London: Macmillan, 1891), p. 148.

to draw attention to the legendary status of the *Morte*, Lubbock places it on his list in close proximity to other national legends, such as the *Nibelungenlied*, and the works of Homer, Virgil, and Hesiod.

Despite the overwhelming criticism Lubbock's list received among his contemporaries, modern scholars have tended not to underestimate the ideological impact the list had on the literary marketplace. As Mary Hammond has written:

The influence which Lubbock's list exerted on the notion of a 'classic series' is difficult to overstate. Despite the objections of several public figures [...] publishers and writers deferred to it for years, even while they deviated from or added to its prescription.¹²⁷

Similarly, N.N. Feltes suggests that the 'significance of the number [of books] was not arithmetical but ideological, signifying [...] attainable knowledge.'¹²⁸ Furthermore, Lubbock's decision to print his list in his own book *The Use of Life* would guarantee a huge readership: his book had sold 50,000 copies by 1900, and 186,000 by 1913.¹²⁹

The same year that Lubbock published his list, two separate editions of the *Morte* were printed: a reprint of Strachey's edition, one of many, with the text being continually reprinted into the 1930s, and a single-volume edition edited by Anglo-Welsh writer Ernest Rhys (1859-

¹²⁷ Mary Hammond, *Reading, Publishing and the Formation of Literary Taste in England, 1880-1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 93-94.

¹²⁸ N.N. Feltes, *Literary Capital and the Late Victorian Novel* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), p. 46.

¹²⁹ P.J. Waller, *Writers, Readers, and Reputations: Literary Life in Britain, 1870-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 69.

1946) for a new book series appropriately titled the Camelot Series. Within ten years, the Camelot Series would be re-envisioned as the Everyman Series, published by J.M. Dent and one of the most famous and influential book series of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Within eighteen months, this series would sell in excess of three million copies. ‘Everyman’s Library’, writes John R. Turner, ‘was an institution, a benign presence, a crusade.’¹³⁰ The first classic to be published in this ‘crusade’ was the *Morte Darthur*.

Strachey’s edition may have established a philologically derived *imaginary* author for the *Morte*, resuscitating Malory from decades of critical censure, but Malory was still lacking in an essential component by which the text could be further enhanced in the eyes of the nineteenth-century critic, chiefly: a biography. As I have already discussed, not until 1894 when Kittredge published some preliminary remarks identifying Malory as the Warwickshire knight Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel was the text reconciled to an historically verifiable author.

Much has been written about Kittredge’s identification of the Warwickshire Malory and its ensuing ramifications.¹³¹ Kittredge would continue to publish short articles giving further evidence in support of the Warwickshire candidate. In the years immediately following Kittredge’s discovery, several other contenders for the identity of Thomas Malory emerged. In 1897, for instance, A.T. Martin discovered a will relating to a Thomas Malory of Papworth,

¹³⁰ John R. Turner, ‘The Camelot Series, Everyman’s Library, and Ernest Rhys,’ *Publishing History* 31 (1992), 27-46 (p. 28).

¹³¹ See, especially, Field, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory*.

Huntingdon, and would go on to publish several articles in defence of the Papworth Malory's claim to authorship.¹³² Martin based his assumption, which would be discredited by later biographers, on the fact that the birthplace of Malory is close to the area 'Mailoria', which John Bale three centuries earlier identified with Malory. Martin would concede, however, that the Papworth Malory was never called a 'knight', thus negating the possibility of him being the author of the *Morte*.¹³³ A further contender was given by J.P. Gilson in 1903, who believes Malory to be a member of the Malory family of Kirkby, Leicestershire. In addition to the Papworth and Kirkby Malory, and the Newbold Malory, too, Malory's Welsh origin, first established by Tudor historians Leland and Bale, continued to find some support, especially in the work of influential Welsh critic Ernest Rhys, whose own (aforementioned) edition of the *Morte* was published as the first volume in the Camelot (later Everyman's) Classics Series. Writing in 1897, Rhys thought it 'highly probable' that Malory was a Welsh cleric, echoing Strachey in his praise of Malory as 'much more than the mere compiler and book-maker that some critics have been content to call him'.¹³⁴ Much later, in 1925, Kittredge collated all assembled information into the pamphlet *Sir Thomas Malory*, advancing the evidence in favour of the Warwickshire candidate while rejecting the alternative candidate given by Martin. For instance, in response to Martin's proposal that, of the two Thomas Malorys alive in 1469 (Malory of Papworth and Malory of Newbold Revel), the Papworth Malory is the most likely

¹³² See A.T. Martin, 'Proceedings of Societies', *The Antiquary* 34 (August, 1898); and A.T. Martin, "'Mailoria" and Sir Thomas Malory', *The Athenaeum* 3690 (July 16, 1898), 98.

¹³³ See A.T. Martin, 'XI – The Identity of the Author of the "Morte d'Arthur"', with Notes on the Will of Thomas Malory and the Genealogy of the Malory Family', *Archaeologia; or, Miscellaneous Tracts Relating to Antiquity* 56 (1898), 165-92, see p. 97.

¹³⁴ Ernest Rhys, 'Sir Thomas Malory and the *Morte d'Arthur*', in *Library of the World's Best Literature, Ancient to Modern*, ed. by Charles Dudley Warner (New York: R.S. Peale and J.A. Hill, 1897).

contender, Kittredge found no evidence of this, arguing that the Papworth Malory could not have authored the *Morte* because he was an armiger and not a knight.¹³⁵ The publication in 1928 of the first full-length biography of Malory, *Sir Thomas Malory: His Turbulent Career*, written by Edward Hicks, further endorsed the Warwickshire Malory, and remained the most authoritative account of the Warwickshire Malory's life records until the publication of Field's biography in 1993.

Within a few years of the publication of Kittredge's initial findings, critics began to remark on the identity of Malory, largely accepting the Warwickshire knight as the most probable candidate. In the 1905 *Handbooks of English Literature*, for example, John Frederick Snell presented what Page West Life calls 'a fuller critical discussion than is found in most literary histories of this time'.¹³⁶ Snell 'condemns the theory that Malory was Welsh and prefers the Warwickshire candidate proposed by Kittredge.'¹³⁷ Similarly, in *The Arthur of the English Poets*, published in 1907, Gustavus Howard Maynadier accepts the Warwickshire candidate, quoting passages from Kittredge's articles.¹³⁸ Finally, in 1910, W. Gordon, in 'Malory, Story-Teller and Portrait Painter', situates Malory between Chaucer and Shakespeare as the greatest writer in the English language: 'Truly', writes Gordon, 'Malory may take his place as the greatest portrait painter between Chaucer and Shakespeare, and worth to be compared with

¹³⁵ G.L. Kittredge, *Sir Thomas Malory* (Barnstable: Privately Printed, 1925); my reference to this text is from Page West Life's survey of the scholarship on Malory; see, Page West Life, *Sir Thomas Malory and the "Morte Darthur": A Survey of Scholarship* (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 1988), pp. 110-11.

¹³⁶ West Life, *Sir Thomas Malory and the "Morte Darthur"*, p. 101.

¹³⁷ West Life, p. 101. See also, John Frederick Snell, *The Age of Transition, 1400-1580*, 2 vols (London: George Bell and Sons, 1905).

¹³⁸ Gustavus Howard Maynadier, *The Arthur of the English Poets* (London: Constable and Co; New York: Houghton and Mifflin, 1907).

them.¹³⁹ Such a comment in praise of Malory would have been unthinkable fifty years earlier, when Masson was comparing the *Morte* to a magazine to be plundered at will. But, by 1910, Malory had both an historically informed identity and a revived reputation, thanks to Strachey's edition. Thus, as we enter into the twentieth century, the *Morte Darthur* is acknowledged to be, in the words of Saintsbury, 'one of the great romances of the world'.¹⁴⁰

Before we move on to discuss how the *Morte* was consolidated into the literary canon at the beginning of the twentieth century, it is worth pondering a little further the opinion of a critic such as Saintsbury, whose esteem within the literary world was greater even than his own learning. Saintsbury's regard for the *Morte* and, most importantly, for its author, is marked by a subtle shift in attitude only after Malory's identity had been revealed. In 1885, for instance, Saintsbury repeats the remark that nothing is known of the author, adding: 'charming as it is, and worthy to occupy the place of honour here given it, [the *Morte*] is notoriously an adaptation of French originals.'¹⁴¹ Saintsbury's use of the word 'notoriously' here could only refer to those critics we have already encountered, Southey and Scott among them, who refused to see Malory for anything other than a 'mere compiler' and with whom Strachey so vehemently disagreed. It is testament to the influence and strength of such censure that similar such comments were still being made nearly seventy years later. Nevertheless, by 1924, once Malory's biography had begun to be accepted, Saintsbury's tone changes. Although he admits that Malory 'did not invent much', he goes on to give an account of the various subtle changes

¹³⁹ W. Gordon, 'Malory, Story-Teller and Portrait Painter', *Queen's Quarterly* 18 (July 1, 1910), 281-93 (p. 93).

¹⁴⁰ George Saintsbury, *Short History of English Literature* (New York: Macmillan, 1924), p. 195.

¹⁴¹ George Saintsbury, *Specimens of English Prose Style* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Company, 1885), p. xviii.

Malory did make, investing Malory with some degree of agency, before adding that Malory has ‘added to literature an imperishable book’.¹⁴² Saintsbury’s praise of the *Morte* became the norm once Malory’s biography had been accepted and thereafter assimilated into critical studies. Nearly a century after the revival of the *Morte* in print, Malory had both an identity and critical acceptance of his authorship. All that remained for Malory’s consolidation into the literary canon is for the effect of Malory’s biography to be recognised for its interpretative value.

III Consolidation

Kittredge’s identification of the Warwickshire knight Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel proved irresistible to scholars of medieval literature at beginning of the twentieth century, concerned as they were with designating a historically verifiable author onto those text that have previously lacked an author figure. Writing just two years after Kittredge published his initial findings, American scholar William Edward Mead in the introduction to *Selections from Sir Thomas Malory’s Le Morte Darthur* (1897), appeared to accept the newly identified Warwickshire Malory as one who ‘fulfils all the conditions required of a claimant for the honour of having written the *Morte Darthur*,’ adding, ‘We may [...] accept him as the author of whom we are in search and insert his biography in our literary histories, at least until a better candidate offers’.¹⁴³ Kittredge’s biography garnered further support by the aforementioned Edward Hicks, by E.K. Chambers in 1922, and by A.C. Baugh, whose 1933 article ‘Documenting Sir Thomas Malory’ provided further evidence in support of the Warwickshire

¹⁴² Saintsbury, *Short History*, p. 7.

¹⁴³ William Edward Mead, *Selections from Sir Thomas Malory’s Le Morte Darthur*, Athenaeum Press Series (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1897), pp. xix, xiv-xv.

Malory.¹⁴⁴ As the twentieth century progressed into the 1920s and 30s, more studies would be published that not only accepted the Warwickshire Malory, but attempted to contextualize the text in relation to the new-found biographical details about its author.

One such study, *Chivalry in English Literature*, written by Harvard professor William Henry Schofield in 1912, was among the first to situate Malory alongside the most eminent authors of English literature – Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare.¹⁴⁵ Schofield found in the *Morte* a narrative responsive to and affected by the details of Malory’s life, writing:

When one considers the circumstances of Malory’s life [...] one understands better why the *Morte d’Arthur* is what it is: a work of retrospect, tinged with sadness for the passing of the good old days; a work of idealism, troubled with knowledge of miserable facts daily divulged; a work of patriotism, written when the land was being wasted by civil strife; a work of encouragement to the right-minded, and of warning to the evil-minded, among men of that class in which the author lived and moved.¹⁴⁶

In particular, Schofield discerned three facets of Malory’s biography cognizant to events and themes in the *Morte Darthur*. First was the incarceration of Sir Tristram by King Mark and the ensuing commentary on the perils of bodily sickness, which Schofield found to parallel Malory’s own experience on imprisonment in Newgate prison.¹⁴⁷ Second was Malory’s

¹⁴⁴ See, E.K. Chambers, *Sir Thomas Malory* (English Association No. 51, Jan., 1922); also, A.C. Baugh, ‘Documenting Sir Thomas Malory’, *Speculum* 8 (1933), 3-29.

¹⁴⁵ William Henry Schofield, *Chivalry in English Literature: Chaucer, Malory, Spenser, and Shakespeare* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1912).

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 87.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 86.

association with Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, ‘whom all Europe recognized as embodying the knightly ideal of the age.’¹⁴⁸ For Schofield, in such an ‘ideal’ was found the ‘perfect school for the future author of the *Morte d’Arthur*’ to model his own account of the chivalric ideal as it is characterised by the Round Table knights.¹⁴⁹ Finally, for Schofield, Malory’s identification of ‘romantic places with English localities’ — ‘we read of “a town called Astolat, that is now in English Guildford”’ — reinforces the English nativism inherent within Malory’s *Arthuriad*, localising a number of key events within the text (such as Uther’s defeat of the rebels at St. Albans) in order to evoke a feeling of similitude between contemporary events and Malory’s romantic narrative – an argument later made in an article on the geography of the *Morte* by George R. Stewart.¹⁵⁰

Reviewing Schofield’s book, which began as a series of lectures at the University of Copenhagen and the Sorbonne, Percy H. Boynton, writing in 1913, criticised the heavy-handed approach of its author to apply authorial biography to the study of literature when the details of the authors’ lives were themselves subject to conjecture. He writes, for instance: ‘Many assertions are made as to what must have happened in the lives of Chaucer and Malory which are based on conjecture concerning which there is large room for debate.’¹⁵¹ Such criticism was not uncommon in the early twentieth century, as critics began to discuss the merits and drawbacks of mixing biography and literary criticism. For the present purpose, however, my interest is less with debate over Schofield’s decision to utilise biography for the purpose of

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 83.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 83.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. 92-93; see also, George R. Stewart, Jr., ‘English Geography in Malory’s “Morte D’Arthur”’, *The Modern Language Review* 30 (1935), 204-09.

¹⁵¹ Percy H. Boynton, ‘Review of *Chivalry in English Literature: Chaucer, Malory, Spenser, Shakespeare* by William Henry Schofield’, *The English Journal* 2 (1913), 204-205.

literary interpretation, and more with how Schofield's practice sheds light on the critical acceptance of Malory's biography, which in turn influences how the *Morte* is received within the academy, the most important channel towards canonisation. Indeed, Schofield's book-length study evinced a new theoretical framework by which to read the *Morte*, one which promulgated biographical criticism as a necessary response to, if not indicative of, literary scholarship. As phrases such as 'the author of...', 'authored by...', and, specifically, 'Malory's *Morte Darthur*' became commonplace features of early twentieth-century criticism on the *Morte*, the once wide gap between the author and text became indistinguishable. Malory was no longer just a name, as he had been to the majority of nineteenth-century critics; he was a man: a writer, soldier, prisoner, whose life-records, collected by Kittredge, were appended to the *Morte Darthur* inasmuch the same way as those of Chaucer were attached to the *Canterbury Tales*. Kittredge's desire to 'give genius a human face', to repeat the now familiar phrase, led him to find an answer to the question, 'Who was Sir Thomas Malory?', led him, indeed, to recover Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel. Indeed, this same desire, also, led other late nineteenth-century critics to attempt to reconcile medieval authors with their texts.

Walter Skeat (1835-1912), for example, himself a prodigious philologist and editor of medieval texts, found, upon editing the fourteenth-century allegorical poem, *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, for the Early English Text Society, that the text's author, William Langland, was, like Malory, unknown in all but name.¹⁵² Desirous to reconcile the text with an author-

¹⁵² For an overview of Skeat's contribution to late-nineteenth-century medieval studies, particularly his groundbreaking scholarship on Chaucer, see: A.S.G. Edwards, 'Walter Skeat', in *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition*, ed. by Paul G. Ruggers (Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books, 1984), pp. 171-89. For Skeat's edition of *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, see William Langland, *The Vision of William Concerning Piers Plowman together*

figure, however, Skeat stitched together obscure pieces of information found within the various manuscripts to the text to fashion a pseudo-biographical account of Langland's life, which, as C. David Benson has observed, had the effect of rescuing the poet 'from the obscurity of an anonymous bard so that he might take his place with Chaucer and other named canonical authors'.¹⁵³

Skeat's designation of an author-figure onto *The Vision of Piers Plowman* opened a new channel for theoretical discourse, one through which future critics, unencumbered by what Derek Pearsall has termed 'the "myth" of the poem', could bring 'a more accurate historical appraisal of it'.¹⁵⁴ Such an appraisal, however, as Benson notes, 'has tended to obscure the awkward fact that the myth is based on very little solid evidence.'¹⁵⁵ Where Pearsall interprets Skeat's scholarship as representing an end to the 'myth' of the author, Benson, on the contrary, convincingly demonstrates that, through Skeat's attribution of an authorial presence onto the text, he had 'established a new and more persistent Langland myth: the myth of the poet's life.'¹⁵⁶ As he goes on to write: 'The Langland myth encourages readers of *Piers* to approach the poem through its poet.'¹⁵⁷ Such an approach is of course entirely conjectural: based on the myth of the constructed author, not the biographical details of his life. But as Christina Hendricks maintains:

with Vita de Dowel, Dobet et Dobest, ed. by Walter W. Skeat, EETS, o.s. 28, 38, 67 and 81, 4 vols in 5 (London: N. Trübner, 1867-85).

¹⁵³ Benson, 'The Langland Myth', p. 86.

¹⁵⁴ Derek Pearsall, *An Annotated Critical Bibliography of Langland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), p. 218.

¹⁵⁵ Benson, 'The Langland Myth', p. 84.

¹⁵⁶ Benson, *Public Piers Plowman*, p. 3.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 51.

The name of an author does not simply refer to a particular individual; it signifies a role that is created by the ways discourse is treated in the culture, and it serves a particular function in the circulation of texts. [...] A text with an “author” may presently be given more attention than one that cannot be traced to someone whose credentials as an authority on truth can be verified.¹⁵⁸

So far from the author being killed by the reader, as Roland Barthes famously claimed him to be, his position is maintained through critical enquiry; and such enquiry is typically, though not categorically, found through institutional recognition of the text itself, which is achieved with the designation of an author-figure.¹⁵⁹ As critics begin to approach the text through its poet, they invariably project their own interpretation onto the text. Not only do these interpretations then proliferate the myth or interpretative function of the author (by his inclusion in various biographical dictionaries, for instance) they also combine to strengthen the authority of the text itself. Benson notes, for example, that ‘with his own chapter in the *Lives of the Poets*, Langland was able to earn a substantial entry in that massive contemporary project, the *Dictionary of National Biography*,’ thus sanctioning the text’s entrance into the literary canon.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Christina Hendricks, ‘The Author[’s] Remains: Foucault and the Demise of the “Author-Function”’, *Philosophy Today* 46 (2002), 152-69 (p. 64).

¹⁵⁹ Roland Barthes, ‘The Death of the Author,’ in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Vincent B. Leitch, *et al* (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), pp. 1322-26.

¹⁶⁰ Benson, ‘The Langland Myth’, p. 86.

Moreover, the reconciliation between the text and its author has a transformative effect on the text itself. As Alexander Nehamas explains:

Some texts are interpreted and are thus construed as works; works generate the figure of the author manifested in them. There can be no prior knowledge of whether a text can be so interpreted. Both work and author are constructs. Both are situated toward the notional end, not at the actual beginning, of interpretation. [...] Texts, then, are works if they generate an author, who is therefore also an interpretative construct and not an independent person.¹⁶¹

The distinction between the *text* and the *work* is crucial to our understanding of the means by which medieval texts such as *Piers Plowman* and *Le Morte Darthur* achieved canonisation at the beginning of the twentieth century. For Nehamas, texts do not generate the figure of the author: ‘authors are not individuals but characters manifested or exemplified, though not depicted or described, in texts.’¹⁶² Rather, texts provide, in some instances, documentary evidence, which can then be used to construct a (pseudo-) biography. We know *Piers Plowman* to be written by Langland because of a memoranda inscribed in Trinity College, Dublin, MS 212 (otherwise known as the C-text), which ascribes the text to ‘Willielmi de Langland, son of Stacy de Rokayle.’ And we know the *Morte Darthur* to be written by Malory because he is named in a colophon appended to the text. But as Barthes advances in his influential essay:

¹⁶¹ Alexander Nehamas, ‘What an Author Is’, *The Journal of Philosophy* 83 (1986), 685-91 (pp. 688-89).

¹⁶² *Ibid*, p. 686.

‘From Work to Text’: the text ‘reads without the inscription of the Father’.¹⁶³ The writer is engraved *on* not *in* the text. For Barthes, the distinction is clear: ‘the *I* which writes the text [...] is never more than a paper-*I*.’¹⁶⁴ The text should thus be considered, as Peter L. Shillingsburg regards it to be, nothing more than a ‘sequence of words and pauses recorded in a *document*’.¹⁶⁵ The text generates the possibility for the creation of the author, but it does not endorse such a creation; only the critic can do this. In the example of *Piers Plowman*, Skeat utilises the slight biographical information found in a version of the text to construct an author-figure for the text. This figure is external to the text itself: it does not alter the textual or bibliographic function of the text, but can influence how the reader receives and interprets the text. By attributing to the text an author-figure, therefore, Skeat validates the authorisation of the *work*: there is the text proper, composed by ‘Wilielmi de Langland’ in the late fourteenth century, and then there is *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, authored by William Langland, edited by Walter Skeat, and published by the The Early English Text Society. Willielmi de Langland can only exist within the text – indeed, knowledge of his existence at all depends entirely on the text. William Langland, however, lives precisely because the work allows him to live, because the editor of the work has created the means by which the author can live.

Skeat’s Langland, unlike Kittredge’s Malory, however, began life as a signifier. With no external evidence (external, that is, to the text itself; i.e., no recorded evidence: patent rolls,

¹⁶³ Roland Barthes, ‘From Work to Text’, in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Vincent B. Leitch, *et al* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), pp. 1326-31, (p. 1330).

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 1329.

¹⁶⁵ See the glossary of terms to Peter L. Shillingsburg’s *Scholarly Editing in the Computer Age: Theory and Practice* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996; repr. 2001), p. 171.

court proceedings, life-records, etc.) from which to identify an *actual* historical writer for *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, Skeat resolved to construct an author based on what is written in the extant material. As little more than a construct, however, a ‘myth’ as Benson would call it, Skeat’s Langland is, in Barthesian terms, ‘never more than a paper *I*’: the reader’s knowledge of the text is not advanced by Skeat’s attribution of an author-figure, although this does not prohibit the reader from accepting, in the absence of a verifiable historical candidate, the mythical Langland as *the* author of *Piers Plowman*. That Skeat’s biography of Langland should have been accepted despite its lack of hard evidence can be regarded as symptomatic of the growing demand by late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars of literature for biography, a demand encapsulated by the establishment of the *Dictionary of National Biography* in 1882, which had, by 1903, published almost 30,000 lives across 63 volumes. Indeed, in an important essay on the appropriation of Chaucerian portraits by nineteenth-century editors and publishers, David Matthews argues that the ‘need for authors was such a strong characteristic of early scholarship that, in their absence, they were invented or conjured up out of vague references.’¹⁶⁶ This assertion is, moreover, supported by the earlier scholarship of Russian formalist Boris Tomashevsky, who argues for the creation of a ‘special kind of anonymous literature’ at the end of the nineteenth century: ‘literature with an invented author, whose biography was appended to the work.’¹⁶⁷

Read in this way, it can be argued that Schofield’s *Chivalry in English Literature* not only endorses Kittredge’s Malory, but also Malory as a function of interpretation – that is, Malory

¹⁶⁶ Matthews, ‘Speaking to Chaucer,’ p. 13.

¹⁶⁷ Boris Tomashevski, ‘Literature and Biography’, in *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, ed. by Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomoroska (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1971); my reading is from Sean Burke’s *Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern, A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995; repr. 2000), pp. 81-90 (p. 86).

as *author*. Kittredge, and later Hicks, created the possibility of the author-figure, but they did not generate it *per se*. The author-figure can only be generated once the biography of the historical writer is, 1: identified, and 2: approved. But such approval cannot be met by the biographer himself, whose role is largely contained to identifying the facts, where they pertain, of the writer's life. It is for the critic, concerned as s/he is with negotiating between past and present discourse, to determine the likelihood of any single candidate for authorship. Only then, once the information is presented, can the critic ascertain how the facts of the author's life can influence interpretation. Indeed, in an exegesis on Michael Foucault's seminal 'What is an Author?', Adrian Wilson offers the following observation: "'the author" of a text is categorically distinct from the historical individual who wrote that text [...] Writers are bodily, mortal beings, who lived and died in the historical past. Authors, on the contrary, are living figures who inhabit the practical past.'¹⁶⁸ Schofield's acceptance of the Warwickshire Malory led in turn to his acceptance of history (in this instance authorial, or biographical, history) as truth: 'When one considers the circumstances of Malory's life', he writes, 'one understands better why the *Morte d'Arthur* is what it is.' By assimilating details of Malory's life into his own study, Schofield removes Malory from the historical past so that he might inhabit the practical past. Doing so situates Malory within the *Morte* itself, with the details of his life mirroring, for the critic, events in the text. Such an approach was not uncommon to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literary scholarship. As Kelen has written, 'nineteenth-century literary criticism of Chaucer [and Langland] does not fully differentiate textual studies from personality studies. Thus, the medieval author is himself a kind of character, whose motives must be understood to tell the story of literary history.'¹⁶⁹ The story is told based on

¹⁶⁸ Adrian Wilson, 'Foucault on the "Question of the Author": A Critical Exegesis', *The Modern language Review* 99 (2004), 339-63 (p. 351).

¹⁶⁹ Kelen, p. 137.

the life of the writers, and through the perspective of the critic, both of which combine to conjure the author. Schofield's Malory, much the same as Skeat's Langland, functions as an interpretative device through which the critic can ascertain meaning. Unlike Langland, however, whose 'identity' is not supported by historical evidence, the historical Malory, the writer, supports the creation of the authorial Malory, the *idea* of the author. Perceptions of the author add weight to Kittredge's biographical findings, and Malory's biography supports acceptance of his authorship, positioning the *Morte* as a site of critical investigation and institutional approval.

The Warwickshire candidate appears to have been accepted by the majority of early twentieth-century critics without questions, but for one particularly contentious issue: the life-records reveal what A.C. Baugh would later write to be 'an orgy of lawlessness'.¹⁷⁰ The charges against Malory of crimes including theft, violence, and rape was, for Muriel Bradbrook, 'depressing', and for William Matthews, another biographer of Malory, his criminal past presents for the reader a 'moral paradox'.¹⁷¹ For another critic, T.J. Lustig, 'The man and the work seem to come from different worlds. The *Morte* is as solid as a cathedral; the man is a will-o'-the-wisp. Malory may have been a prisoner in life, but he escaped from the gaol of posterity.'¹⁷² Critics began to question how they could reconcile the less savoury aspects of Malory's biography with the text, which was by the beginning of the twentieth century being

¹⁷⁰ Baugh, p. 4.

¹⁷¹ See Muriel Bradbrook, *Sir Thomas Malory* (London: Longman's, Green and Co, 1958), p. 9; William Matthews, *The Ill-Framed Knight: A Sceptical Inquiry into the Identity of Sir Thomas Malory* (California: University of California Press, 1966), p. 43.

¹⁷² T.J. Lustig, *Knight Prisoner: Thomas Malory Then and Now* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2013), p. 68.

referred to as a great ‘achievement in high art.’¹⁷³ In the main, critics appear to have ignored Malory’s criminal past, skirting past it to consider the more wholesome aspects of his biography – as evidenced in Schofield’s aforementioned study. In some cases, however, critics, most notably Vida Scudder in 1917 and Nellie Slayton Aurner in 1933, the latter of whom produced one the most extensive commentaries on the historical contextualisation of the *Morte* published at that point in time, appear to have ignored Malory’s criminal past, painting instead a romanticised image of him as he composed the *Morte Darthur*. For Scudder, then:

One can picture the old knight, his days of action done, as he sat, possibly in prison, perhaps banished to his estate in that Warwickshire which was to be the home-country of Shakespeare and of George Eliot, brooding lovingly over his “Frensche book” and transcribing it into English. Surely fame never occurred to him; he wrote for pure delight, in the humble spirit of those anonymous mediæval scribes whose personality is lost while their contribution to life remains. Yet the modern reader is aware that Malory’s *Morte* synthesizes a civilization. [...] Chivalry and feudalism fade before the eyes of the student of the fifteenth century; their glories had departed, and the English Renaissance [sic] was already in the air. But the old ideals were still potent in many hearts, and it is evident that Malory himself, an aristocrat and patriot, lived by them ardently, though in his own phrase he “had a deeming” that their day was done. [...] In Malory [...] is to be found the authentic accent of mature romance: romance, which is always introspective, always haunted by the memory of glory that has passed or is passing away.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Snell, *The Age of Transition*, II, p. xxvii.

¹⁷⁴ Vida D. Scudder, ‘*Le Morte Darthur*’ of Sir Thomas Malory and Its Sources (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1917), p. 179.

In a similarly romanticised account, Aurner writes:

One would like to picture him in the best place on one of the “eight double setles” before that one of the “twentie-eight desks” which afforded the clearest light. Here as the days passed he could transform his rage into characters and situations in the world of black-letter, over which neither the Duke of Buckingham nor the house of York had power. Here – possibly before the same desk on which Charles, Duke of Orleans had inscribed rondeaus and ballades he may have sat himself down week after week [...] until the good monks recognized the nook of Sir Thomas as an established part of their library and arranged that his books and his writing materials should be undisturbed.¹⁷⁵

Both descriptions paint a vivid mental picture (akin, perhaps, to the work of the Arthurian-inspired pre-Raphaelite painters) of an author sitting at leisure in a comfortable medieval castle, pouring over old volumes in preparation of what would become the final synthesis of Malory’s age, of the Middle Ages: the *Morte Darthur*. By imagining Malory in such a romantic way, the unsavoury aspects of his biography are forgotten by the fireside of the imagined library in which Malory sat ‘brooding lovingly’ as he, without realising and without any condescension to fame (‘sure fame never occurred to him’) immortalised himself by entering into posterity a text that would rise from the depths of oblivion in the eighteenth century, to be counted, by the early twentieth century, alongside Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare, as among the most important works of English literature.

¹⁷⁵ Nellie Slayton Aurner, ‘Sir Thomas Malory-Historian?’, *PMLA* 48 (1933), 362-91 (pp. 364-65).

Malory, as I have in this chapter argued, enters into the literary canon as a direct result of, first, his connection to established canonical writers, second, his rehabilitation at the hands of Strachey, resulting in acknowledgement of his status as author, and third, his revived presence in the form of biography. By the 1930s, Malory has an identity, his status as author was largely accepted, and his text was in print across a vast range of popular and academic titles and adaptations. One final constraint on the *Morte's* acceptance into the literary canon came, arguably, from the absence of an alternative, and preferably earlier, witness to Caxton's edition. This constraint would be remedied, however, by the discovery in 1934 of the Winchester Manuscript, which would, as the next chapter will show, strengthen Malory's authorship to new heights.

II

Thomas Malory and the Canon II: Reading the Author in the Editions of Eugène Vinaver and P.J.C. Field

Introduction

Perceptions of Malory's authorship changed radically in 1934 with the discovery by Walter Oakeshott of the Winchester Manuscript, the first witness in manuscript to the *Morte* and the first alternative witness to Caxton's 1485 *editio princeps* on which all editors of the *Morte* had been reliant.¹ The story of its discovery in Winchester College Library has been written about at length and is recognised as being one of the greatest literary events of the twentieth century.²

¹ The Winchester manuscript is accessible in a digitised facsimile via *The Malory Project*, directed by Takako Kato and designed by Nick Haward < <http://www.maloryproject.com> >; a facsimile of the manuscript was published in 1976; see *The Winchester Malory: A Facsimile*, intro. by N.R. Ker (London: Early English Text Society, 1976).

² For an account of the discovery of the manuscript by Oakeshott in 1934, which includes a reconstructed history of the manuscript, see Paul Yeats-Edwards, 'The Winchester Manuscript: An Attempted History', in *The Malory Debate: Essays on the Texts of Le Morte Darthur*, ed. by Bonnie Wheeler, Robert L. Kindrick, and Michael N. Salda (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000), pp. 367-91; in the same volume, see also for a detailed account of the content and composition of the Winchester manuscript, Helen Cooper's essay, 'Opening Up the Malory Manuscript', pp. 255-285. For a recent critical analysis of the manuscript, which includes a detailed survey of the marginalia and typography of the MS, see K.S. Whetter, *The Manuscript and Meaning of Malory's Morte Darthur: Rubrication, Commemoration, Memorialization* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2017).

The discovery was reported in all major British Newspapers, including *The Times*, leading a young Russian-born scholar and then Reader of French at Manchester University, Eugène Vinaver, to arrive two days after the news was reported at Oakeshott's doorstep, 'asking to see the book'.³ Vinaver was at this point in time a recognised authority on the *Morte*, having completed his doctorate on the text at the *École Pratique des hautes études* under the supervision of one of France's preeminent medievalists, Joseph Bédier. Vinaver had already published two books on Malory, including a 1929 monograph, and was by the early 1930s preparing a new critical edition of the Caxton Malory, the first since the publication of German scholar H. Oskar Sommer's three-volume edition published between 1889 to 1891.⁴ Based upon Vinaver's initial assessment of the manuscript, he concluded that 'it could not have been copied from Caxton', and is unique insofar that it is the only surviving manuscript of the *Morte*.⁵ The result of this assessment began a thirteen-year long project, ending in 1947 with the publication of Vinaver's three-volume edition, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, the best description of which is given by A.S.G. Edwards, writing: 'Few events can have led to such a radical re-conceptualization of a literary work as the publication, in 1947, of Eugène Vinaver's edition of *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*'.⁶ Vinaver's edition was indeed a 're-conceptualization', and it is no understatement to say that the birth of Malory studies as we know it today began in 1947.

³ For the full story of Vinaver's initial meeting with Oakeshott and his initial impression of the Winchester MS., see A.S.G. Edwards, 'Editing Malory: Eugène Vinaver and the Clarendon Edition', *Leeds Studies in English* XLI (2010), 76-81.

⁴ See *ibid* for an overview of Vinaver's unrealised edition of the Caxton Malory. For Vinaver's monograph, see *Malory* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1929). For Sommer's edition, see *Le Morte Darthur By Syr Thomas Malory: The Original Edition*, 1889-91.

⁵ See Edwards, 'Editing Malory', p. 78.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 76.

Despite the initial excitement generated by a new edition based on a recently discovered manuscript, Vinaver's edition proved controversial from the outset. Most famous of all was the name. The all familiar Caxtonian title *Le Morte Darthur* was gone. In its place was the deeply controversial *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*. Contending that it was Caxton's idea, not Malory's, 'to publish the *Morte* under one general title', Vinaver, on the basis of his analysis of the manuscript, sought to restore the text from the corruptions of Caxton's edition.⁷ The differences between the Winchester MS. and Caxton consist primarily of variants in sentence structure, spelling, and word choice, although the Roman War episode is radically different, with an unabridged version in the manuscript, a matter that has generated a good deal of debate.⁸ Caxton's edition, moreover, includes a table of rubric and a preface, which are absent from the manuscript; the Caxton is also divided into 21 books and 506 chapters. The most consequential difference between the two versions, however, is the inclusion of section breaks in the Winchester MS., dividing individual tales and books, some of which end with an *explicit*, supposedly written by Malory himself. One such *explicit*, concluding the tale of 'Sir Launcelot du Lake' is as follows:

Explicit a Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake. Here followyth Sir Garethis Tale of Orkeney that was callyd Bewmaynes by Sir Kay⁹

Each *explicit* ends one tale and, on most occasions, introduces the next. For Vinaver, the *explicit*s are indicative of Malory's own intention as author: that the text should be read as eight

⁷ *Works*, I, p. xxxix.

⁸ See the essays in *The Malory Debate*, especially the essays by P.J.C. Field, pp. 127-69, Masako Takagi and Toshiyuki Takamiya, pp. 169-91, Yuji Nakao, 191-217, and Edward Donald Kennedy, pp. 217-33.

⁹ See Field's 2017 edition, p. 222.

separate tales, not as a unified narrative. Thus the unifying title of *Le Morte Darthur* was replaced by *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*.

For C.S. Lewis, terms like ‘Malory’s *Morte Darthur*’ or ‘The Works of Sir Thomas Malory’ make the text sound ‘dangerously like “Browning’s *Sordello*” or “The Works of Jane Austen”’.¹⁰ The effect of Vinaver’s title, or of referring to the *Morte* as ‘Malory’s *Morte*’, is one of authorial attribution. Malory is designated the status of author because, much like Jane Austen or Browning, his name is made synonymous with the work for which he is known. But as Lewis continues, ‘Our familiar concept of “the-author-and-his-book” is foiled by the composite works of the Middle Ages’.¹¹ The process by which Malory composed the *Morte* (a process Lewis refers to as ‘touching up’) renders Malory’s status as author untenable because, despite adding ‘touches here and there’, Malory ‘could never have conceived’ of the *Morte* in its ‘majestic entirety’.¹² In other words, Malory’s lack of originality dissuades Lewis from drawing parallels between ‘The Works of Jane Austen’ and ‘The Works of Sir Thomas Malory’ because the name of the author implies originality, which Malory lacks. This in turn persuades Lewis to abandon author-related terminology when referring to the *Morte* in favour of the more generic ‘The English Prose “Morte”’, a title which relegates Malory to the position of ‘the last of many restorers’, rather than author.¹³

The debate surrounding Vinaver’s editorial practice and the title of his edition has been written about at length and need only be summarised briefly. Among those of Vinaver’s

¹⁰ C.S. Lewis, ‘The English Prose *Morte*’, in *Essays on Malory*, ed. by J.A.W. Bennett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 7-29 (p. 24).

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 24.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 25.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 25.

contemporaries who questioned his principles, D.S. Brewer, R.M. Lumiansky, Charles Moorman, and Robert H. Wilson, irrespective of personal difference, were all in agreement that Malory's work 'has an organic unity of its own'.¹⁴ Brewer argued in favour of a reading based on 'narrative cohesion'.¹⁵ Lumiansky *et al*, questioning Vinaver's assumption of Malory as the writer who 'invented least', countered this with a collection of essays that established Malory's text as a 'highly original literary work'.¹⁶ And Thomas C. Rumble noted a number of inaccuracies in Vinaver's Commentary to the *Works* 'which tend to diminish Malory's stature as a writer by attributing to the *Morte Darthur* inconsistencies which do not, in fact, exist'.¹⁷ Maintaining that Malory was the writer who 'invented least,' Vinaver based his editorial practice on the long-held assumption of Malory as translator rather than author. In doing so, Vinaver's edition is less a reconstruction of the *Morte* through analysis of the Winchester MS., than a reinterpretation based on Vinaver's own academic opinion: that the *Morte* represents, 'with varying degrees of success', Malory's endeavour 'to disentangle from his sources a series of self-contained stories'.¹⁸ That the *Works* remained the definitive edition of the *Morte* prior to the publication of Field's edition, in 2013, is because it has the distinction of being the first edition of the *Morte* to be based on a witness other than the Caxton.

¹⁴ Edmund Reiss, *Sir Thomas Malory* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), p. 26.

¹⁵ D.S. Brewer, 'The Hoole Book', in *Essays on Malory*, ed. by J.A.W. Bennett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 41-64 (p. 42).

¹⁶ R.M. Lumiansky, *Malory's Originality* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1964), p. 7; also, Lumiansky, 'Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, 1947-1987: Author, Title, Text,' *Speculum* 62 (1987), 878-97.

¹⁷ Thomas C. Rumble, 'Malory's "Works" and Vinaver's Comments: Some Inconsistencies Resolved,' *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 55 (1960), 59-69 (59).

¹⁸ Vinaver, 'Sir Thomas Malory', in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Roger Sherman Loomis (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. 541-53 (p. 545).

The discovery of the Winchester Manuscript led to a renewed appreciation for Malory, not only because it precipitated the arrival of Vinaver's edition, published 13 years later, but because some of the *explicit*s, most of which are omitted in the Caxton Malory, are followed by *colophon*s, which contain brief but important facts about Malory. For instance, at the end of the first tale, 'King Uther and King Arthur', Malory refers to himself directly: 'for this was drawyn by a knyght presoner, Sir Thomas Malleorré, that God sende hym good recover. Amen.'¹⁹ The events of Malory's incarceration had, by 1934, already been documented, with a recent biography of Malory (of Newbold Revel) published in 1928.²⁰ For a number of critics, the events of Malory's life, in particular his incarceration, were disconcerting, and did not reconcile well with the subject of his writing. Nevertheless, as the argument in chapter one makes clear, Malory's biography was useful insofar that it satisfied a critical desire to know more about the author, thus improving the author's and text's place within the literary canon.

For Vinaver, however, the results of biographical criticism are measured only by their usefulness in how critics *read* the text; and in Malory's biography, Vinaver found no reason for critics to feel disconcerted by Malory's criminal past, insisting instead that it would be better had Malory remained anonymous. Rejecting the results of biographical criticism, Vinaver focused himself purely on the interior author, that is, on the *idea* of Malory, which can only be attained, as another editor of the *Morte*, Strachey, discovered for himself sixty years earlier, through an exhaustive analysis of what Malory did: namely, his handling of the sources. Such an investigation, writes Vinaver, 'leads us through a series of simple and tangible discoveries to the understanding of the complex processes which underlie a great writer's work,

¹⁹ *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. Field, p. 144.

²⁰ Edward Hicks, *Sir Thomas Malory: His Turbulent Career*, 1928.

and it makes the writer himself into a living person'.²¹ This person is not *the* Malory, the knight-prisoner who wrote the *Morte* from a prison cell sometime in the late 1460s, but *a* Malory, an amorphous, evolving figure, privy to the vicissitudes of editorial intervention, who exists only because the editor requires an author to better understand how the text was composed. Vinaver bases his editorial practice on the divisions unique to the Winchester MS., believing them to be indicative of Malory's own intentions, therefore removing the influence of Caxton by acknowledging and implementing *what Vinaver believes to be* the most authoritative version of the text to date. The resulting *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory* therefore privilege Malory's claim to authorship, placing him front and centre as the ultimate authority on the structural unity of the *Morte*. Simultaneously, however, Malory is undermined in Vinaver's edition, transformed into a concept-driven, paper author only, whose existence is dependent on whatever the editor, no matter how learned he be, chooses to believe. As Jerome McGann has written:

Vinaver's edition appeals to our longing to read texts which come as clearly and directly from the author's hands as possible. His critical scrupulousness, however, reminds us of the special authority which Caxton's editorially mediated text will always possess. In this way, paradoxically, Vinaver's edition shows that for an editor and textual critic the concept of authority has to be conceived in a more broadly social and cultural context.²²

²¹ Vinaver, *Works*, III, p. 1263.

²² Jerome McGann, *Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), p. 84.

This ‘concept’, what I am terming the *idea* of the author, is unique to each editor, whose edition, in accordance to individual practice and methodology, becomes a site of authorial representation. The edition, in short, captures the author, and as such it tells us something about the editor’s own attitude towards authorship. In what follows, then, is my attempt to capture the idea of the author as it is presented in the editions of Vinaver and Field, arguably the two most important editors of the *Morte* of the last hundred years.

I A Tale of Two Malorys in Vinaver and Field

In the introduction to his 2017 edition of the *Morte*, Field summarises the results of Malory’s biography in this way: ‘Although the *Morte Darthur* [...] helps to fill out the picture of Malory’s life, his life-story yields much less directly useful information about his book’.²³ Then he adds: ‘The nearest thing to a clear motive apparent in the records is what looks like a preoccupation with a (repeatedly frustrated) search for a “good lord” who would invite Malory into a “fellowship of noble knights”’.²⁴ Such a tenuous reconciliation between text and biography leads one to question, as did multiple reviewers of Field’s 1993 biography, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory*, the point of literary biography if the life-records yield little ‘useful information’ about the author’s book. Historian Christine Carpenter, for instance, whose specialist subject is fifteenth-century Warwickshire, Malory’s birthplace, draws just this conclusion, writing in a review of Field’s *Life and Times*:²⁵

²³ *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. by P.J.C. Field (2017), p. xviii.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. xviii.

²⁵ Carpenter’s research into fifteenth-century Warwickshire resulted in an award-winning monograph, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401-1499* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Sir Thomas of Warwickshire probably did die in Newgate prison, as the site of his grave suggests, and could well have written the *Morte Darthur*. Does it matter whether he did and, if he did, whether he was a “good” or a “bad” man? One does not have to believe in “the death of the author” to think that artistically speaking the career of the author of the *Morte Darthur* is largely an irrelevance – as, indeed, Field seems ultimately to conclude.²⁶

Another reviewer, Helen Castor, comments on the difficulty of examining ‘character and motive in an era from which so tantalisingly few private, informal sources have survived’.²⁷ Malory’s intellectual and emotional life, notes Castor, are silent, hindered by the dearth of material available to the biographer. As such, continues Castor:

Field is left with the *Morte Darthur* itself as virtually the only possible indication of Malory’s ‘mental landscape.’ Meanwhile, piecing together such details of Malory’s career as do survive into what can only be a bare outline of a life adds nothing to what is already known of the general literary and cultural context within which the work was written.²⁸

Castor’s conclusion, and that of other reviewers (and of Field himself) is that the ‘*Morte Darthur* is the only possible indication of Malory’s “mental landscape”’.²⁹ Various studies have

²⁶ Christine Carpenter, ‘Review of *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory*, by P.J.C. Field’, *Medium Aevum* 63 (1994), 334-36 (pp. 335-36).

²⁷ Helen Castor, ‘Review of *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory*, by P.J.C. Field’, *Arthuriana* 4 (1994), 274-76 (p. 275).

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 275.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 275.

successfully placed the *Morte Darthur* within the social and cultural context of the late fifteenth-century gentry to which it belonged, utilising Field's biography in doing so. But what Castor terms the 'mental landscape' of the *Morte*, Malory's own 'individual intellectual experience', is silent. The life-records reveal nothing of Malory's personality, artistry, or reason for writing the *Morte*, furnishing only with a bare outline of a Warwickshire man who, probability suggests, did write the *Morte*. Malory's biography provides, at best, an interesting footnote intended to satiate curiosity about the man who wrote this enduring classic of English literature, and at worst a distraction from the artistry and individual talent that directed Malory to compose the *Morte* in the first place. Curiosity is, as we saw in the first chapter, a powerful incentive for engaging with biographical studies, especially when a text, such as the *Morte*, is deficient in this area. But the purpose of biography, and with it the intent of the biographer, is surely not purely intended to satisfy critical curiosity. Biography, from a literary perspective, must tell us something about the text, which Malory's biography, as Field himself appears to admit, does not. It is for this reason that Vinaver a generation earlier repeatedly disregarded the results of biographical studies in his assessment of the *Morte* in favour of a text-centric approach, believing that only through analysis of the extant witnesses to the text, as well as its sources, can some semblance of the author's 'individual intellectual experience' be gleaned.

More than once did Vinaver dismiss the results of biographical enquiry that led to the identification of the Warwickshire knight Malory of Newbold Revel. In his chapter on Malory for Roger Sherman Loomis's seminal *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, for instance, Vinaver summarises his ambivalence toward Malory's biography as follows:

such knowledge as we now have of Malory's life has little bearing on our understanding of his literary character. Nothing would in fact be lost if he were still allowed to enjoy

the advantages of his former obscurity, avoiding the indiscretions of literary biographers and the now fashionable disquisitions about “the man and his work”.³⁰

What Vinaver calls ‘disquisitions about “the man and his work”’ gained increased prominence in early twentieth-century Malory studies, a fact noted by A.S.G. Edwards in a review of Field’s *Life and Times*, noting, ‘the quest for the authorial knight-prisoner [...] has remained the strongest constant in Malory scholarship’.³¹ We saw in the previous chapter how conducive Malory’s biography was to eager critics in their attempt to reconcile man and work for the purpose of fashioning a narrative based on historical evidence, the results of which would lend itself to the canonisation of the text. And we saw, also, how Malory’s biography was frequently manipulated by these same critics as they sought to reconcile the less wholesome aspects of Malory’s life with their own idealised perception of the *Morte Darthur*. Whether it be Scudder’s romanticised vision of Malory ‘brooding lovingly over his Frensche book’, writing ‘from the window-seat of some country manor’, as Chambers imagines, or Aurner’s sentimental portrait of Malory ‘sat [...] week after week’ in his composition of the *Morte*, such romanticised notions of authorial practice transform Malory into a character more suited to the chivalric and idealised world of Camelot than to the realities of late fifteenth-century England.

Early twentieth-century critics of the *Morte* were almost unanimous in their disapproval of the more controversial aspects of Malory’s biography. As such, rather than situating Malory’s supposed crimes in the social and cultural context of his own age, they manipulated the material to paint a portrait of Malory akin to the romanticised ideal found in the work of the pre-

³⁰ Vinaver, ‘Sir Thomas Malory’, p. 541.

³¹ A.S.G. Edwards, ‘Review of *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory*, by P.J.C. Field’, *Review of English Studies* 47 (1996), 79-80 (p. 79).

Raphaelites. The truth, of course, is far less romantic. As Vinaver would write, Malory wrote the *Morte* '[n]ot "in the window-seat of some country manor", nor "in his estates in Warwickshire" as certain critics have imagined, but in the lonely cell of a prison'.³² Vinaver was the first to reject not only the romanticised vision of Malory but the evidence of Malory's identity appertaining to the research conducted by Kittredge and Hicks. Repeatedly, Vinaver maintained an ambivalent stance on the issue of authorial biography. He included biographical information about the Warwickshire Malory in his both 1929 monograph *Malory* and in the introduction to his edition of the *Morte*, likely following a precedent set by other editors of medieval texts, who frequently appended to the text a brief biography of its author, evidence permitting. Elsewhere, however, Vinaver wrote of the irrelevance of biography when it proves irreconcilable to the text, and he maintained a perplexed view of the anxiety caused by the 'recreant' nature of Malory's biography, writing:

Malory's biography has its uses: it is entertaining in itself, and it is an interesting sidelight on the social history of his time. But to feel "disconcerted" about it as, for instance, E.K. Chambers did, is to misuse the results of biographical research, which are no more — and no less — puzzling in this case than such results normally are.³³

'Nothing would in fact be lost', wrote Vinaver, if Malory 'were still allowed to enjoy the advantages of his former obscurity'.³⁴ What Vinaver found dismaying was less the idealisation of Malory's critics by anxious critics than the fact that Malory's biography (and, more broadly,

³² Eugène Vinaver, *Malory* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1929), p. 7.

³³ Eugène Vinaver, 'On Art and Nature: A Letter to C.S. Lewis,' in *Studies in Malory*, ed. by J.A.W. Bennett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), also printed in Vinaver, *On Art and Nature*, ed. by W.R.J. Barron (Exeter: Short Run Press, 2000), pp. 1-13, p. 3.

³⁴ Vinaver, 'Sir Thomas Malory', p. 541.

biographical studies) had become a mainstay of Malory studies, and of medieval studies more generally. He writes, for instance, in the *Works*:

Biographical interpretation has done so much harm to literary criticism that it is a relief to find how very little room there is for it in Malory's case. No one will seriously attempt to read his life into his works or associate these with any phase or aspect of his curious career. The danger lies the other way. To those who think that criticism has some relevance for biography it may seem hardly credible that a man whose behaviour showed so little respect for conventional morality should have written a book which, according to Caxton's Preface, was designed "for our doctrine and for to beware that we shall fall not to vice or sin, but exercise and follow virtue".³⁵

In Vinaver's view (and, as we have seen, in the view of Malory's most authoritative biographer, Field) nothing was to be gleaned about the *Morte Darthur* from Malory's biography. As such, the point of such an endeavour is nothing more than the production of an 'interesting sidelight': 'entertaining', perhaps, but wholly irrelevant to the wider process of literary analysis. 'What manner of man was he?' asked R.D. Altick in 1950, continuing:

with his flamboyant criminal record, that he could write a book celebrating the many articles of knightly behaviour which he himself had honoured far more in the breach than in the observance? We cannot at this distance of time, answer the question with assurance. [...] But we can not doubt that under the spell of the books he read and the tales he found coming to life again under his hand he was deeply stirred by the meaning of the ideals he had violated. He was great enough to know them as impossible in a frail

³⁵ Vinaver, *Works*, I, p. xxvi.

and tempting world, but he also knew [...] how truly the fact that we cannot follow them is the stuff of human tragedy. Lancelot caught to the very end in his unhappy tangle of divided loves, Guinevere afraid to accept a final kiss, Bedivere fumbling between love for Arthur and greed for Excalibur – these are the final pictures of a man whose vision of reality simply transcended the vulgar counsel of Caxton.³⁶

‘This is as far as one can go’, proclaimed Vinaver about Altick’s description,

in speculating about the miraculous play of character and circumstance which had brought the obscure knight-prisoner to his high theme: as far perhaps as any biographer should go in endeavouring to show how a life inevitably small can be graced with an unrivalled achievement.³⁷

For Vinaver, it was the *Morte Darthur* that mattered, not Malory. To repeat what Field says about Malory, from the introduction to this thesis: ‘We are interested in Malory because he wrote the *Morte Darthur*, not in the *Morte Darthur* because Malory was its author’.³⁸ This is especially true of Malory’s biography, for which any interest is surely premised on the hope, however misguided, that it feeds some interpretative or critical desire to understand more about the text. This hope is not met. Malory’s biography, as Field himself states, contributes little to our understanding about the text for which Malory is known. The biography tells us something about a Warwickshire gentry-man who lived during the late fifteenth century, and it does, as

³⁶ Richard D. Altick, *The Scholar Adventurers* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1950), p. 83.

³⁷ Vinaver, *Works*, I, p. xxix.

³⁸ Field, *Romance and Chronicle*, p. 3.

Vinaver admits, help to fill out some of the gaps about the landscape in which Malory was writing, but it tells us nothing concrete about the author.

Both Vinaver and Field appear to agree about the limited usefulness of Malory's biography, but Field alone of all editors of the *Morte* has the distinction of also being Malory's biographer. Biography does not, of course, influence the editor's decision insofar as the composition of a critical edition is concerned. But it can colour the vision through which an edition takes its final form. If, as we determined in the previous chapter, the *idea* of the author is a philologically contrived creation, then it is fair to say that the author is always present in an edition of the text. What shape the author takes, however, is dependent entirely on the practice of its editor, and how the author is conjured by the editor is perhaps best witnessed by the visual layout of the edition, be it the title, contents page, or images, chapter or book divisions, and even punctuation. Frequent focus is placed on the methodological practice of the editor: their choice of copy-text, for instance, or their collation of witnesses, the evidence from which is placed in a critical apparatus, as in Vinaver's and Field's respective editions; the implementation or correction of variant readings, and, where applicable, the drawing of a *stemma codicum*, from which the genealogical descent of the various witnesses is recorded with the intent of determining the most authoritative text on which to base an edition. This is, in part, the job of the editor, and it is, by degree, the scientific aspect of text editing. But equally important is the *mise-en-page* of the edition, the physical arrangement of the text, its paratextual features, as well as the textual divisions, which combine to shape the text for respective generations of readers. Strachey's edition, printed in 1868, will inevitably look different to Field's, not only because they are based on different editorial methodologies, and not only because Field's edition is based on the Winchester manuscript, which had yet to be discovered when Strachey was preparing his version of the text, but because reader expectations of what a book should

look like have altered considerably since the nineteenth century, and continue to do so. The material aspect of an edition shapes reader expectations, but it can also be indicative of the editor's own perceptions of the text, or of its author.

As we will see in this chapter, the idea of the author is conjured in very different ways in the editions of Vinaver and Field, with the latter rooted in the biographical, and therefore anchored to the historical, and the former conjuring a more abstract, philologically derived author-figure. In short: Field's author is *the* Malory, and Vinaver's author is *a* Malory. Everything about Field's edition implies authorship, and the presentation of his edition is unmistakably authorial; the reverse is true of Vinaver's edition. By considering the physical appearance of both editions, comparing, for instance, the contents page; chapter divisions; the presentation of explicits and colophons; the title page; and the use of punctuation, we can see how Field's edition, in appearance, takes the form of modern prose, with clean pages devoid of editorial marks, which Vinaver's has in abundance. To be sure, I am arguing in this chapter that Field's edition *looks* authorial, therefore privileging *the* Malory, of Newbold Revel, the subject of Field's earlier biography. Vinaver's edition, conversely, bears on every page the unmistakable mark of the editor: it is more editorial than authorial, which in turn shapes the perception of the author-figure conjured in the pages of the edition. But the perception of authorship in each edition, and the presentation of each edition, are shaped in accordance to the view of each editor about the unity of the *Morte*. For Field, it is one text, a whole, which can be seen, for example, in the composition of Field's contents page when compared with Vinaver's. For Vinaver, based on his analysis of the explicits to the Winchester Manuscript, the *Morte* is not one book but many: Malory wrote, in his view, eight distinct tales, which, when read together, form a collection of 'works', not a unified narrative. Such a view shapes not only the final product, the edition, but also the author conjured by the edition. Who, or what, is Vinaver's Malory?

Vinaver rejects, as we have seen, the biographical Malory as wholly unnecessary, and he rejects, also, any notion of unity, engaging with the explicits and colophons, which were written by Malory, as final proof of Malory's intention for the *Morte*. As such, Malory occupies a nebulous, entirely editorially contrived position in the *Works*. Everything about Vinaver's Malory is based on the editor's assumptions, which are in turn largely decided by the content of the Winchester Manuscript. Vinaver edited from the Winchester not because it is better or more authoritative than the Caxton (both are separated by two degrees from Malory's holograph) but because, discovered in 1934, it is new, providing the opportunity for the editor to engage with a wholly different version of the text. The Winchester made apparent how extensive Caxton's changes, both structurally and to the text, were; and Vinaver, with a new version of the text, was able to undo what Caxton had done. But Vinaver's changes proved to be equally as profound as those of his fifteenth-century predecessor. Indeed, in the editions of both Caxton and Vinaver, it is arguably the editor whose presence is felt, not the author.

Field's edition provides the opportunity to assess the structural and material changes Vinaver made to the text. Comparing Vinaver's and Field's editions allows us to determine how each respective edition represents what Malory wrote and, more importantly, how each edition conjures the figure of the author. By examining the *mise-en-page* of both editions, this chapter builds on the argument of chapter one by arguing that, with the discovery of the Winchester Manuscript in 1934, which includes authorial colophons giving biographical information about the historical Malory, the figure of the author remained an important and increasingly discussed aspect of Malory studies, culminating in the publication of Field's biography, in 1993. Vinaver's rejection of the biographical details of Malory's life, however, contrasting with Field's acceptance, provides an interesting premise on which we might review the contrasting elements of their respective editions, especially where these elements concern and shape the

figure of the author. To begin, I discuss the cover-page to Field's edition, arguing that, with the inclusion of the coat of arms of the Warwickshire knight Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel, it is made clear that the author of Field's edition is grounded in the concrete, verifiable fact of Malory's existence, and is therefore the first edition of the *Morte* to reconcile the text with *the* true figure of the author, the writer.

II '3 leopards sable', 'chevron gules', and '3 boars' heads': Presenting Malory

The front matter to Field's edition features two coats of arms, one the medieval insignia of King Arthur based on a description in the fourteenth-century alliterative *Morte Arthure*, and the other a reconstruction of the arms of which the Warwickshire knight 'Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel was entitled'.³⁹ Emblazoned with '3 leopards sable', granted to Malory's ancestor, Sir Peter Malory, for services to the king, 'chevron gules within a bordure engrailed sable', the territorial insignia of Newbold Revel, and '3 boars' heads coupé sable', inherited from the progenitor of the Newbold Revel line, Sir John Malory, 'it is very likely', writes Field, 'that Sir Thomas Malory knew that he was entitled to combine the chevron, the leopards, and the boards' heads' – whether he did, however, 'is a much harder question'.⁴⁰ No evidence survived for Malory's use of the insignia. Field's reconstruction is based on two sources. The first is an armorial window featuring the arms of Malory's descendent, Dorothy Malory, 'in the Leicestershire church of Stanford, adjacent to the Malory manor of Swinford'. Photographs of the 'Cave arms linked to four variations of the Malory arms', with the leopard, boars' heads and chevron gules clearly visible, are supplied in Christina Hardyment's biography of

³⁹ See the Appendix to Field's edition, esp, pp. 858-60, (p. 859).

⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 859-60.

Malory.⁴¹ The second source is a sketch made by seventeenth-century Warwickshire antiquary William Dugdale of a now lost coat of arms in the parlour window of Newbold Revel. As Malory's most authoritative biographer, Field is well placed to deduce from the extant evidence that the coat of arms illustrating his own title page is most likely that which Malory knew, although the reconstruction remains subject to conjecture. As such, Field's edition is the first to emphasise the probable heraldry of the Warwickshire family to which the author of the *Morte Darthur* belonged.

Field does not provide justification for adding either coat of arms, rendering their inclusion a site of (hitherto unexplored) interpretation. From a popular, non-academic, viewpoint, the presence of heraldry medievalises the edition, drawing attention to the inherent *medieval-ness* of the text therein. Recent works inspired by the Middle Ages, such as George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series and its television adaptation, *Game of Thrones*, have, as Mat Hardy notes, 'brought heraldry from being a niche interest to something that is now consumed by a global audience of millions of people'.⁴² Thanks to the success of series such as these, and also the global success of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and its various adaptations, heraldry is no longer the exclusive preserve of scholars. Popular, faux-historical representations of heraldry have become mainstays of the ongoing, media-driven reimagining of the Middle Ages.⁴³ Consequently, even in the absence of an informed understanding of the meaning behind

⁴¹ Christina Hardyment, *Malory: The Life and Times of King Arthur's Chronicler* (London: Harper Perennial, 2005), p. 174.

⁴² Mat Hardy, 'The Shields that Guard the Realms of Men: Heraldry in *Game of Thrones*', *Genealogy* 2 (2018), 1-15 (p. 1).

⁴³ See, for instance, Paul B. Sturtevant, *The Middle Ages in Popular Imagination: Memory, Film, and Medievalism* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019); Andrew B.R. Elliott, *Medievalism, Politics, and Mass Media: Appropriating the Middle Ages in the Twenty-First*

the heraldry attached to Field's edition, their appearance nevertheless draws upon the same consciousness by which heraldry is received by a modern reader/audience, invoking an awareness of the historical, and oft fantastical, elements intrinsic to popular medievalism, and not infrequently found within the *Morte Darthur*.

Field's edition is foremost a work of high scholarship, however, the culmination of half a century of critical engagement with the *Morte*. Though an interpretation based on the popular reception of heraldry should not be dismissed given the overwhelming endurance and evolution of medievalist themes in present media, it is more likely that Field selected the two insignia for what they reveal about both the *Morte* and its author. The Arthurian insignia, for example, one of a 'variety of coats of arms attributed to' Arthur during the Middle Ages, was chosen by Field because it is likely to be the one that 'Malory knew as King Arthur's' from his 'extensive readings of Arthurian stories', most notably the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, which bears a description of the insignia and was adapted by Malory for book five of the *Morte*, the so-called 'Roman war episode'.⁴⁴ Aside from Malory's probable knowledge of the Arthurian coat of arms, its inclusion in Field's edition is symbolic because it reminds the reader, most obviously, that the book they are about to read is about King Arthur and the Arthurian world. More figuratively, the presence of the insignia engages with the long literary tradition of Arthurian storytelling, to which the *Morte* belongs. Drawn from a description from one of Malory's most important sources, the coat of arms establishes a genealogical descent for the *Morte*, symbolically gesturing to the reader that the *Morte* is a literary representation of the vast library

Century (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2021). For an overview of medievalism in *Game of Thrones*, see Carolyne Larrington, *Winter is Coming: The Medieval World of Game of Thrones* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015).

⁴⁴ Field, II, pp. 858-59.

of Arthurian material known to Malory and to the late medieval reader — that the *Morte* represents the apotheosis of Arthurian storytelling in the English language.⁴⁵

Why Field should have included the Malorian coat of arms has already partly been answered. As Malory's most authoritative biographer, who has done more than any other scholar to demonstrate the likelihood of the Warwickshire Malory's authorship, it is justifiable that Field would then include an historic and familial representation of the author of the *Morte Darthur*. But its importance, for the current argument, is that inclusion of the coat of arms validates the Warwickshire Malory's authorship, establishing for the *Morte* a definitive, historically verifiable author, therefore ending centuries of near anonymity when Malory was unknown in all but name and uncertainty over the fraught question first posed by Kittredge in 1894, 'Who was Sir Thomas Malory?' Indeed, we might go so far as to say that Field's edition represents the culmination of the rehabilitation of Malory that began in 1868 with Strachey's edition. Strachey, as we have seen, was the first editor of the *Morte* to appreciate, based on a philologically-derived analysis of Malory's sources, the extent to which the *Morte* was more than a derivative of its antecedent sources. Rather, for Strachey, it was a work of occasional originality, which merits the stamp of authorship. By appending Malory's name to the title of his edition, calling it specifically 'Sir Thomas Malory's Book', Strachey began the process of rehabilitation from which Malory's name would be elevated to the front-matter of every edition thereafter. Strachey's Malory was in essence a paper author only, however: he existed within the text, a necessary construct for the purpose of philological enquiry, but he lacked a verifiable, historical body (a biography) to give substance to the abstract. Field's Malory, conversely, supported by the Malorian coat of arms, is the *real* historical figure, Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel. Field's Malory isn't just the author of the *Morte*, but the writer. The distinction

⁴⁵ For an overview of Arthurian literature prior to Malory, see Moll, *Before Malory*.

is important: by introducing his edition with the heraldic insignia, Field is attributing definitive authorship upon a real rather than imagined authority: *the* Malory rather than *a* Malory.

The reverse is true of Vinaver's edition. Vinaver is not interested in the results of biographical enquiry: the identity of the author of the *Morte* matters only insofar that it informs our understanding of the text itself, which Malory's biography does not. Indeed, writing in a short essay published in the journal *Shakespeare Quarterly*, entitled 'Why Does Literary Biography Matter?', Andrew Hadfield considers how the growth in biographical studies during the last four decades has come to bear upon contemporary medieval and early modern literary criticism.⁴⁶ Echoing Foucault's oft-discussed question about the author, 'what does it matter who is speaking?', with the equally intriguing, 'Do we really need literary biography?', Hadfield acknowledges the inherent limitation — and occasional exigencies — of ascribing biographical research to authors of whom (1) little, if anything is known for certain, and what is known cannot be relied upon to support literary analysis; (2) the author himself remains a mystery, thus rendering biographical research purely speculative; and (3) conversely, so much is known about the author that the details of his life (in the absence of an authoritative literary biography) obscure our understanding of the literature itself.⁴⁷ Hadfield contends that for literary biography to matter the *self* contained within the pages of the biography must correspond to the authorial *I*. The details of the author's life matter only insofar that they

⁴⁶ Andrew Hadfield, 'Why Does Literary Biography Matter?', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 65 (2014), 371-78.

⁴⁷ Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?', in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interview by Michel Foucault*, ed. by Donald Bouchard, trans. Donald Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977). My reading of Foucault's paper is quoted from Sean Burke's *Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern, A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995; reprt. 2000), pp. 233-47.

inform an understanding of his work. As Helen Gardner observes in an address given in 1980 before the Modern Humanities Research Association:

Biography is rooted in history; the biographer is committed to truth of fact and to a truthful record of events in his subjects life. But the most important events in the life of the writer are his creations of works of art. They are the *raison d'être* for writing his life.⁴⁸

What use, in other words, is biographical research to the literary critic if the results of which do not inform our understanding of the text? Such a question is fraught with difficulties, not least because it encroaches upon the equally problematic notion of authorial intention. The literary biographer's search for meaning is akin to the editor's search for intention: neither is dependent upon the other to fulfil their intended purpose. And yet, when combined, the effect lends itself to the substantiation of a single author-figure, whether real or imagined. Where the identity of the author goes unchallenged, literary biography and textual philology remain largely divorced from each other. Where there is an anonymous author, however, or one whose life-records do not so easily relate back to the work itself, philology provides the necessary measures by which to fashion an author.

We saw in the previous chapter, for instance, how philology became the cornerstone by which Strachey rehabilitated Malory's reputation. His research into Malory's handling of his sources persuaded Strachey that Malory could only be the author because Strachey himself had stepped into the author's shoes in order to ascertain precisely what Malory had done in his composition

⁴⁸ Helen Gardener, 'Literary Biography', *The Modern Language Review* 75 (1980), xxi-xxxvii (xxiv).

of the *Morte*. In other words, by re-tracing the author's steps, Strachey established the conditions by which the author could be created. Paradoxically, Vinaver both rejects and accepts the issue of authorship. By rejecting the evidence attained from biographical research, Vinaver dismisses the historical Malory as irrelevant to the purpose of literary criticism. Ironically, however, he also privileges Malory as the author of the text by naming him in the title of his edition. *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory* is just that, Malory's work. But who is Vinaver's Malory? He is not the same Malory whose coat of arms embellishes the title page to Field's edition, Malory of Newbold Revel. Vinaver's Malory is a figurative creation, a construct, similar in design to Strachey's Malory. Vinaver like Strachey requires an author-figure in order to ascertain the precise composition of the *Morte*, but Vinaver's Malory — much like his edition — bears all the signs of being a thoroughly post-medieval figure, an ideal rather than anything rooted in the historical. Field's Malory, as we have seen, is the direct opposite: he is granted a privileged position at the head of the text by the inclusion of the coat of arms, which categorically supports Field's edition as being *the* edition of the *Morte Darthur* because it is supported by *the* Malory, not *a* Malory, further evidence of which is given in what follows.

III Looking for Malory: Reading the Contents Page and other Paratexts in the Editions of Vinaver and Field

The first editor of the *Morte Darthur* to add a contents page, or table of rubrication, was Caxton, who provided a short descriptive sentence to each of the 506 chapters that encompass his edition of the *Morte*. The information given in each entry of the rubric is not strictly a summary of the whole chapter. Rather, as James Wade has noted, they are 'front-end heavy', in most cases focusing entirely on 'only the first events that happen in what are often complex

and episodic chapters.⁴⁹ In Caxton's edition, individual chapters were not introduced by the corresponding descriptive heading; these were contained solely to the prefatory material, in the front-matter of the edition, and not dispersed throughout. Caxton's successor, however, Wynkyn de Worde, distributed the table of rubric throughout both of his editions, printed in 1498 and 1529, with each chapter prefaced by a heading, a method of application that has received much critical comment (of which more in chapter 3). Every black-letter edition thereafter, including the Stansby Malory, would follow de Worde's lead, with the chapter headings becoming a permanent feature of every successive edition of the *Morte*. As three nineteenth-century editions are based on the text of the Stansby Malory, the two 1816 editions, edited by Alexander Chalmers and Joseph Haslewood respectively, and the 1858 edition, edited by Thomas Wright, these, too, include the table of rubrication and the chapter headings, as does Strachey's 1868 edition. An important exception is Sommer's 1889-91 three-volume critical edition, which, intended to be an exact reprint of the Caxton, although with numerous small mistakes, includes the table of rubrication but not the chapter headings.⁵⁰ The 1892 single-volume edition, published first as an abridgement, edited by Ernest Rhys for The Camelot Classic Series, is based on Wright's 1858 edition, which is itself based on the Stansby Malory, and did not include either the table of rubric or the chapter headings.⁵¹ As the most oft-reprinted edition, remaining in print well into the 1930s, the 1868 Strachey edition was perhaps the single most accessible version of the *Morte* for over six decades, ensuring that Caxton's table of rubric and de Worde's chapter headings remained a prominent feature of the text for successive generations well into the twentieth century.

⁴⁹ James Wade, 'The Chapter Headings of the *Morte Darthur*: Caxton and de Worde', *Modern Philology* 111 (2014), 645-67 (pp. 647-48).

⁵⁰ For a description of this edition, see Gaines, *Anecdotal Bibliography*, pp. 24-26.

⁵¹ For a description of this edition, see Gaines, *Anecdotal Bibliography*, pp. 26-27.

The decisions made by two late fifteenth-century editors, then, Caxton and de Worde, would have a lasting effect on the presentation of the text, even four-hundred years later. Such a fact is hardly surprising, given the total authority of the Caxton edition prior to the discovery of the Winchester Manuscript in 1934. The decision by respective editors to include the table of rubric and chapter headings, however, is likely based more on expedience and marketability than any devotion to Malory's early editors. The *Morte* is a long text, often divided into multiple volumes, and therefore requires chapter and book divisions, with the relevant headings appended, for the reader to make sense of and navigate the text. The discovery of the Winchester Manuscript, however, and Vinaver's ensuing, thirteen-year editorial project, concluding with the publication of *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, in 1947, provided a new model on which to structure the *Morte*. Vinaver's edition was based on a new witness; and it therefore made sense that the presentation of his edition should reflect the newness (new to the editor, at least) of its chief source. The title to Vinaver's edition has received extensive critical commentary, being the ultimate reflection of his belief that divisions in the Winchester Manuscript communicated by the frequent inclusion of explicits are suggestive of the author's own intention: that the *Morte* should be read as a 'series of self-contained stories', not as a single, unbroken text.⁵² Based on this premise, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, or, as Vinaver re-named the text for his 1971 single-volume edition, *Malory: Works*, abandons Caxton's division of twenty-one books and 506 chapters for an altogether new structure. Vinaver's edition is composed of eight 'works', with a further forty sections. In Vinaver, for instance, the first 'work', 'The Tale of King Arthur', includes six sections, each given a separate title.⁵³

⁵² See the Introduction to Vinaver's 1971 single-volume edition *Malory: Works*, p. viii.

⁵³ A note on terminology: as I am comparing the presentation of 'books' and 'subsections' in both Vinaver's and Field's editions, it is important to distinguish between them based on the terminology used. Based on Vinaver's belief in the *Morte* as a collection of individual 'works', I use the term 'works' (or 'work', when singular), in quotation marks, when

The changes Vinaver made, not only to the text, but to the presentation of the text, have had a lasting impression on the reception of the *Morte*. Indeed, prior to Vinaver, no other editor after de Worde had implemented such influential and longstanding changes. While Caxton's influence on the text was, prior to the event of 1934, ubiquitous, credit for the packaging of the text is given in equal measure to de Worde, whose introduction of modernised punctuation, including parentheses (of which see more in chapter three), as well as paratexts such as woodcuts and chapter headings, shaped the text for successive generations. De Worde's influence over the *Morte*, especially in how the text is presented, though more subtle than Caxton's, provided the blueprint for all future editions, and his influence can be seen in the packaging of the text even three centuries after the publication of his second edition, in 1529. An (unintended) success of Vinaver's edition is that it displaces de Worde's influence. Through his aggressive repackaging of the text, Vinaver established new parameters through which the *Morte* is received, as did de Worde. Vinaver's approach, however, is not so subtle, and nor, indeed, is his packaging of the *Works*. On every page is felt the hand of the editor, rather than the author, a fact that is now made more apparent, as Field's edition minimises many of the

describing tales – i.e., the first 'work' in Vinaver's edition is 'The Tale of King Arthur'. In Field, to reflect his view of the *Morte* as a unified narrative, I use the term 'tales', i.e., the fourth tale in Field is 'Sir Gareth of Orkney'. I base my use of the term 'tales' when describing Field's edition on what Field himself writes in the Introduction to his 2017 edition: '(The eight parts are now usually called tales, which conveniently distinguishes them from Caxton's twenty-one books.)' Moreover, in addition to 'works' or 'tales', I also refer throughout what follows to 'sections'. This refers specifically to, in Vinaver, what we might call individual chapters within a single 'work'. For example, in Vinaver, the first section of the sixth 'work', 'The Tale of the Sankgreal', is called 'The Departure', and there are nine sections in this 'work'. On occasion, I refer also to the title of individual 'tales' or sections in Field and 'works' in Vinaver. See Field, *Le Morte Darthur* (2017), p. xxi.

editorial traces made by Vinaver, repackaging the text to suit a different methodological and ideological approach: for Field, the unity of the *Morte*; for Vinaver, division. I begin my assessment with the contents page to each editors' respective edition because they represent, not only reader accessibility (the key to unlocking the text, we might say) but the differing editorial practices that have and continue to define interpretative perceptions of the text.

I begin by commenting on a feature of Field's edition that, to most, might appear unremarkable, even obvious, but immediately distinguishes it from Vinaver's: inclusion of the book-title. Field aligns the title of the book, in uppercase letters, LE MORTE DARTHUR, top-centre, directly beneath the main 'Contents' heading and that for the 'Introduction'. No such inclusion is given in Vinaver's contents page, and indeed even his revised title, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, is omitted. The effect of this is instantaneous, and for the critic who is familiar with Vinaver's and Field's differing practice, it is noteworthy. Immediately, it is made clear that the text is to be read as one book, as a unified narrative, with the individual tales and sections all brought together under the wider umbrella of *Le Morte Darthur*, to which they are component, not individual, parts of a wider whole. By its inclusion, the title of each tale that comes after is afforded less autonomy than what is seen in *The Works*. Read in this way, inclusion of the title acts almost as a colon: what comes before is the primary objective; what follows is constituent to the main point. In Field's contents page, inclusion of the book-title collectivises the following headings, establishing unity. Equally, by the omission of any inclusion of an overarching book-title, Vinaver's contents page reinforces division in the text.

As we move into the sections headings for each of the eight 'works', or 'tales', represented, the theme of division in Vinaver and unity in Field continues. In *The Works*, for instance, included in the title of the heading for each 'work' is the word 'tale' or 'book', which are absent in Field, as the following selective comparison shows:

Field:

KING UTHUR AND KING ARTHUR

SIR GARETH OF ORKNEY

SIR LAUNCELOT AND QUEEN GUENIVERE

THE MORTE ARTHUR

Vinaver:

THE TALE OF KING ARTHUR

THE TALE OF SIR GARETH OF ORKNEY THAT WAS

CALLED BEWMAYNES

THE BOOK OF SIR LAUNCELOT AND QUEEN

GUINEVERE

THE MOST PITEOUS TALE OF THE MORTE ARTHUR

SAUNZ GUERDON

No mention is made of ‘tale’ or ‘book’ in Field’s headings because they are not intended to be read individually. The fifth ‘tale’ in Field, like in Vinaver, does include the word ‘book’, but how Field places this word in comparison to his predecessor is important. In Vinaver’s edition, there is, ‘THE BOOK OF SIR TRISTRAM DE LYONES’, again, reinforcing insularity. In Field’s edition, however, the Tristram section is divided into two parts, although both are still regarded as one section in the whole, and are titled as: ‘SIR TRISTRAM DE LYONES: THE FIRST BOOK’, and ‘SIR TRISTRAM DE LYONES: THE SECOND BOOK’. By placing the word ‘book’ after the colon, Field refuses to privilege any notion of insularity. The colon works to define a two-part structure to a component part of the whole text, rather than a self-contained story.

How sections are presented in the respective editions is interesting, too, because again they substantiate the editors' respective practice. In Field, there are thirty-eight sections across five tales.⁵⁴ In Vinaver, there are forty sections, also across five 'works'.⁵⁵ In Field, they are italicised, with only the corresponding page numbers. In Vinaver, however, roman numerals are included to number each of the respective sections corresponding to the 'work' to which they belong. In the *Works*, for instance, the first 'work', 'The Tale of King Arthur', is presented, based on a selective sample, as follows:

I. Merlin

II. Balin or the Knight with the Two Swords

III. Torre and Pellinor

IV. The War with the Five Kings

Numerals are employed consistently in Vinaver's edition for each of the 'works' inclusive of sections; the numerals, moreover, do not run on in number, but start again with each new 'work'. By setting off each section with a numeral, Vinaver presents them as chapters in a book: 'The Tale of King Arthur', for instance, is composed of six 'chapters', thereafter it ends, and the next 'work' begins. In Field's edition, conversely, the absence of a numbering system for each tale, and their presentation in italic font, means that they are presented as secondary items rather than as individual 'chapters'. Headings increase accessibility, allowing the reader

⁵⁴ In Field, the division of sections to tale is as follows: the first tale has four sections; the fifth tale, split in two parts, has 15 sections; the sixth tale has nine sections; the seventh tale has five sections; and the eighth tale has five sections.

⁵⁵ In Vinaver, the division of subchapters to book is as follows: the first 'work' has six sections; the fifth 'work' has fifteen sections; the sixth 'work' has nine sections; the seventh 'work' has five sections; and the last 'work' has five also.

to navigate Field's edition, but they do not prejudice the reader's perception of the text towards division. The opposite is true in the *Works*, in which the given number of sections form a single book and are presented as separate 'works'. This is perhaps most obvious in the title of the final section in 'The Book of Sir Tristram De Lyones' in Vinaver's edition. In Field, the last section heading of this tale is titled 'The Christening of Sir Palomides'. In Vinaver, it is simply called 'Conclusion'. The conclusiveness of such a title leaves no confusion that, in Vinaver's edition, the 'work' has reached its end, and that what follows will be an entirely different 'work'.

There is a good deal of continuity in the titles Field adopts that is not present in the contents page to Vinaver's edition, especially in the headings for the latter 'works' in Vinaver's edition. In particular, in the titles given to the sections presented in the seventh and eight tales in Field, following a precedent set in the titles given to sections in 'THE SANKGREAL', Field is careful to name the knight about whom the section refers by making the name of the knight the title to each respective section of the tale. In the *Works*, for instance, Vinaver presents the section headings of the sixth 'work', 'The Quest of the Holy Grail', as follows:

III. Sir Perceval

IV. Sir Launcelot

V. Sir Gawain

VI. Sir Bors

VII. Sir Galahad

Minus the numerals, and presented in italic font, the same is given in Field. In the seventh 'work' in Vinaver, 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guenivere in Field, Vinaver titles the section reflecting its main event, 'The Poisoned Apple', whereas Field titles it for the instigator of the

main event, *Sir Mador de la Porte*. In four of the five headings given by Field in ‘The Morte Arthur’, only the name of the knight about whom the section is referring is given; in Vinaver, a fuller title is given:

Field:

THE MORTE ARTHUR

Sir Aggravayne

Sir Gawayne

The Siege of Benwick

Sir Mordred

Sir Lancelot

Vinaver:

THE MOST PITEOUS TALE OF THE MORTE ARTHUR SAUNZ GUERDON

- I. Slander and Strife
- II. The Vengeance of Sir Gawain
- III. The Siege of Benwick
- IV. The Day of Destiny
- V. The Dolorous Death and Departing out of this world of
Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere

This is how the final tale/ ‘work’ is presented in the contents pages of each respective edition. The eponymy of Field’s section headings read against the descriptive content of Vinaver’s demonstrates a further desire on behalf of Field to ensure narrative continuity. In this instance, such continuity starts at ‘The Sankgreal’, as the eponymous headings given therein are then

repeated in style in both ‘Sir Launcelot and Queen Guenivere’ and ‘The Morte Arthur’. This is a particularly significant stylistic choice made by Field, as Malory’s version of the story of the Holy Grail is widely regarded to be the least original tale in the *Morte Darthur*. As Norris maintains: ‘Malory follows the major source of this tale with greater fidelity than that of any other of the eight tales’, following his source, the Vulgate *Queste del Saint Graal*, ‘from its beginning to its ending without omitting or altering any of its key events.’⁵⁶ Such a fact was not lost on Vinaver, who, as Charles Moorman argues, believed Malory’s version of the Grail story to be ‘an autonomous piece having little or no connection with any other division of the work’.⁵⁷ For Vinaver, apart from ‘omissions and minor alterations’, the sixth ‘work’ is ‘to all intents and purposes a translation’.⁵⁸ The fidelity by which Malory adhered to his source likely encouraged Vinaver in the belief that he was only attempting to piece together a collection of ‘works’. Thus, Vinaver’s contents page reflects this belief. From the last entry for the sixth ‘work’ in Vinaver, ‘The Miracle of Galahad’, we go immediately into the first entry of the seventh ‘work’, ‘The Poisoned Apple’. There is no suggestion of narrative unity; indeed, the opposite is true: if we compare the same entries in Field, we see that the last entry for ‘The Sankgreall’, ‘The Kingdom of Sarras’, is followed by the first entry of ‘Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere’, ‘Sir Mador de la Porte’, which directly mirrors the five eponymous headings given in ‘The Sankgreall’. As our eye travels down the page, we come to the above-quoted entry for ‘The Morte Arthur’, with four eponymous section headings, while the title of the final section heading of the seventh tale in Field, though not wholly dissimilar to Vinaver, is still reflective of this same practice: ‘Sir Urry of Hungary’ in Field, and ‘The Healing of Sir Urry’ in Vinaver.

⁵⁶ Norris, *Malory’s Library*, 114.

⁵⁷ Charles Moorman, “‘The Tale of The Sankgreall’: Human Frailty’, in *Malory’s Originality*, pp. 184-205 (p. 185).

⁵⁸ Vinaver, *Works* (1967), III, p. 1534.

Field employs eponymy in the section headings to promote the idea of narrative continuity. Moreover, in Vinaver, it is the theme or subject of the specific section that are captured in the section headings, hence we read ‘Slander and Strife’ or ‘The Day of Destiny’, both from the final ‘work’. In Field, it is the character that is important. This in itself establishes narrative harmony for the *Morte*, as by selecting the names of various knights to be the title of individual sections, especially in the latter books, Field is explicitly drawing attention to a major theme of the whole work: the knights of the Round Table. Consequently, not only does Field promote narrative harmony but thematic unity, too, with each knight representing a constituent part of the Round Table as each section heading in Field’s contents page represents a constituent part of the *Morte Darthur*.

From an examination of the contents page in the respective editions of Vinaver and Field can we see the obvious difference in each editor’s view on the question of unity in the *Morte*. To further make this point, we must open up the editions, looking beyond the front-matter to consider how structural considerations inform our understanding of editorial practice. For example, another addition to the *Works*, which is not present in Field’s edition, is the inclusion of eight title pages, each of which introduces the corresponding ‘work’. These are directly related to the contents page and are worth pondering alongside it, as they enforce even more strongly than the contents page the notion of disunity in Vinaver’s version of the *Morte Darthur*.

The presentation of the eight title pages in the *Works* varies based on which version of the edition one reads. The single-volume paperback edition, for instance, first published in 1971, is generally more accessible than its three-volume counterpart, with fewer editorial marks and a streamlined critical apparatus, which will be discussed in due course. Here, the individual

title pages are much cleaner than in the three-volume version, but their function is the same: to mark the end of one ‘work’ and the beginning of another. These title pages are different to chapter headings, as their purpose is less on aiding the reader’s navigation of the text than on informing the reader (telling them) that they are about to read an entirely different ‘work’. In the single-volume edition, then, as well as the three-volume edition, the title page is presented on a clean page, always on the recto or right-hand page, with the opposite (verso) page left blank. The title, centre-aligned and in uppercase characters, is presented atop the page, with no further information given.

In the three-volume edition of the *Works*, conversely, these title pages give a much fuller account of the structural composition of the ‘works’ that follow, with each giving information about the corresponding books in Caxton and the relevant folio numbers as the tale is presented in the Winchester Manuscript. For example, the following shows how the title-page to the eighth ‘work’ in the 1967 three-volume edition of the *Works* is presented:

THE MOST PITEOUS TALE
OF
THE MORTE ARTHUR SAUNZ GUERDON

[*Winchester MS., ff. 449r-484v;*
Caxton, Book XX AND XXI]

In the 1971 single-volume edition, the information in square brackets is omitted, and no other information is given aside from the title of the tale. In the three-volume edition, however, following the main title page to each individual ‘work’, individual title pages are also given to mark the opening of each section. Thus, the first section of the eighth ‘work’ looks like this:

I

SLANDER AND STRIFE

[*Winchester MS., FF. 449r-458r;*
Caxton, Book XX, chs. 1-8]

Again, these individual section headings are presented on a separate, clean page (recto). Every section in each ‘work’ as they are presented in Vinaver’s three-volume edition are accorded a title-page such as this. Following this, another page is then given in the three-volume edition, which gives the corresponding section headings, each numbered, as they appear in Caxton’s rubric. This, too, is given its own page.

In the *Works*, then, before we even encounter the story, the reader finds, first, a title page, second, a page introducing the relevant division of ‘work’ and section, and third, a page giving Caxton’s rubric to the corresponding chapter. Conversely, if we compare the presentation of the eighth tale in Field, no such divisions are present. In Field’s edition, ‘The Morte Arthur’ is introduced only with the title, given in uppercase characters, which is presented on the same page as the text; the section heading, ‘Sir Aggravayne’, is then given directly below, after which the text begins. As with the contents page to Field’s edition, no numbering is used to distinguish individual tales or sections. Field does not even demarcate individual tales by adding page breaks, as does Vinaver; throughout Field’s edition, no pages are left intentionally blank. The first page of ‘The Sankgreal’, for instance (the sixth ‘work’ in Vinaver) begins on the right of the last page of the previous ‘book’, ‘Sir Tristram De Lyones: The Second Book’, with no obvious indication to the reader that anything resembling a separate ‘book’, or ‘work’, is about to begin.

Field's divisions, then, are much cleaner and altogether less drastic than Vinaver's. Indeed, even using the term 'division' when discussing Field is perhaps inappropriate, as 'division' signals an act of separation, or difference, which is the very opposite of what Field believes about the composition of the *Morte*. In a now famous and oft-cited essay, C.S. Lewis famously remarked about the unity of the *Morte*, 'It is our imagination, not his [Malory's], that makes the work one or eight or fifty. We can read it either way. We can read it now one way, now another. We partly make what we read'.⁵⁹ Such a statement is filled with interpretative possibility, which Vinaver himself found when he penned a reply to Lewis. In answer to Lewis's last statement, for instance, Vinaver simply writes, 'We certainly can, but why?'⁶⁰ For Vinaver, critical perceptions of unity in the *Morte* are premised solely on repeated references to earlier or later events, which Vinaver credits to be nothing but narrative reminders or prompts rather than evidence of narrative harmony. He writes, for instance: 'Remove from Malory's text all the occasional references to what is going to happen in a later work or to what has happened already in an earlier one, and nothing of importance will be lost'.⁶¹ Such an occurrence is not evidence of unity to Vinaver because it does not signify thematic unity. That is, Vinaver finds in these 'occasional references' only parenthetical reminders or prompts rather than anything indicative of a wider thematic context bringing together the 'works'. In chapter three of this thesis, I question Vinaver's theory here given by arguing that the inclusion of parentheses in Wynkyn de Worde's 1529 edition of the *Morte* in fact testifies to the thematic harmony of the *Morte*, and thus provides the opportunity for a re-evaluation of Vinaver's hypothesis based on evidence from another editor working four centuries earlier. At present, however, it is important to emphasise Vinaver's views on the disunity of the *Morte* because it

⁵⁹ See Lewis, 'The English Prose *Morte*', p. 22.

⁶⁰ See Vinaver, 'On Art and Nature', p. 8.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 8.

explains how he came to make the choices about the structure of the *Works* that we have so far discussed.

To be sure, Vinaver based his assumption that the *Morte* was in fact a collection of individual ‘works’ on two aspects: the explicits to the Winchester Manuscript, discussed above, and, as we have just seen, the supposed absence of thematic unity. Counterarguments to both of these hypotheses have been given at length, and it is not the object of this chapter to enter into further debate on this topic, although Vinaver’s presentation of the explicits will be discussed below. Rather, my interest is in how the respective structural composition of the editions of Vinaver and Field, based on paratextual elements such as the contents page, bring to mind the presence of the author. In short, I am asking: how is Malory, the author, presented in the editions of Vinaver and Field? Such a question is answerable not through analysis of the methodological approach each editor applies to their edition but on its presentation – how the edition looks. As Lewis remarks, ‘We partly make what we read’. We do, and to most readers, conclusions are formed based on presentation. As I discussed in my analysis of the Malorian coat of arms appended to the front-matter of Field’s edition, such an addition at once *medievalises* the book, embracing the present popular demand for medieval-inspired media. But it also adds a historical fixture to the book in the person of the writer, aligning the text with a real historical figure and therefore superimposing an authorial presence that is rooted in historical fact. This authorial presence is made more apparent in Field’s edition by the fact that it is presented in altogether more authorial terms than is Vinaver’s. Field’s edition looks like modern fiction, in other words; pages are clean, divisions are minimal, headings and titles are given neatly and on the same page to the text, and, most importantly, all trace of the editor is minimised. Compare even a single page of Field’s edition to that of Vinaver’s and we can see that, in the *Works*, the editor is always there. Editorial marks are used frequently by Vinaver, littering the

pages of his edition. He uses these symbols, as he writes in the introduction to his edition, ‘To enable the reader to see the emendations at a glance’.⁶² Readings borrowed from Caxton without the support of Malory’s sources are placed in square brackets, in half brackets are ‘Caxton’s readings confirmed by’ the sources, and in caret brackets ‘the words and letters which occur neither in Caxton nor in the Winchester text’.⁶³ Square brackets, moreover, are also used to indicate ‘*lacunae* in *W* [Winchester]’.⁶⁴ Editorial marks such as square and angle brackets are used on every page to mark emendations; in Field, no such symbols are used, and all variant readings are discussed in the critical apparatus, which is in a separate volume. At the bottom of each page of the *Works* is the critical apparatus, which is the ‘product of a collation of the Winchester MS. with Caxton’s edition, of both these texts with Malory’s sources’, and in the margins of every page is the folio, in bold, of the corresponding leaf in the Winchester manuscript.⁶⁵ Perhaps nowhere in the *Works* is the editor more present than in ‘The Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius’. As this was greatly altered by Caxton, the reading in the Winchester Manuscript is very different. Vinaver records whole paragraphs of variant readings in a critical apparatus on the same page as the text proper — which, again, Field confines to his apparatus. In summarising the role of the editor, Vinaver writes:

Our task as interpreters is really much more modest than people think. We can neither define nor explain. But we can point in the direction where we feel the path of genius lies and hope that in this way we may bring ourselves and others a little closer to its understanding.⁶⁶

⁶² *Works*, I, cxxii.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. cxxii.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. cxxii.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. cxxii.

⁶⁶ Vinaver, ‘On Art and Nature’, p. 40.

It is in large part thanks to the work conducted by Vinaver that so many were brought to read the *Morte* and that modern Malorian scholarship is now a firmly established area of study within the academy. But any notion of modesty on the part of the editor is utterly displaced in the *Works* by the sheer weight of editorial intervention, which is always present. If, as Lewis says, ‘We partly make what we read’, then how can the reader make of the *Works* as being anything but a work belonging to its editor, not its author? Malory is displaced by Vinaver precisely because it is the actions of the editor, not the author, that can be seen. In Field, conversely, the author is imposed upon the text by elimination of the editor. A clean text, easily readable, with no editorial marks, no critical apparatus, book and chapter divisions that are clear — all marks of the editor, in fact, are given in a separate volume. As such, Field’s edition presents as akin to modern fiction and is therefore indicative of modern notions of authorship. In short: Field’s text is authorial because the editor is invisible.

In Vinaver’s edition, then, the presence of the author is displaced by that of the editor, whose hand is constantly felt, and seen, by the reader. Despite this heavy-handedness, however, Vinaver believes, and compares, his practice as akin to that of an archaeologist, writing:

But throughout my work, and in face of every doubtful passage, I have borne in mind that the proper attitude to a text should be that of an archaeologist to a monument of the past: an attitude of respect for every details that may conceivably belong to the original structure.⁶⁷

He is referring here more to methodology than visual presentation, but were we to make comparisons based on the latter, we might reasonably compare Vinaver’s practice more to that

⁶⁷ *Works*, I, p. ix.

of a scaffolder, the tools of whose work are seen everywhere, as the tools of Vinaver's practice are also visible on every page. But Vinaver's is not the only overt presence in the *Works*. Another powerful presence is felt, too, this time in the form of Malory's first editor, Caxton. As we saw in the introduction to this chapter, at the time the Winchester Manuscript was discovered, Vinaver was already preparing a new edition of the Caxton Malory. The discovery of the manuscript, however, derailed these plans, and Vinaver rushed to see the text for himself. Based on his examination, he determined that

while the manuscript was not that used by Caxton, it was in many respects more complete and authentic than Caxton's edition and had the first claim to the attention of any future editor of Malory. My task was thus clearly outlined for me. Without undue regret I abandoned my original project and undertook to edit Malory's works from the newly discovered text.⁶⁸

As the Winchester Manuscript is missing its final gathering of eight leaves, as well as its opening leaves, and as some readings in the Caxton are found to be more authoritative than equivalent readings in the manuscript, the Caxton edition was always going to play an important part in the composition of an edition of the *Morte*, Field's included. However, inclusion and distribution of Caxton's table of rubrication, or of his famous preface, are additions made entirely at the behest of the editor. And it is odd, frankly, that Vinaver should have, first, included the preface, and second, distributed Caxton's rubric in his own edition. The finding of the manuscript afforded not only the opportunity to edit the text from an entirely new witness, but to move away altogether from the pervasive influence exerted by Caxton for the last four centuries. Indeed, prior to Vinaver, Caxton, and latterly his successor, de Worde,

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. viii.

had provided the blueprint for how every edition thereafter should look. Vinaver may have ‘abandoned’ his original project of editing the Caxton Malory in favour of the manuscript, but his choice to include in the *Works* so many paratextual features intrinsic to Caxton’s edition means that, ultimately, Caxton is imposed onto an edition based on a version of the text that is unique precisely because it is not Caxton’s. Field, too, includes Caxton’s preface, but he does so in his Appendix to volume II of his 2013 edition, placement of which clearly categorises it as an interesting historical document, not as an intrinsic part of the text. In the *Works*, however, the preface directly precedes the opening of the first ‘work’. As such, Caxton’s famous introductory words, ‘Thenne, to procede forth in thys sayd book’, are imprinted in the reader’s mind as they begin to read the *Morte*.⁶⁹

The result of these choices is that the *Works* presents as a hybrid of its two witnesses. Caxton’s preface and the Winchester’s explicits are given together in the same edition. Similarly, Vinaver’s table of contents, which is based on Vinaver’s perception of the divisions found in the manuscript, is placed alongside Caxton’s rubric. Even Caxton’s name is given prominence, as, in the three-volume edition, the aforementioned page introducing each individual tale and bearing the rubric has in uppercase letters, ‘CAXTON’S RUBRICS’. This is what the reader sees immediately before they encounter each ‘work’ in Vinaver’s edition. For an edition that stakes much of its prominence on the fact that it is not based on the Caxton, the inclusion of Caxton’s name, and in such a prominent position, is bewildering. Caxton is given prominence in an edition which, as we have seen, belongs as much to Vinaver as it does to Malory. To an extent we could say that Caxton’s presence in the *Works* somewhat undermines Vinaver’s status as editor. On the other hand, it might also be said that Caxton’s name represents continuity, furnishing the *Works* with the authority that Caxton demands as Malory’s first

⁶⁹ See *Works* (1971), p. xv.

editor. To be sure, the presence of the *Morte's* first editor, combined with Vinaver's overwhelmingly heavy-handed presentation, scaffolding his way through the text with copious editorial marks, places both Caxton and Vinaver in a prominent position, forcing Malory, the author, to compete against the editor. This is perhaps the biggest irony of Vinaver's edition. Malory is given a prominent and privileged position by virtue of his being named in the title of the edition, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, only to be displaced in favour of those who have no claim to authorship. In Field's edition, conversely, Malory occupies a privileged position because the presentation of the text allows him to. Indeed, in what follows, I examine another aspect of the two editions, the presentation of the explicits and colophons, which are the most important and most authorial inclusion in the Winchester Manuscript. Similar to what has been written about the contents page, how the explicits are presented draws attention to the question of unity in the *Morte*.

IV Reading the Explicits and Colophons in Vinaver and Field

As I discussed in the introduction to this chapter, the most important addition in the Winchester Manuscript is a series of authorial colophons at the conclusion to most 'books' in the *Morte*.⁷⁰ In these colophons, Malory directly addresses the reader, naming himself repeatedly and exhorting the reader to 'praye for me whyle I am on lyve'.⁷¹ The majority of these colophons are omitted in the Caxton, except for the last, which is witnessed only by the Caxton Malory, as the manuscript is missing its final gathering. The last colophon is perhaps the most important, for it dates composition of the *Morte* as being in 'the ninth yere of the

⁷⁰ In Field, the tales are 'King Uther and King Arthur', 'Sir Gareth of Orkney', 'Sir Tristram De Lyones: The Second Book', 'The Sankgreal', 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guenivere', and 'The Morte Arthur'.

⁷¹ See Field, *Le Morte Darthur* (2017), p. 940.

reygne of Kyng Edward the Fourth'.⁷² For Field, simultaneously Malory's biographer and editor, as noted by Thomas Crofts, Malory's colophons are of 'the greatest historical importance'.⁷³ Based on the information given by Malory himself in the colophons, Field draws the conclusion that, in the ninth year of the reign of Edward IV, Malory must have been 'an author, a knight and a prisoner'.⁷⁴ Of the various candidates put forward for authorship of the *Morte*, only one fits this description: Malory of Newbold Revel.

The Winchester Manuscript was discovered only six years after the publication of Hicks's aforementioned short biography of Malory, *His Turbulent Career*, in 1928, and at a time when, as we saw in chapter one, critical interest in the historical figure of the writer was gaining in prominence. The finding of the manuscript, and with it the discovery of a series of written colophons naming and offering small details of Malory's life, would have appealed directly to the critical desire for biography. In addition to the colophons in the Winchester Manuscript, there is also a series of explicits falling at the end of sections and tales. These signify the conclusion of one section/tale and, sometimes, introduce the next. The explicits, as we have seen, provided the impetus for Vinaver's belief in the disunity of the *Morte*. As he writes in his introduction to the *Works*:

Although the manuscript is bound in one volume, it is clearly divided into several sections and each section, with the exception of the last which lacks a gathering of eight leaves at the end, is concluded by an *explicit*.⁷⁵

⁷² Ibid, p. 940.

⁷³ Crofts, *Malory's Contemporary Audience*, p. 16.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 16.

⁷⁵ *Works*, I, p. xxxvi.

This conclusion directed, as we have seen in our examination of Vinaver's contents page, the presentation of his edition as a collection of eight 'works' with, between them, forty section headings. Comparison of the contents page in the respective editions of Vinaver and Field has enabled us to see the extent of Vinaver's emendation. In what follows, I compare the presentation of a selection of different explicits and colophons as they are given in the editions of Field and Vinaver to further my argument made above, about the contents page, specifically that their presentation in the editions of both Vinaver and Field represent the editors' differing views on the notion of narrative unity.⁷⁶

For Vinaver, 'the first *explicit*', which concludes the 'The Tale of King Arthur' in the *Works*, 'is the most significant of all', providing the most important impetus for his view of the *Morte* as a collection of 'works'.⁷⁷ He writes, for instance:

In it the author bids farewell to the reader and suggests that someone else might continue his work: *Who that woll make ony more lette hym seke other bookis of kyng*

⁷⁶ There are seven authorial colophons in the Winchester Manuscript, of which five identify the author. The final colophon, coming at the end of the eighth tale, is unique to Caxton's edition, as the manuscript is missing its final gathering of eight leaves. David Eugene Clark states about the colophons that they include a 'passing reference to the source matter', as well as reference to the author, Malory, often including a prayer 'on his behalf'. Explicits, as Clarke states, signal 'the end of a section of text', and are also included at the end of individual 'works' or tales. Explicits are more numerous in the *Morte* than colophons, and often include the word 'Explicit', although not always. See David Eugene Clark, 'Hearing and Reading Narrative Divisions in the "Morte Darthur"', *Arthuriana* 24 (2014), 92-125 (p. 98); for a discussion of the colophons as they relate to the life-records of Malory of Newbold Revel, see Crofts, *Malory's Contemporary Audience*, pp. 15-16.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. xxxvi.

Arthure of sir Launcelot of sir Trystrams. The works which follow claim no continuity of narrative, still less of composition.⁷⁸

The words in italics (Vinaver's not mine) are evidence enough for Vinaver that Malory is drawing to a close this individual 'work', indicating that it has reached its end while exhorting his reader to, should they wish, engage with other 'works'. One of the earliest critics to discuss, and disagree with, what Vinaver here writes about the first explicit was Thomas C. Rumble, in 1956, who finds 'Vinaver's reading of this first *explicit*' to be 'an extremely dubious one'.⁷⁹ He draws this conclusion, in the first instance, on the fact that 'It has apparently gone without notice that the paragraphing of the [...] passage is Vinaver's rather than that of the Winchester manuscript'.⁸⁰ For point of comparison, I include the explicit exactly as it is presented in the *Works* and in Field's edition:

Vinaver

HERE ENDYTH THIS TALE, AS THE FREYNSHE BOOKE SEYTH, FRO THE
MARYAGE OF KYNGE UTHUR UNTO KYNG ARTHURE THAT REGNED
AFTIR HYM AND DED MANY BATAYLES.

AND THIS BOOKE ENDYTH WHEREAS SIR LAUNCELOT AND SIR TRY-
STRAMS COM TO COURTE. WHO THAT WOLL MAKE ONY MORE LETTE HYM
SEKE OTHER BOOKIS OF KYNGE ARTHURE OR OF SIR LAUNCELOT OR SIR
TRYTRAMS; FOR THIS WAS DRAWYN BY A KNYGHT PRESONER, SIR
THOMAS MALLEORRÉ, THAT GOD SENDE HYM GOOD RECOVER. AMEN.

EXPLICIT.

⁷⁸ *Works*, p. xxxvi.

⁷⁹ Thomas C. Rumble, 'The First *Explicit* in Malory's *Morte Darthur*', *Modern Language Notes* 71 (1956), 564-66 (p. 564).

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 565.

Field

Here endyth this tale, as the Freynshe booke seyth, fro the maryage of Kyngge Uther unto Kyng Arthure that regned aftir hym and ded many batayles. And this booke endyth whereas Launcelot and Sir Trystrams com to courte.

Who that woll make any more lette hym seke other bookis of Kyngge Arthure or of Sir Launcelot of Sir Trystrams; for this was drawyn by a knyght presoner, Sir Thomas Malleorré, that God sende hym good recover. Amen.

Explicit

As we can see, the explicit is in both editions presented in two short paragraphs. The first paragraph offers a brief concluding remark (summary would be too strong a word to use) about the content of the tale, after which is it followed by an authorial remark, in the second paragraph, which is a direct address to the reader. The issue is in how these two paragraphs are presented in Vinaver's edition. In Field, the first paragraph ends with the sentence beginning 'And this booke endyth', and he then begins the next paragraph with the authorial exhortation 'Who that woll...'. Vinaver, however, has the first paragraph read as only one sentence, ending with 'ded many batayles'. He then opens the second paragraph with 'And this booke endyth'. The alteration in tone between the first and second paragraphs, from summary in the first to direct address in the second, is somewhat lost in the *Works*, as Vinaver has chosen, led entirely by his own judgement, to open the second paragraph with what should be the concluding sentence of the first paragraph, as it is in Field. Vinaver's decision to present the paragraphs in this way is likely based on how the explicit is presented in the manuscript. There is a small indentation where the line 'And this booke endyth' begins, which falls directly below the sentence ending 'batayles'.⁸¹ In Stephen H.A. Shepherd's 2004 Norton Critical Edition of the Winchester Manuscript, which is intended to be a diplomatic edition of the manuscript, a

⁸¹ See fol. 70v of the manuscript.

paraph mark (or pilcrow) is given, starting a new paragraph, before ‘And this booke endyth’.⁸² On the presentation of the explicit in the Winchester Manuscript, Field notes that ‘*W* [Winchester] has an explicit that follows a personal remark by the author. They are the other way around in *C* [Caxton] and in all five of *M*’s [Malory’s] other tales that have both explicits and authorial remarks’.⁸³ Taking the manuscript at face value, Vinaver presents the explicit verbatim without considering the context of the first sentence of the second paragraph, beginning in Vinaver ‘And this booke endyth whereas sir Launcelot and sir Trystram com to courte’. Tristram plays no part in the ending of book one, however, a fact noted by Rumble, who states that ‘Malory is likely to have added Tristram’s name to the first *explicit* in deliberate anticipation of his later incorporation of the *Tristan* material’.⁸⁴ Malory is anticipating his own later use of the French *Tristan* as a source for ‘The Book of Sir Tristram De Lyones’, by doing so also anticipating later events in the *Morte*, the reverse of what Vinaver believes to be true.

The concept of narrative unity in Field and division in Vinaver is made further apparent by the presentation of the explicit at the end of the third ‘tale’, ‘Sir Launcelot Du Lake’ in Field, and ‘A Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot Du Lake’ in Vinaver. In Field, the explicit is presented as follows:

*Explicit a Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake.
Here folowyth Sir Garethis Tale of Orkeney
that was callyd Bewmaynes by Sir Kay*

⁸² See *Le Morte Darthur Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. by Stephen H.A. Shepherd (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2004), p. 112.

⁸³ *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. by Field, II, p. 243.

⁸⁴ Rumble, ‘The First Explicit’, p. 566.

Vinaver, conversely, gives only the first sentence, 'EXPLICIT... DU LAKE', as the explicit to 'A Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake'. He then presents the second sentence, beginning 'HERE FOLOWYTH', at the head of 'The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney'. In the manuscript, the presentation of the explicit is given with no division between the first sentence and the second. Vinaver deliberately turns away from the manuscript to follow his own judgement. Doing so supports his theory, but it is not supported by the manuscript. Indeed, by placing the second sentence at the head of 'The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney', coming directly after, as we have discussed, Vinaver's individual title page, which are included for every 'work' in his edition, only serves to reinforce the nature of structural division.

At the end of 'The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney' in Vinaver and 'Sir Gareth of Orkney' in Field, we find an even greater divergence in presentation when comparing the explicit and authorial colophon in Field and Vinaver:

Field

And so they helde the courte fourty dayes with grete solempnyté. And this Sir Gareth was a noble knyght, and a well rulyd and fayre langaged.

And thus endyth this tale of Sir Gareth of Orkeney, that wedded Dame Lyonesse of the Castell Perelus. (And also Sir Gaheris wedded her sistir, Dame Lynet, that was called the Damesell Saveaige, and Sir Aggravayne wedded Dame Lawrell, a fayre lady wyth grete and myghty londys, with grete ryches igyffyn wyth them by Kyng Arthure that ryally they myght lyve tyll their lyvis ende.)

And I pray you all that redyth this tale to pray for hym that this wrote, that God sende hym good delyveraunce sone and hastely. Amen.

Vinaver

And so they helde the courte fourty dayes with grete solempnyte. And thus sir Gareth of Orkeney was a noble knyght, that wedded dame Lyonesse of the Castell Parelus. And also sir Gaheris wedded her sistir, dame Lyonette, that was called the damesell Saveaige. And sir Aggravayne wedded dame Lawrell, a fayre lady with grete and myghty londys, with grete ryches igyffen with them, that ryally they myght lyve tyll their lyvis ende.

AND I PRAY YOU ALL THAT REDYTH THIS TALE TO PRAY FOR HYM
THAT THIS WROTE, THAT GOD SENDE HYM GOOD DELYVERAUNCE
SONE AND HASTELY. AMEN.

HERE ENDYTH THE TALE OF SIR GARETH OF ORKENEY.

My presentation here mirrors exactly what is found in the editions. Several things are worthy of comment here. First, Vinaver faithfully reproduces the text as it is given in the Winchester Manuscript, which means that the sentence beginning ‘HERE ENDYTH’ is in the wrong place. In the apparatus to his edition, Field convincingly shows that the explicit as it is given in the manuscript derives from a scribal mistake from which, attempting a correction, part of the explicit became mixed with the final authorial comment:

The most likely sequence of events is that, after copying *solempnyté*, W, which should have continued with *And this*, slipped by homoeoarchon to *And thus*, the beginning of the following sentence. [...] the scribe realised his mistake and [...] decided to move M’s explicit. He therefore went back to the previous sentence, copied enough of what followed *And this* to restore the appearance of sense, and skipped the rest of it. [...] He then picked up the wording of his copy-text, and followed it closely, as the agreement with C shows, to the end of M’s narrative afterthought. He then copied M’s plea to the

reader [...] and finally re-inserted M's explicit at the point where he wanted it. His changes may even be an improvement, but they are not what M wrote.⁸⁵

Vinaver's strict adherence to the manuscript would have precluded him from arriving at such a learned conclusion. More to the point, however, by failing to properly question, as does Field, the presentation of the explicit, Vinaver presents a concluding statement as an authorial comment. This is important, as Vinaver's entire theory of narrative division is primarily based on what the explicits and authorial colophons say. Unlike Field, he takes them entirely at face value, failing to assess their placement critically. As such, Vinaver fails to realise that the scribe has made a mistake and 'edited' the text to, as Field says (above), 'restore the appearance of sense'. While the explicit as it is presented by Field is not supported by the manuscript, it is the more authoritative because Field has restored the text to differentiate between narrative and authorial commentary.

Another example, which is perhaps the most divergent in presentation between the two editions, is found at the end of 'Sir Launcelot and Queen Guenivere' in Field.⁸⁶ In the *Works* Vinaver offsets only the final authorial remark, which includes a prayer, in French, for the author, for mercy, beginning 'And here on the othir syde', all in uppercase initials. An earlier authorial comment, which is obviously an explicit signalling the end of the tale, although the word explicit is not used here in the manuscript, is presented in the *Works* as narrative, with no distinction by the use of uppercase characters or italics. In Field, however, an entire paragraph, beginning 'And so I leve here of this tale' and ending 'and that caused Sir Aggravayne', is

⁸⁵ *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. by Field, II, p. 243.

⁸⁶ 'The Book of Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere' in Vinaver.

offset from the rest of the text by the use of italics and centre-text presentation. Another small but interesting difference between the presentation of the two is given as follows:

Field: *and here I go unto the Morte Arthur, and that caused Sir Aggravayne*

Vinaver: and here I go unto the morte Arthur, and that caused sir Aggravayne

The use of an uppercase initial for 'Morte' in Field contrasts with the omission of the uppercase initial in Vinaver. The context of this passage, which is an authorial comment, is that Malory is stating his intention to 'departe from the tale of sir Launcelot', his source for 'Launcelot and Guinevere', to move on to another source, which, for 'The Morte Arthur', would be either the Vulgate *Mort Artu* or the stanzaic *Morte Arthur*. The context of this passage is plain, and no other reading must have occurred to Vinaver. Why Field should give an uppercase character to 'Morte' where Vinaver does not is interesting to note, however. As a proper noun, an uppercase initial is appropriate, which Vinaver must have realised. Besides which Vinaver is very liberal with his use of uppercase initials in the *Works*. Every explicit and colophon, and even small headings throughout individual sections, are written entirely in uppercase characters. It is possible that Vinaver chose not to capitalise 'Morte' because the title of the source Malory is referring to, the 'Morte Arthur', resembles the title Vinaver was determined to avoid for his own edition: *Le Morte Darthur*. Indeed, in the final explicit for 'Launcelot and Guinevere', which in Field is presented as a second, shortened paragraph, offset from the rest of the text and in italics, whereas in Vinaver is the only portion of text that is offset from the primary narrative, both editors represent the title of the last 'tale' in slightly different ways:

Vinaver

AND HERE ON THE OTHIR SYDE FOLOWYTH *THE MOSTE PYTEOUS TALE OF THE MORTE ARTHURE SAUNZ GWERDON* PAR LE SHYVALERE SIR THOMAS MALLEORRÉ, KNYGHT.

Field

And here on the othir syde folowyth “The Moste Pyteuous Tale of the Morte Arthure saunz Gwerdon” par le Shyvalere Sir Thomas Malleorré, Knyght.

Field’s use of double quotation marks when read against Vinaver’s use of italics demonstrates the difference in their respective perceptions of unity in the *Morte*. Vinaver does not use italics in any of his explicits, preferring to set them apart with uppercase characters. His use of them here, however, is clearly intended to present the next tale as an independent book. Conversely, by using quotation marks, Field is marking the title as being *a* title, a component part of a wider narrative, rather than *the* title, an individual title to a separate book.

Vinaver has far more scope to put his theories into practice with the last explicit, found at the end of ‘The Morte Arthur’, as the pages wherein this is found are lost in the Winchester Manuscript, leaving only the Caxton edition as witness. Again, the differences in presentation of the explicit in the editions of Vinaver and Field are slight but significant:

Field

Here is the ende of The Hoole Book of Kyng Arthur and of His Noble Knyghtes of the Rounde Table, that whan they were holé togyders there was ever an hundred and fifty. And here is the ende of “Le Morte Darthur”

Vinaver

HERE IS THE ENDE OF THE HOOLE BOOK OF KYNG ARTHUR AND OF HIS NOBLE KNYGHTES OF THE ROUNDE TABLE, THAT WHAN THEY WERE HOLÉ TOGYDERS THERE WAS EVER AN HONDRED AND FORTY. AND HERE IS THE END OF *The Deth of Arthur*.

By using a mixture of roman and italic text in the presentation of the explicit, Field makes plain that the 'Hoole Book' is at an end. Vinaver thinks differently, however. As he writes to Lewis of the critical response to this passage, many of whom believed it to be a clear indication of narrative harmony:

Next came the critics who, looking at the passage, decided, quite naturally, that from Malory's point of view the 'book of King Arthur', [...] was the same as the 'Death of Arthur': that the words after the first *the ende of* were a description of the work of which the words after the second *the ende of* supplied the title. Hence, they concluded, Malory did give his romances one general title, and Caxton did not betray the author's intentions by saying in his own colophon: 'Thus endeth thys noble and Ioyous book entitled le morte Darthur.' There was clearly no harm in 'anglo-normanizing' *the death of*. Who can say, then, that Malory did not intend to write one book or that *Le Morte Darthur* is not its legitimate title?⁸⁷

It is for this reason that, for Vinaver, the 'hoole booke' ends with *The Deth of Arthur*. It is one end, of a single 'work', not *the* end, of the 'hoole booke', as it is in Field, who marks the final end clearly as that of 'Le Morte Darthur'.

⁸⁷ Vinaver, 'On Art and Nature', pp. 6-7.

In the same letter to Lewis referenced throughout this chapter, Vinaver rightly notes that ‘five of the eight colophons end with the word *Amen*’, which he considers to be the ‘medieval equivalent of THE END’.⁸⁸ Such a view directs Vinaver’s assumption that Malory himself is purposefully drawing each of his ‘tales’ to a definite close, that his intention, in fact, is to move on to the next book, which is self-contained. By reading *Amen* in this way, Vinaver fails to appreciate the biographical importance of these authorial colophons. Malory is referring directly to his experience of incarceration and asking his readers to ‘prayer’ for him that God might deliver him from prison. A specific Malory wrote these words, the same Malory presumably who was entitled to bear the coat of arms reconstructed by Field. This is the Malory who wrote the *Morte Darthur*. By recognising Malory’s exhortative *Amen* to be nothing more than indication of narrative finality, Vinaver is undermining not only Malory’s experience but also his rightful place in the text. These authorial prayers are definitive proof of the existence of *the Malory*, and yet rather than seeing them for their biographical importance, Vinaver views them only through the lens of his own theory. As such, Malory’s frequent and often sorrowful exhortation to his reader becomes nothing more than a narrative device, similar in function to a chapter heading. It is not Malory communicating directly to the reader his lived experience, but Malory communicating, simply, ‘the end’. A consideration that mutes the authorial presence in Vinaver’s edition.

V Vinaver and the Author: The Influence of Joseph Bédier

In a paper presented before the Modern Humanities Research Association in 1969 entitled ‘The Historical Method in the Study of Literature’, Vinaver recounted the events of an ‘important’ meeting that took place ‘in the spring of 1818’ between a ‘young German scholar’,

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 7.

Friedrich Diez (1794-1876), and the aged writer and statesman, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1876).⁸⁹ Having recently acquitted himself from his studies in law, Diez, then aged twenty-four, ‘went to see Goethe to ask advice about his future plans’.⁹⁰ Impressed by a work of translation, *Altspanische Romanzen*, recently published by Diez, Goethe suggested to him that he read Francois Raynouard’s two-volume work on the Troubadours, *Des troubadours et les cours d’amour* (1817): ‘He [Goethe] took a sheet of paper, wrote the title of Raynouard’s book on it, and gave it to Diez’.⁹¹ The outcome of this meeting between a young, burgeoning scholar and the pre-eminent writer of his age would have profound ramifications for the future of literary and historical criticism, a fact appropriately demonstrated in Vinaver’s decision to recount the story before a delegation from the MHRA; for this meeting represents, as Vinaver relates, ‘the real beginning of Romance studies if not of Modern Humanities as we understand them today’.⁹²

‘Throughout his life,’ remarks Vinaver, ‘Diez remembered his conversation with Goethe as the starting point of all his work.’⁹³ Diez’s reading of Raynouard’s work on the Troubadours inspired in him a commitment to undertake his own study of the Occitan tradition, culminating in the publication of his first work of criticism, *An Introduction to Romance Poetry*, in 1823, followed thereafter by two volumes engaging with the poetry and lives of the Troubadours.

⁸⁹ Eugène Vinaver, ‘The Historical Method in the Study of Literature’, in *Acta of the Jubilee Congress of the Modern Humanities Research Association* (Cambridge: MHRA, 1969); reprinted in Vinaver, *On Art and Nature and Other Essays*, pp. 1-13 (p. 13). All references to the latter.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 13.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 13.

⁹² *Ibid*, p. 14.

⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 14.

Frequently engaged in the ‘study of languages which had absorbed all his energies’, Diez soon adopted an alternative recourse for the study of comparative philology, one which was wholly distinct to that practiced by his contemporaries of Germanic philology.⁹⁴ Unlike Jacob Grimm (1785-1863) or Rasmus Rask (1787-1832), for instance, whose own philological endeavours were frequently tempered by the excesses of Romantic idealism, Diez set aside his juvenile appreciation of medieval Provençal literature in favour of a reading predicated upon the foundations of historical realism.⁹⁵ ‘His procedure’, as defined by Urban T. Holmes and Alexander H. Schutz, ‘meant doing away [...] with purely national viewpoints and with those considerations which proceeded from the notion of a “racial genius” and a “racial taste”’.⁹⁶ Diez believed in the power of *wissenschaft* (science) for the propagation of knowledge; the two works for which he is best known, *Grammar of the Romance Languages* (1836-1844) and the *Etymological Dictionary of the Romance Languages* (1853), sought to trace the ancestry of Romance languages with recourse to a specifically evidential model of comparative analysis from which general theories of etymological exchange (frequently, though not exclusively, concerned with Romantic notions of race and nationalism) were precluded by the application of empirical research.⁹⁷ Such a model placed in synthesis literary history, broadly defined as the

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 14.

⁹⁵ See Peter Hans Reill, ‘Philology, Culture, and Politics in Early 19th-Century Germany,’ *Romance Philology* 30 (1976), 18-30; also, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, “‘UnSouffle d’Allemagne ayant passe’”: Friedrich Diez, Gaston Paris, and the Genesis of National Philologies’, *Romance Philology* 40 (1986), 1037. See also, Yakov Malkiel, ‘Friedrich Diez and the Birth Pangs of Romance Philology’, *Romance Philology* 30 (1976), 1-15.

⁹⁶ Urban T. Holmes and Alexander H. Schutz, *A History of the French Language* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1938), p. 138.

⁹⁷ See, for instance, John M. Graham, ‘National Identity and the Politics of Publishing the Troubadours’, in *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*, ed. by R. Howard Bloch and Stephen

interpretation of texts with reference to historical evidence, and *wissenschaftlicher Grund* (scientific reasoning).⁹⁸ Though neither the historical nor the comparative treatment of Romance languages originated with Diez, he was the first to apply a combined comparative-historical approach (known otherwise as ‘*conscience romaniste*’), a fact which has led numerous critics to refer to him as the founder of Romance philology.⁹⁹

Why Vinaver chose to recount the story of Diez’s first meeting with Goethe before a delegation from the Modern Humanities Research Association was to introduce a question for which there are no easy answers, and upon which, in Vinaver’s view, the future of the humanities depended, namely: ‘Should literature be studied with reference to history, and if so, what sort of history should it be?’¹⁰⁰ Questions such as this were not new to the humanities. Rene Wellek, in 1949, famously questioned whether it was possible to write literary history, ‘that is, to write that which will be both literary and history’.¹⁰¹ Wellek thought not. His proclamation for the ‘fall of literary history’ was less a call for its ‘death’, as some critics have interpreted it to be, and more a call to neutralise the absolutism of literary history (the predominant model of literary interpretation for over a century) by combining it with the results

G. Nichols (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 57-95; also, Gumbrecht, ‘Friedrich Diez, Gaston Paris, and the Genesis of National Philologies’.

⁹⁸ For a comprehensive definition of the meaning of the term ‘literary history’, see Wendell V. Harris, ‘What is Literary “History”’, *College English* 56 (1994), 434-51; also, *The Uses of Literary History*, ed. by Marshall Brown (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995).

⁹⁹ Natalya I. Stolova, *Cognitive Linguistics and Lexical Change: Motion Verbs from Latin to Romance* (Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2015), p. 8.

¹⁰⁰ Vinaver, ‘The Historical Method’, p. 15.

¹⁰¹ Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949), p. 263.

from both literary theory and through an interrogation of former works of criticism.¹⁰² Wellek's book, *Theory of Literature*, co-authored with Austin Warren, expounded a radical shift in the conceptualisation of literary criticism by arguing that extrinsic models of interpretation (environmental, historical, or biographical factors, for instance) should be disregarded in favour of an intrinsic approach, emphasising the internal logic of the literary object.¹⁰³ Such a supposition called into question over a century of critical practice (beginning, arguably, with Diez) through the suggestion that literature should be analysed specifically for what it is rather than from where it came: its origins, antecedents, environment, etc. Cleanth Brooks summarised the situation succinctly in his influential article, 'Literary History vs. Criticism', when he bemoaned the absence of sufficient training within the humanities in methods other than the purely historical.¹⁰⁴ For Brooks, 'the inner structure of a great deal of literature is not obvious; and it does not come of itself from a study of literary history'.¹⁰⁵ By 'inner structure' he was referring to the question of *what* literature is, answerable in the first instance with recourse to the text itself, rather than *how* or *why* it came into being. Unlike Wellek, Brooks did not discredit the usefulness of literary history (on the contrary, he admitted that it can scarcely be avoided 'if we are to read literature of the past at all') but, rather, that literary history is often produced at the cost of alternative critical approaches.¹⁰⁶ Put simply, he states, 'The average English professor [...] does not know how to *read*':

¹⁰² Rene Wellek, 'The Fall of Literary History,' in *The Attack on Literature and Other Essays*, ed. by Rene Wellek (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), pp. 64-77.

¹⁰³ Wellek and Warren, *Theory of Literature* (1949); see esp. chapter XIX, 'Literary History', pp. 263-85.

¹⁰⁴ Cleanth Brooks, Jr., 'Literary History vs. Criticism', *The Kenyon Review* 2 (1940), 403-12.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 405.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p. 406.

He has been trained [...] in linguistics and the history of literature. He possesses a great deal of information, valuable and interesting in its own right, and of incalculable value for the critic. But he himself is not that critic. He has little or no knowledge of the inner structure of a poem or a drama [...]; he is ignorant of its architecture [...]¹⁰⁷

Consequently, the ‘uncritical pursuit of facts’ became, for Brooks (and, more broadly, for the humanities) just that: ‘uncritical’. ‘If the profession lacks an interest in literature as literature, they may become blind alleys,’ he concludes.¹⁰⁸ That Vinaver’s address before the MHRA came some three decades after the publication of Brooks’ article shows that the question (or, as J.M. Cameron would term it, the ‘problem’) of literary history was far from being resolved.¹⁰⁹

But what was the problem? For Vinaver, it arose primarily out of the parameters by which scholars defined, and by so doing justified, their application of the historical method to the study of literature; and it was a problem which, as Brooks so cogently argued thirty years earlier, defied traditional attempts to assert an overarching meaning to the term ‘literary history’. Thus, for Vinaver:

there is a curious semantic anomaly in the use of the term “literary history”. When we talk about the history of science, or of philosophy, or of political thought, [...] the historical method consists in examining each of these things historically – in studying

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 405.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 412.

¹⁰⁹ J.M. Cameron, ‘Problems of Literary History,’ *New Literary History* 1 (1969), 7-20.

science, philosophy, political thought or economic structures in their evolution, and the first condition of such a study is, of course, some knowledge and understanding of what these things are. When it comes to literature, however, the method is applied not to the essentials of literature, but to its background, its antecedents and its influence; it is focused not on what literature is, but on what it has developed from or into; not on the history of literature itself, but on the history of things to which it is supposed to be related. Is this not the narrowing, not to say a distortion, of the very concept of history?¹¹⁰

The anomaly of which Vinaver is speaking is based on the assumption that the term ‘literary history’ automatically implies a causal relationship between literature on the one hand and history on the other. Brooks argued that literature cannot be taught in a vacuum, and in the absence of alternative, theoretical models for the study of literature, history became the default position by which scholars approached the literary object. Such a position in turn failed to take into account literature as an ontologically distinct entity. As Vinaver expounds, we would not apply the historical method to the study of philosophy without first being in possession of ‘some knowledge and understanding’ of what philosophy is in the first place.¹¹¹ To literature, however,

¹¹⁰ Here, Vinaver chooses not to base his position on any single school of thought. By his own admission, he was ‘uncommitted’ to either the intrinsic or extrinsic approaches to literary criticism which had dominated the discipline since the publication of Wellek and Warren’s aforementioned *Theory of Literature* in 1949. By adopting an intermediate position, Vinaver was better able to particularize the ontological distinction between the adjective *literary* and the substantive *history*, thus drawing attention to the composite nature inferred by the use of the term ‘literary history’. See Vinaver, ‘The Historical Method,’ p. 15 and 16. For a comprehensive overview of the meaning of the term ‘history’ in literary history, see Wendell V. Harris, ‘What is Literary “History?”’, *College English* 56 (1994), 434-51.

¹¹¹ Vinaver, ‘The Historical Method’, p. 17.

the historical method is applied freely and without considering the implications the term 'literary' has when it is placed in synthesis with 'history'. History informs the scholars' understanding of literature, but to what end? What use is evidence in the absence of interpretation? To write literary history, 'that is, to write that which will be both literary and history' as Wellek attests, foremost implies an acknowledgement on behalf of the practitioner of the meaning of the term 'literary'. But as we have already seen, this was not so: 'the average English professor' did not possess the training to discern the 'literary' and thus the interpretational aspect of literature. To define literary history, therefore, required, what Wendall V. Harris termed, 'a simple exercise in desynonymization': scholars of English literature must engage with the history of their profession if they are to furnish (and broaden) their 'knowledge and understanding' of the meaning of the terms 'literary' and 'history'.¹¹²

How appropriate, then, that Vinaver should open his address before the Modern Humanities Research Association with the story of Diez's first meeting with Goethe, a meeting which he clearly considers to be the origin story for the founding of the modern humanities. 'Diez was the founder of it all', he pronounces:

It was he who taught Adolf Tobler and later became the acknowledged master of Gaston Paris – the spiritual grandfather of many of us who have received our inspiration from his pupils. How stimulating, and how strange, it is to think that in the last analysis it all began with Goethe – that something that happened so few generations ago in the mind of the greatest man of his time gave the first decisive impulse to our pursuit and determined, in a deeper sense than most of us realize, everything we now stand for.¹¹³

¹¹² Harris, 'What is "Literary History?"', p. 436.

¹¹³ Vinaver, 'The Historical Method', pp. 13-14.

The significance of this remark is twofold: on the surface, Vinaver is encouraging his audience to consider the history of their profession as the source of the problem that lies before them. So ‘immense’ and so divisive has the problem of literary history been to the modern humanities, and so focused were scholars in choosing which side of the parapet they stood (i.e., extrinsic/intrinsic; literary history vs. literary criticism, for instance) that they rarely considered the problem in light of their own shared history. Had they done so, they would have realised that the task they had set their mind to since the founding of the Modern Humanities Research Association in 1918 (‘exactly a century after Diez’s visit to Goethe’) was akin to the same task Goethe set Diez in the previous century.¹¹⁴ ‘What was that task?’ asked Vinaver: ‘For Diez, literary history meant the rediscovery and the study of texts, the effort to understand them, *to interpret correctly their meaning*; for Goethe something else was no doubt involved: the study of the poetic genius in all its diversity and in its evolution.’¹¹⁵ Both approaches seem to Vinaver to imply some level of basic interpretative analysis, but where they differ is in the extent to which such an interpretation requires an overtly *critical*, rather than simply *historical*, motivation. The phrase ‘to interpret correctly their meaning’, for instance, supposes that meaning can be reduced to a single, corroborated definition. What is a correct interpretation? If it were correct, would it not therefore become fact, thus nullifying the function of an interpretative approach?

At a deeper level, Vinaver’s address before the MHRA is also a reminder of the power its members exert, at a collective and individual level, over the future direction the humanities take. Just as Goethe’s influence was crucial to the shaping of a young Diez, so too was Diez’s influence apparent in the later work of scholars such as Gaston Paris and Alfred Tobler (both

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 15.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p. 14. The emphasis is mine.

of whom would themselves prove influential to the establishment of medieval studies as an academic discipline); and thus, so too is it equally important to consider how the decisions made in one generation can influence, sometimes irrevocably, the motives and aspirations of the next.

This brings me to the purpose of the final part of this chapter, which is to consider the influence a single scholar, Joseph Bédier (1864-1938) had on the development of his student Eugène Vinaver's concept of the author. Recent research into the publication history of Vinaver's edition of the *Morte* has revealed a good deal of previously unexamined material which sheds new light on the methodological, the editorial, and the personal processes which led to the publication of the *Works* in 1947.¹¹⁶ One area which has received only scant critical attention, however, is the professional relationship between Vinaver and his mentor, Joseph Bédier. To date, scholars have focused largely on Vinaver's adoption of the Bédierist principle of best-text in the creation of his edition of Malory, while showing little concern for the epistemological and cultural differences which defined each scholars' respective careers, particularly with their regard to the role of the author. As Stephen G. Nichols has recently asserted: Bédier and Vinaver cultivated different aspects of medieval literature and embodied different epistemological moments: Bédier, the positivism of the second half of the nineteenth-century, Vinaver, a syncretic phenomenology that emerged in Paris in the 1920s'.¹¹⁷ Vinaver's unique cultural background as a Russian émigré, and his consequent separation from the French

¹¹⁶ See, for instance, Edwards, 'Editing Malory'; Samantha Rayner, 'The Case of the "Curious Document": Malory, William Matthews, and Eugène Vinaver', *Journal of the International Arthurian Society* 3 (2015), 120-38; Toshiyuki Takamiya, 'Behind the Scenes of Vinaver's *Works of Thomas Malory*', *Journal of the International Arthurian Society* 4 (2014), 135-56.

¹¹⁷ Stephen G. Nichols, 'Counter-Figural Topics: Theorizing Romance with Eugene Vinaver and Eugene Vance', *MLN*, 127 (2012), 174-216 (p. 178).

academic establishment, led to his rejection of Bédier's nationalism in favour of a syncretic approach which emphasized historical relativism as a primary factor in the development of a critical edition. Both scholars demonstrated an uncommon interest in recognizing the autonomy of the medieval author as crucial to their understanding of the stylistic and aesthetic details intrinsic to medieval texts.¹¹⁸ Where Bédier sought to uncover the truth behind the author (his name '*en toutes lettres et syllables, son pays, sa condition, etc* [in all letters and syllables; his country; his condition]') Vinaver disregarded the information attained from biographical contextualization as unjustifiably focused on the genesis, rather than the essence, of the text.¹¹⁹ Vinaver's frequent remonstrations against the biographical Malory, for instance, that is, against the figure of the writer as he was (the man), in favour of an interpretative Malory whose artistic style circumscribed the author of the *Morte* to the boundaries of *what is* as opposed to the then conventional *what was*, followed a Proustian logic which emphasized the 'unbridgeable' gap between the 'man and his work'.¹²⁰ For Bédier, '*Un chef-d'oeuvre commence à son auteur et finit à lui* [A masterpiece begins with its author and ends with him]'.¹²¹ For Vinaver, however, it was in '*the nature of the object*' that the critic should primarily concern himself, asking not 'where it came from' and 'how was it made', but appreciating instead that the principal task of

¹¹⁸ Letter: Eugène Vinaver to John Steinbeck, July 6, 1959; for the full transcription, see Pamela M. Yee, 'Eugène Vinaver's Magnificent Malory: Exhibit Guide', Rossell Hope Robbins Library Exhibit, 2013: <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/text/yee-eugene-vinavers-magnificent-malory-exhibit-guide>.

¹¹⁹ Joseph Bédier, *Les Légendes épiques: Recherches sur la formation des Chanson de Geste*, 4 vols (Paris: Libraire Honoré Champion, éditeur, 1914), III, p. 450.

¹²⁰ Vinaver, 'The Historical Method', p. 29.

¹²¹ Bédier, *Légendes*, III, p. 450.

the literary historian, ‘one task that is worthy of a lifetime’s effort’, was in ‘the recognition of living and changing *values* in what man has thought, said and done’.¹²²

We have already seen in this chapter the negative reaction Vinaver had, found often in his published criticism, towards the subject of biographical criticism. We have seen, too, how the figure of the author is undermined by that of the editor in the *mise-en-page* to Vinaver’s edition. In the final part of this chapter, I want to explore a possible explanation for why Vinaver viewed Malory’s biography in such a negative light. I argue that the overtly nationalistic tendencies of his doctoral supervisor and mentor, Bédier, who appreciated literary biography only insofar that it supported his desire for a native (French) author from which the text could truly be called French, differ considerably from the Vinaver’s views, and may have influenced his own attitude towards biographical details of Malory’s life. Vinaver cared only for what the author had done, not who he was, displaying none of the nativist prejudice of his mentor. In focusing on the influence exerted over Vinaver by Bédier, I hope to strengthen the argument I have been making in this chapter that Vinaver’s idea of the author is wholly based in the abstract. This therefore explains, perhaps, why the figure of the author is largely absent from his edition.

A good place to begin would be to outline the received differences between Vinaver and Bédier’s respective conception of the medieval author, and here the recent argument made by Nichols is important. While Bédier partially succeeded in rehabilitating medieval literature from the primitivism of nineteenth-century Romanticism, Nichols has persuasively argued that, rather than ‘alter the primitivist assessment’, he simply shifted ‘responsibility for the creative process away from “the people” to some more remote power’.¹²³ Bédier’s predecessors in the field of French medieval studies rejected the autonomy of the medieval poet in place of a

¹²² Vinaver, ‘The Historical Method,’ p. 29.

¹²³ Nichols, ‘Counter-Figural Topics’, p. 179.

collective, national voice (“the people”) intended to foster a sense of national pride in response to the conflicts that had arisen in nineteenth-century France. Ernest Renan, for example, expressed his distaste for referring to a text such as the *Chanson de Roland* as the product of a single authority, writing:

En vérité j'en serais fâché, parce qu'alors on dirait très positivement *l'Iliade* d'Homère, le *Roland* de Tuold, etc... Ce qui serait surtout très insupportable si ces poèmes étaient parfaitement délimités, et qu'on pût dire : « Tuold composa telle année un poème de quatre mille vers ». Alors on attribuerait ces poèmes à un homme, et cet homme y a été pour si peu ! Ce serait une fausseté historique. C'est l'esprit de la nation, son génie, si l'on veut, qui est le véritable auteur. Le poète n'est que l'écho harmonieux, je dirais presque le scribe qui écrit sous la dictée du peuple, qui lui raconte de toutes parts ses beaux rêves.¹²⁴

Bédier disagreed, however: his response to Renan, published in his *Les Légendes épiques*, demonstrates Bédier's singulative position with regard to the autonomy of the medieval poet:

¹²⁴ [In truth, I would be annoyed, because then we could actually say, in a rather positive fashion, Homer's *Iliad*, Tuold's *Roland*, etc. What would be particularly unbearable is if these poems were perfectly delimited, and it could be said: "Tuold composed a poem of four thousand verses, then we would attribute these poems to a man, and this man was there for so little! It would be a historical falsehood. It is the spirit of the nation, its genius, if you like, who is the true author. The poet is only the harmonious echo. I would almost say scribe who writes under the dictation of the people, who tell him on all sides of his beautiful dreams.] Ernest Renan, *L'avenir de la science* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, éditeur; Ancienne Maison Michel Lévy Frères, 1890). Also quoted in Bédier, *Légendes*, III, p. 449 (my translation).

Je dirai au contraire : j'aimerais savoir le nom de l'auteur de la Chanson de Roland, en toutes lettres et syllabes, son pays, sa condition, etc..., comme j'aimerais en savoir toujours plus long de la vie de Racine, et pour les mêmes raisons.¹²⁵

Bédier implored his reader not to fall into ‘les theories qui veulent partout metre des forces collectives, inconscientes, anonymes, à la place de l’individu’, [theories that want everywhere to put collective, unconscious, anonymous forces in place of the author] adding: ‘Un chef-d’oeuvre commence à son auteur et finit à lui [A masterpiece begins at its author and finishes with him].’¹²⁶ When writing about *La chanson de Roland*, in the third volume of *Les Légendes épiques*, for instance, Bédier, as Alain Corbellari has noted, ‘*exaltait le genie createur de l’auteur la chanson de Roland*’ [exalted the creative genius of the author of the *Chanson de Roland*] in support of his theory that the *Roland* was a purely French poem, written by a ‘*Franc du France*’, for, not by, the people of France.¹²⁷ By rejecting the concept of a collective authorship for the *Chanson de Roland*, Bédier sought to rehabilitate the poem from the mid-nineteenth-century theories which asserted a Germanic influence over the genesis of the poem.

¹²⁵ [I would say on the contrary: I would like to know the name of the author of the *Chanson de Roland*, in all letters and syllables, his country, his education, etc., as I would like to know always more of the life of Racine, and for the same reasons.] Bédier, *Légendes*, III, p. 450 (my translation).

¹²⁶ Bédier, *Légendes*, III, p. 450 (my translation)

¹²⁷ Corbellari, ‘Regardes croises sur Bedier et l’épistémologie des sciences humaines en France au xx siècle,’ in *Romanische Philologie als Herausforderung / Les defies des etudes romanes*, ed. by Willy Jung and Grazyna Bosy (Bonn: V&R Unipress, 2009), pp. 47-63; reprinted in Corbellari, *Le Philologue et son double: Études de réception médiévale* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2014), pp.187-204, p. 191. (my translation). See also, Isabel Divanna, *Reconstructing the Middle Ages: Gaston Paris and the Development of Nineteenth-Century Medievalism* (Cambridge: Scholars Press, 2008), p. 80.

To do this, however, Bédier needed first to establish a verifiable figure to whom the *Roland* could be attributed. As Michelle Warren has argued, ‘the original French author [of the *Roland*] guarantees basic unity’.¹²⁸ Bédier’s defence of the oldest manuscript of the *Roland*, Oxford University, Bodleian Library, Digby MS 23, for instance, was in large part also a defence of its author, Tuold. As Corbellari observes:

Bédier [...] se pose en revanche en première ligne parmi les défenseurs de l’auteur de la *Chanson de Roland* (Tuold, ou quelle que soit son nom); son idée que le texte du plus ancien manuscrit conserve, celui d’Oxford, sans être celui de l’original’, a l’authentique dignité d’une version parfaitement autonome, fait de l’acte d’écriture qui lui a donné naissance une revendication qui excède infiniment le domaine du littéraire.¹²⁹

Bédier did not deny that an older *Chanson de Roland* may have existed, ‘*différente et plus fruste*’ [different and more unclean] and that an oral, collective version likely anteceded the

¹²⁸ Michelle R. Warren, *Creole Medievalism: Colonial France and Joseph Bédier’s Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. 152.

¹²⁹ [Bédier [...] is on the other hand first in line among the defenders of the author of the song of Roland [...]; his idea that the text of the oldest manuscript retains that of Oxford without being that of the ‘original’, has the authentic dignity of a perfectly autonomous version, made of the act of writing which gave it a claim which infinitely excels the field of literature]. Alain Corbellari, ‘Le Repos des clercs et la Trahison du guerrier’, in *L’Histoire dans la littérature*, ed. by Laurent Adert and Eric Eigenmann (Geneve: Droz, 2000), pp. 19-27; reprinted in Corbellari, *Le Philologue et son double: Études de réception médiévale* (Paris: Classique Garnier, 2014), pp. 127-36, p. 135.

Oxford manuscript.¹³⁰ But it was only when the poet, Turolde, endeavoured to recount the story that it came into existence as more than a legend:

Une minute a suffi, la minute sacrée où le poète, exploitant peut-être quelque fruste roman, ébauche grossière du sujet, a conçu l'idée du conflit de Roland et d'Olivier. Seulement, ayant conçu cette idée, pour la mettre en oeuvre, et, je ne crains pas le mot, pour l'exploiter, il ne s'est pas contenté de « chanter » ; il lui a fallu se mettre à sa table de travail, des combinaisons, des effets des romes, calculer, combiner, raturer, peiner.¹³¹

For Bédier the *Roland* was, *pace* Renan, Turolde's *Roland* – '*le Roland de Turolde*'. It was enough for Bédier to know that an author had existed, to realise that '*il n'y pas d'autre théorie vraie pur rendre compte des ouvrages de l'esprit*' ['there is no other true theory to account for the works of the mind'] other than '*le don gratuit et magnifique que nous a fait cet homme, non pas une legion d'hommes*' [the free and magnificent gift that this man made us, not a legion of men].¹³²

¹³⁰ Bédier, *Légendes*, III, p. 446-47; see also, Corbellari, 'Regardes croises sur Bedier et l'epistemologie...', p. 191.

¹³¹ [One minute sufficed, the sacred moment when the poet, exploiting perhaps some crude novel, or rough draft of the subject, conceived the idea of the conflict of Roland and Olivier. Only, having conceived this idea, to implement it, and, I do not fear the word, to exploit it, he did not content himself with "singing"; he had to put himself at his work-table: seek combinations, effects, romances; calculate, combine, remove, and toil.] Joseph Bédier, *Les Légendes épiques: Recherches sur la formation des Chanson de Geste*, 4 vols (Paris: Libraire Honoré Champion, éditeur, 1914), III, p. 448.

¹³² Bédier, *Légendes*, III, p. 449.

However, it has been noted by critics such as William Kibler that Bédier's 'probity had its limitations, as it caused him to reject what he could not himself examine and control'.¹³³ Bédier read medieval romances outside of their historical context, preferring instead to apply a universalist doctrine which led to the application of modern, theoretical approaches to medieval texts with little to no regard for whether the approach fit with the text or, indeed, the historical period in which it was composed. As Nichols has written about Bédier's method: 'he had no hesitation in attributing to poets of the twelfth century an abstruse rhetoric no older than the seventeenth'.¹³⁴ For Bédier, Tuold's *Roland* could be read in much the same way as Racine's *Iphigénie*. Both originated with the author, even if they were based on earlier sources. Both belonged to a native (French) tradition of literary creation, and both could be institutionally accredited as members of the French literary canon – because, not in spite, of the author. Wanting to discover 'always more about the name of the author', Bédier, as Hans Aarsleff has observed, rejected evidence-based approaches, such as the scientific-positivism of his mentor, Gaston Paris in place of the 'non-objective portion of scholarship': the ideology.¹³⁵ Bédier was an ideologue, and as such his conception of the author was itself ideologically motivated by his

¹³³ William W. Kibler, 'Joseph Bédier, 1864-1938', in *Medieval Scholarship: Biographical Studies on the Formation of a Discipline*, ed. by Helen Damico (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 253-67 (p. 255).

¹³⁴ Nichols, 'Counter-Figural Topics', p. 180.

¹³⁵ For an account of Bédier's relationship with Gaston Paris, see Per Nykrog, 'A Warrior Scholar at the College de France: Joseph Bédier', in *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*, ed. by R. Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 286-308. See also, Hans Aarsleff, 'Scholarship and Ideology: Joseph Bédier's Critique of Romance Medievalism', in *Historical Studies and Literary Criticism*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 93-114 (p. 93).

overwhelming belief in the hegemony of French literature, past and present. Bédier sought answers to questions only he had initially entreated. Who was the author? mattered little where a belief in the author (that is, in the medieval poet) was minimal. By rejecting the primitive ideology of his forebears, however, Bédier could advance his own ideological agenda by establishing an alternative means of classifying medieval literature – one which promoted individualism over collectivism.

However, Bédier's scholarship was no less 'primitive' than that of the Romantics, as Nichols observes (above). His advocacy for the medieval poet was less an acceptance of the historical figure of the writer as he existed than it was an implicit recognition of the singular nature of literary creation. Vinaver, as Nichols observes, realised this, and he attempted through his own learning to expose Bédier's ideological agenda as contrary to the acceptance of the individual author:

Elegantly but inexorably, Vinaver exposes Bédier's thundering assertion of individualism – *la chanson de Roland est, parce qu'un homme fut!* He sees it for what it is: namely, the belief in an Orphic power. In short, it's not gifted poets we find in the Middle Ages so much as seers imbued with vatic authority. [...] Contrary to what one might believe from Bédier's insistent iteration of the term "individual", poetry was not "personal" at all. The poet, or *l'homme*, for Bédier, is less a person in our sense of the term than "a force greater than any individual human".¹³⁶

Convinced as he was by the individual genius of the medieval poet, Bédier, nevertheless,

¹³⁶ Nichols, p. 179.

whether consciously or unconsciously, rejected the living poet (the man) as antithetical to the tenets of Orphic creation. This approach was further enhanced by Bédier's rejection 'of what he could not himself examine and control'; as Kibler posits:

He [Bédier] distrusted comparatist theories and methodologies, and his passionate nationalism led him to reject non-French sources in favour of indigenous ones. His training was belle-lettristic; he was uncomfortable with philosophy and theology, and even with sociology and history. [...] He sought purely literary solutions to what he perceived as purely literary problems and felt that the study of medieval institutions, history, or art, were best left to others more qualified than himself.¹³⁷

Bédier made no attempt to place the *Roland* within its historical context. He was interested in the genesis, not the historicity, of the story. Indeed, to have contextualised the *Roland* might have revealed uncomfortable truths for Bédier – that the source was other than French, for instance. The name of the author of the *Roland* gave Bédier the only verification he required to assert his own Orphic belief in a higher, authorial power. This approach was not unique to the *Roland*, however. Vinaver finds in Bédier's scholarship on the *Roman du Tristan*¹³⁸ a similar advocacy for 'vatic authority', writing:

¹³⁷ Kibler, p. 255.

¹³⁸ For a bibliographic introduction to Bédier's edition of the *Tristan*, see the prologue to Edward J. Gallagher's revised edition: Joseph Bédier, *The Romance of Tristan and Iseult*, ed. by Edward J. Gallagher (Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 2013). See also, Edward J. Gallagher, "'This to you ought to Read': Bédier's Roman de Tristan et Iseult", in *Tristan and Isolde: A Casebook*, ed. by Joan Tasker Grimbert (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 425-51.

Bédier n'aimait pas les formules. Il y en a une pourtant qui est bien de lui, et que pour rien au monde il n'aurait désavouée. Évoquant le « beau spectacle » de l'homme qui crée une oeuvre nouvelle, autonome, volontaire — le roman de Tristan, — il dit : « La question n'est pas si ce spectacle est, ou non, sentimentalement, le plus beau. Il est le plus beau s'il est le plus vrai. » Nul doute que cette équation ne répondît chez lui à un sentiment profond. Pour qu'un fait établi ou suppose par l'historien et le philologue, fût-ce la leçon d'un manuscrit ou la structure d'un poème, rejoignît le domaine du beau, il fallait, pensait-il, que sa vérité devînt manifeste, irrécusable.¹³⁹

The search for truth as an expression of beauty was the only formula Bédier followed in relation to his comprehensive engagement with the *Roland* and the *Tristan*.¹⁴⁰ Both could be

¹³⁹ [Bédier did not like formulas. There is, however, one which is well [placed] with him, and which for nothing in the world he would have disavowed. Evoking the “beautiful spectacle” of the man who creates a new, autonomous, voluntary work – *Le Roman de Tristan* – he says: “The question is not whether this spectacle is, or is not, the most beautiful. It is the most beautiful if it is the most true.” There is no doubt that this equation did not correspond to a profound feeling. For a fact established or assumed by the historian and the philologist, even if it were the lesson of a manuscript or the structure of a poem, joined the domain of the beautiful; [and] it was necessary, he thought, that this truth should become manifest, irrefutable.] Vinaver, ‘A la recherche d’une poétique médiévale’, *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 2 (1959), 1-16 (p. 8.)

¹⁴⁰ Corbellari would note that ‘Bédier used his talents in the service of truth, but never to the detriment of art, this form that he venerated like a true a classical writer,’ an argument more recently supported by Nichols, who argues that ‘Bédier turns out to want to put medieval literature on the same footing as French classicism, totally ignoring, in the same way, medieval history and poetics’. See Corbellari, ‘Joseph Bédier, Philologist and Writer,’ in *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*, ed. by R. Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 269-85, p. 270; and also, Nichols, ‘Counter-Figural Topics’, p. 181.

attributed to a single, ‘beautiful spectacle’: Tuold and Beroul, respectively; and it was for the philologist to accept as truth the ‘irrefutable’ fact of authorship assumed by evidence derived from the manuscript tradition. This Bédier did. But rather than follow his own advice, ‘to know where to draw the line that marks the limit of our capacity to know’, he assumed an ideological position which ventured beyond the limits of evidence-based scholarship to focus instead on his own subjective handling of medieval French poetry.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, by engaging directly with the question of authorship rather than deferring the matter to the same collective theories promulgated by his Romantic predecessors, Bédier set a precedent for future scholars to, on the one hand, conceptualise the medieval poet in accordance with their own ideological approach, and on the other, to react against the very ideals that had contributed to Bédier’s vast, and revolutionary, contribution to the field of French medieval studies.

Vinaver’s conception of the author was influenced by, but ultimately differed from, Bédier’s. Having received his training at the Ecole pratique des hautes études, where he was a disciple of Bédier, under whom he completed his doctorate on Malory’s adaptation of the French Prose *Tristan*, with a subsidiary thesis on the sources of the Prose *Tristan*, Vinaver would on two occasions express a direct appreciation for Bédier’s learning: in the concise *Hommage à Bédier*, published shortly after Bédier’s death, in 1942, and latterly in his 1959 article, ‘A la recherche d’une poétique médiévale’ (quoted above).¹⁴² In a *festschrift* presented to Vinaver on his sixty-sixth birthday, F.E. Sutcliffe referred to the *Hommage* as indicative of ‘the nature of the influence that his teacher exerted upon him’, adding: ‘It was the combination in Bédier of genuine aesthetic feeling with accurate scholarship [...] that he [Vinaver] found so

¹⁴¹ Aarsleff, p. 107.

¹⁴² Vinaver, *Hommage à Bédier* (Manchester: Editions du Calame, 1942).

attractive'.¹⁴³ Of particular note is Vinaver's recognition in the *Hommages* of Bédier's unparalleled respect for, and acknowledgement of, the medieval poet:

C'est ainsi que fut restitué à la France, non seulement le roman de Tristan, mais aussi et surtout le poète de Tristan, ce poète méconnu dont l'oeuvre, réduite par les hasards de la transmission à quelques fragments, avait été disséquée et anéantie par les critiques du siècle dernier. Pour la ressusciter, pour en retrouver le principe vital, il ne suffisait pas de dépouiller les textes : il fallait aussi les comprendre, les aimer, et les revivre; il fallait savoir interpréter la mission d'un philologue comme une tâche poétique, au sens le plus large et le plus élevé du mot.¹⁴⁴

Vinaver, as Nichols maintains, 'helps us to see the immense service Bédier rendered to medieval studies by freeing its literature from the confines of primitive folklore'.¹⁴⁵ On Bédier's *Légende épiques*, for instance, Vinaver commented, 'it is designed to prove that we are dealing in both cases with individual artists, with poetic creation in the true sense of the word, and not

¹⁴³ See the Prologue to *Medieval Miscellany Presented to Eugene Vinaver by Pupils, Colleagues, and Friends*, ed. by F. Whitehead, A.H. Diverres, and F.E. Sutcliffe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1965), p. 8.

¹⁴⁴ [Thus was restored to France, not only Tristan's romance, but also and above all the poet of Tristan, this poet known to us from the work, reduced by chances of the transmission to some fragments, had been dissected and annihilated by critics of the last century. To resuscitate it, to find its vital principle, it was not enough to cleanse the texts; it was also necessary to understand them, to love them, and to revive them; it was necessary to know how to interpret the mission of a philologist as a poetic task, in the broadest and most important sense of the word]. Vinaver, *Hommages*, p. 20; see also, William J. Entwistle, 'Review of *Hommage a Bédier*, by E. Vinaver,' *The Modern Language Review*, 38 (1943), 260-61.

¹⁴⁵ Nichols, p. 181.

with a collective effort of a multitude of poets'.¹⁴⁶ Loyalty to Bédier, however, did not prevent Vinaver from questioning (and, ultimately, rejecting) a number of Bédier's most important theories. In the conclusion to Vinaver's 1959 article, '*À la recherche d'une poétique médiévale*', for instance, Vinaver simultaneously praised Bédier for his idealistic approach to reading medieval texts, while also attacking his universalist position as unjustifiably focused on an absolutist assessment of medieval literature which did not take into account the facts obtained from an historically centered approach:

«Si nous pouvons progresser vers une connaissance adéquate du passé, ce ne sera pas en nous haussant au point de vue d'un observateur absolu qui croit dominer tous les temps et, en cela même, les ignore, mais au contraire, en éprouvant toujours mieux que cette conviction même a sa date, que l'idée même d'un univers de vérité est trompeuse, et en percevant par contraste ce que le passé a été pour lui-même. » Ce n'est point ainsi que parlait Bédier, fidéiste qui croyait à l'idée d'un univers de vérité et qui eût difficilement admis qu'une conviction eût sa date. N'empêche que si aujourd'hui nous pouvons entrevoir un monde autre que le sien, c'est à lui que nous en devons la première révélation. D'autres nous ont enseigné le respect des textes et des faits, le mépris des idées préconçues, l'horreur de l'à-peu-près ; lui seul nous a appris qu'au-delà des textes et des faits, cachées au regard du lecteur profane ou irrespectueux, il y a des valeurs dont le destin est d'être uniques, irremplaçables. Nous ne les voyons plus sous même jour ni dans la même perspective : nous nous cherchons à les situer dans une dimension historique encore interdite à son esprit, dans un mouvement créateur qu'il ne soupçonnait

¹⁴⁶ Eugène Vinaver, 'Form and Meaning in Medieval Romance,' *The Presidential Address of the Modern Humanities Research Association* (MHRA: Cambridge, 1966).

pas. L'essentiel, c'est que nous les voyions, et s'il nous est donné de les voir, c'est grâce à sa vision propre. Notre plus grand privilège n'est pas de renier ce que son oeuvre eut d'éphémère, mais de l'avoir cultivée, d'en être partis, et de retrouver sur le chemin qui s'offre à nous la trace lumineuse de sa pensée.¹⁴⁷

Where Bédier sought 'purely literary solutions' to perceived 'literary problems', rejecting historical contextualisation in the process, Vinaver approached literary analysis from a multidisciplinary perspective, favouring a comparative methodology which was neither nationalist *a la* Bédier or contingent to any easily definable ideology.¹⁴⁸ Vinaver deplored the concept of a 'disembodied poetic force' as the very opposite of individualism.¹⁴⁹ He accepted

¹⁴⁷ [If we can advance towards an adequate knowledge of the past, it will not be by raising us from the point of view of an absolute observer who believes himself to dominate all times, and, in this very fact, ignores them, but on the contrary, by experiencing always better that this very conviction has its date, that the very idea of a universe of truth is deceptive, and by perceiving by contrast what the past has been for itself. It is not thus that Bédier spoke, a fideist who believed in the idea of a universe of truth, and who would hardly have admitted that a conviction has its date. Nevertheless, if today we can see a world other than his own, it is to him that we owe the first revelation. Others have taught us respect for texts and facts, contempt for preconceived notions, horror of the nearby; he alone has taught us that beyond the texts and the facts, hidden from the eyes of the profane or disrespectful reader, there are values whose destiny is to be unique and irreplaceable. We no longer see them in the same light or in the same perspective: we try to situate them in a historical dimension that is still forbidden to his mind, in a creative movement that he did not suspect. The essential thing is that we see them, and if we are given to seeing them, it is thanks to his own vision. Our greatest privilege is not to deny what his work had been, but to have cultivated it, to have left it, and to find on the path that is offered to us the luminous trace of his thought.] Vinaver, 'A la recherche d'une poésie médiévale', *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 2 (1959), 1-16 (pp. 15-16).

¹⁴⁸ Kibler, p. 255.

¹⁴⁹ Nichols, p. 180.

historical methodologies as the most likely to lead to an adequate knowledge of the past; and he recognized that authors, much like scholars, were products of their time. The contrast between Bédier and Vinaver's respective ideologies can be regarded as the contrast between art and nature: where Bédier believed medieval poetry to be a product of nature, of divine providence, Vinaver saw medieval literature as entirely the product of artistic (individual) genius, a living artist, as opposed to an Orphic power. Bédier was a universalist, Vinaver, a relativist: the distinction is crucial to our understanding of the influence Bédier exerted over Vinaver's conception of the medieval author. By distancing himself from Bédier's universal absolutism, Vinaver rejected the notion of authorial or textual truth as unjustifiably focused on the *end* rather than the *means* of textual production. 'The essence often escaped the hand that trapped the influence', argued Vinaver: borrowing from the work of his contemporary, P. Mansell Jones, Vinaver agreed with Jones' observation that 'the characteristic defect of the literary historians who taught him both in this country [Britain] and in France was "their failure effectively to differentiate the *spirit* of the piece of literature which they were striving to place historically"'.¹⁵⁰ So focused were early proponents of medieval studies such as Bédier, Renan, and Ferdinand Lot with recovering, cataloguing, and editing previously undocumented manuscripts from the Middle Ages, that they routinely neglected to appreciate the literary value of medieval texts. As Mansell Jones remembered of his 'experience as a student in the great center of French literary studies':

Facts were being unearthed, of course, and opinions corrected. But the bias of the system had produced a fear of interpretation, an indifference to general ideas, an avoidance of judgements, an innocence of taste, which were really disconcerting.

¹⁵⁰ Vinaver, 'The Historical Method', p. 17.

Impressionism had gone too far, certainly. Yet chronology aside, what is the value of a literary fact completely divorced from the impression it produces?¹⁵¹

‘What indeed?’, advanced Vinaver; what value are facts to the literary historian if he is not intent on relating them back to the literature under examination.¹⁵² Bédier was ‘tireless with facts’, notes Aarsleff; and yet as his aforementioned response to Renan’s criticism of the medieval author suggests, he was not averse to facts: by wanting to know more about the name of the author (his background, education, etc.) Bédier demonstrated an awareness for the intricacies of historical criticism. But as Vinaver, *a la* Mansell Jones, indicates, ‘they were perpetually *setting the scene*, but never getting to the first act.’¹⁵³ Bédier ‘unearthed’ facts about the author of the *Roland*, correcting the opinions of his predecessors in the process, but he did little to advance an interpretative model on which to assimilate these facts into his study of medieval literature.

Bédier was not alone, however, in his failure to reconcile ‘literary fact’ with literary criticism. Indeed, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century medieval studies is marked by an acute lack of appreciation for medieval texts as overtly *literary*. In his presidential address given before the the Modern Humanities Research Association in 1966, for instance, Vinaver queried the meaning of the term ‘Early texts to be studied *as examples of literature*’ which he had found in a statute book in the ‘Honour School of Modern Languages at Oxford’, as indicative of a general dismissal among scholars to recognise medieval studies as a distinctly literary

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p. 17.

¹⁵² Ibid, p. 17.

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 17.

discipline.¹⁵⁴ For Vinaver, the term ‘as examples of literature’ was attributable to his predecessors, Bédier among them, in the field of medieval studies, writing:

there was a time not long ago, both at Oxford and elsewhere, when medieval texts were read with the utmost care, but emphatically not as literary texts. They were read as examples of a great many things other than literature: of the diffusion of folklore, of the ideas and feelings they expressed, of the language in which they were written, of the type of civilization to which they belonged. They were assigned to a respectable academic discipline which was quite distinct from such lighter pursuits as literary criticism and aesthetic appreciation. The phrase ‘to be studied as examples of literature’ may strike us as being curiously redundant; at the time when it was introduced in the Oxford Examination Statutes, far from being redundant it was highly original and even daring. Whoever used it for the first time must have been a brave man, well ahead of his time and perhaps even of our own.¹⁵⁵

Again, so focused were early medievalists on ‘setting the scene’, that is, on establishing a presence for medieval texts by unearthing hitherto unrecognised manuscripts, that they did not establish a precedent upon which to appreciate medieval texts as anything other than artefacts, or as ‘museum pieces’, as Tim William Machan asserts.¹⁵⁶ Vinaver extends this argument

¹⁵⁴ Vinaver, ‘Form and Meaning in Medieval Romance’, *The Presidential Address of the Modern Humanities Research Association, 1966* (Leeds: WS Maney & Son Ltd, 1966), p. 1.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 2.

¹⁵⁶ Tim William Machan, ‘Middle English Text Production and Modern Textual Criticism’, in *Crux and Controversy in Middle English Textual Criticism*, ed. by A.J. Minnis and Charlotte Brewer (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1992), p. 7.

further, however, by suggesting that, even at the time of his address to the MHRA (1966), medievalists had still not quite come to terms with the literariness of the texts they were investigating. Indeed, as late as the 1990s, critics such as Machan were commenting that medievalists had only recently, in the previous two decades, become ‘methodologically self-conscious’.¹⁵⁷ ‘In particular’, Machan notes,

textual scholars have shown themselves prepared to accept, or at least to grapple with, the proposition that the social, historical and cultural context in which works are produced (and edited) crucially effects the ways in which we may regard the end product, and that this perception, hitherto more familiar to literary than to textual critics, must have radical implications for many traditional editorial principles which have previously gone unquestioned.¹⁵⁸

It is a measure of Vinaver’s foresight that he was calling for the same methodological self-consciousness among medievalists that Machan would three decades later acknowledge. Vinaver did not separate medieval texts from their intrinsic literary value, arguing, on the contrary: ‘Since the texts so to be studied include some of the great masterpieces of medieval prose and poetry, one wonders how else they could be studied and what else they could be examples of if not of literature.’¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Machan, ‘Middle English Textual Production’, p. 1; see also, Machan, *Textual Criticism and Middle English Texts* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1994), esp. ch. 5, ‘Editing, History, Discourse,’ pp. 65-93.

¹⁵⁸ Machan, ‘Middle English Textual Production’, p. 7.

¹⁵⁹ Vinaver, ‘Form and Meaning’, p. 1.

How should a text be read as an example of literature, then? For Vinaver, as we have seen, the answer is not to read literature in relation to authorial biography because the presence of the historical writer distracts the critic away from a consideration of the artist. In his aforementioned address before the MHRA entitled ‘The Historical Method in the Study of Literature’, Vinaver evokes the work of both Marcel Proust and his own contemporary Ronald S. Crane, who had recently published his seminal, two-volume monograph, *The Idea of the Humanities*, in order to categorize the unbridgeable gulf between the man and his work.¹⁶⁰ Thus, Vinaver says:

[Proust] believed that the gulf between the man and his work, over which the biographers had been building bridges in the manner of Sainte-Beuve, was in fact unbridgeable, and he would have agreed with Ronald Crane’s remark that criticism has very little need to take account of “literary history as such”. What Crane meant by literary history was, as he himself explained, the circumstances of the origin of the work, the personal peculiarities of its author, such filiation as it may have with other works or such reflection as there may be in the work of the philosophic doctrines or of the economic interests of its age. *I would suggest that none of these things is a necessary part of literary history; they could in fact all be displaced with in an inquiry confined to the limits of an historical study of literature properly so called. Not because they are uninteresting or unimportant, but because they belong to the category of being, not of artistic being.*¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Ronald S. Crane, *The Idea of the Humanities*, 2 vols (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

¹⁶¹ Vinaver, ‘The Historical Method’, p. 24.

Herein lies the essence of Vinaver's attitude to authorship, especially that of Malory. He is concerned chiefly with the 'artistic being', not the 'being' – the man. Vinaver was, as we have seen, a scholar first and foremost of the French Arthurian tradition; his main interest, therefore, was not in who Malory was, and how Malory's life can be read alongside his text, but in what Malory did – in his ordering, selection, arrangement, and abridgement of his sources. In this, for Vinaver, can the 'artistic being' be reached. The author matters to Vinaver only in how his text establishes an authorial presence, which it does through the analysis of the methods used by the author in the composition of his work. Unlike Bédier, who premised his own scholarship upon a specifically French basis for authorship, therefore requiring the establishment of a proven French author, which could only be attained from biographical research, Vinaver shows no such patriotic or cultural presumptions. Crucially, the 'artistic being' exists solely in the mind of the critic; it has no external form, it requires not name or biography. It is for the critic alone to deduce such a being, to create the means by which the author can live. *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, therefore, is the product of Vinaver's Malory: a construct, an imaginary 'artistic being', privileged by being named in the title, but existing completely within the edition itself. This is all that matters to Vinaver: the recognition of what the author *did*, not who he was. This is the task 'worthy of a lifetime's effort – the recognition of living and changing *values* in what man has thought, said, and done'.¹⁶²

How do we define the difference between Bédier's concept of the author and Vinaver's, and through doing so, how do we then summarise Vinaver's idea of Malory? The answer to this

¹⁶² Ibid, p. 29.

question lies in what we have already seen. For Bédier, the author is made at the very beginning of composition. ‘Une minute a suffie’, he tell us.¹⁶³ A single minute, when the poets exploits an idea to turn it into a story, which is composed with the intention of it being read. This is how the author is created, for Bédier, with an idea that begins and ends with the writer. A single comment made by Vinaver in the Commentary to the *Works* would appear to disagree with this assumption. Vinaver compares the work of the editor (his own work) to that of the author by stating that neither ever has its end in the hands of only one man. A work of art is not static, but fluid, and it cannot claim to have its genesis in any one figure. As Vinaver writes:

But if there is one thing that a work such as this has in common with an artistic enterprise it is that neither can ever be considered complete by its author: it can only be abandoned for a time and taken up again by himself or by others.¹⁶⁴

Malory was a continuator, his ‘works’ a continuation of a tradition much older and more expansive than any one author can claim credit for. In Field’s 2017 edition, Malory is presented as the static embodiment of the writer. The *Morte* belongs to the Malory, of Newbold Revel, because, at a particular moment in time, during the ‘ninth year of the reign of King Edward IV, this Malory, the man, began, or finished, the work. On the cover of Field’s 2017 edition is written, in red uppercase initials directly above the Malorian coat of arms, the words ‘The Definitive Original Text’. Such a claim to be definitive is made often of critical editions (certainly it has been made of Vinaver’s), but another way of reading the definitiveness of Field’s edition is in how it subtly conjures the presence of the author. Most might argue that any claim to be definitive is based on methodology, which is a fair and oft-discussed

¹⁶³ Bédier, *Légendes*, III, p. 448.

¹⁶⁴ *Works*, III, p. 1264.

conclusion. But I claim that Field's edition is definitive because he has done what no other editor of the *Morte* has previously been able to do: he has reconciled the work with the man. Of course, such a reconciliation is itself an editorially imposed addition, based solely on the choices made by the editor. As such, I argue that by reconciling the man and the work, Field, in fact, has not: he has given us only *his* version of the text, presentation included. Therefore the author is artificially stamped onto the text. This is perhaps the truth of all editions. Some impression of the author will always be imprinted onto the edition because the editor requires an author to make sense of the work. This is as true of Field as it was of Strachey. The editor seeks to find some semblance of the authorial work, or he seeks to ascertain how the author composed the text. The very nature of the craft of editing creates the author. Read in this way, Field's author is no different to Vinaver's. They are both concept-driven creations; they are both drawn in the abstract. It is a question of degree, however. The influence of the editor will always be a driving force in all future criticism of the text. But should that influence be so overwhelming that we end up talking more about the edition and less about the work? This is the reality of Vinaver's edition. His influence reaches to the heights of authorship. He displaces the author because he thinks of him as nothing more than a continuator. Vinaver seeks to 'point in the direction where we feel the path of genius lies', which he assumes to be a subtlety. But his edition, as its presentation shows us, neither points nor leads. It forces the reader to accept a version of the text that points only back to the editor.

In answer to the question I asked in my introduction, who is Vinaver's Malory?, we might then claim it to be Vinaver himself, who, as I have claimed, approaches the text with the precision of the archeologist only to then scaffold his way through the project of editing. The result of which is an edition that privileges Malory's name in its title, but privileges Vinaver's own theories in its content. In abstract terms then, only Field manages to point the reader in the

direction of the author, which still remains his version of the author, but he does so in such a way as to leave no doubt that this author is the same man who asks his reader to ‘praye for my soule’.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. by Field (2017), p. 940.

III

Reading Parentheses in Wynkyn de Worde's 1529 Edition of the *Morte Darthur*

I

Defining Parentheses

Parentheses is a complex term with two distinct definitions that are nevertheless closely related. There is ‘parentheses’ the rhetorical device and ‘parentheses’ the punctuation used to frame the rhetorical device. Linguist David Crystal aptly addresses this awkwardness with the short (and effective) definition: ‘parentheses contain parentheses’.¹ At a rhetorical level, parentheses is defined as any ‘word, clause, or sentence inserted as an explanation, aside, or afterthought into a passage with which it has not necessarily any connection.’² The example given above, for instance, enclosed in brackets, functions as a rhetorical aside intended to convey the effectiveness of Crystal’s definition: its omission would not hinder the overall sense or coherence of the sentence. Rhetorical parentheses are typically represented by one of three typographic symbols, the comma, em dash, and round bracket, although the last is by far the symbol we most commonly associate with parentheses.

¹ David Crystal, *Making a Point: The Pernickety Story of English Punctuation* (London: Profile Books, 2015), p. 295.

² See the entry ‘Parentheses’ in the online edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* < http://www.oed.com/searchType=dictionary&q=parentheses&_searchBtn=Search >

Grammarians frequently differentiate between rhetorical and typographical parentheses by referring to the latter as *parens*: John Lennard in his seminal work, *But I Digress: The Exploitation of Parentheses in English Printed Verse*, adopts the Latin *lunulae* (half-moon) to refer to examples of parentheses represented by round brackets.³ The round bracket, Lennard expounds, was developed in the fourteenth century to enclose parenthetical material or interpolated matter: the first use of the bracket in England is dated to the 1494 edition of Joannes Sulpius's *Opus Grammaticum*, printed first by Richard Pynson, and thereafter in five further editions by Pynson and de Worde. Sulpius defines parentheses as follows:

Parenthesis est vbi diversa oratio (vt inquit Perottus) imperfecti adhuc oration interponitur et duas habet virgulas com[v]exas : alteram ante principium illius orationis interposite / alteram post finem⁴

[Parentheses is where a different utterance (so says Petrottus) is introduced into an as yet incomplete utterance. And it has two convex virgulae: one placed before the beginning of that utterance / the other at the end.

Sulpius's definition is striking in its close resemblance to the above-quoted entry extracted from the latest edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Where Sulpius defines parentheses as a 'different utterance' introduced into an 'as yet incomplete utterance', the *OED* likewise specifies the extraneous function of parentheses as an 'explanation, aside, or afterthought'. More than five centuries separate the two definitions yet they share a similar understanding

³ John Lennard, *But I Digress: The Exploitation of Parentheses in English Printed Verse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁴ Lennard, p. 7, as is the translation below.

about the primary function of parentheses: to convey extra-textual material irrelevant/extraneous to the primary narrative thread. Indeed, as linguist Nicole Dehé observes in *Parentheticals in Spoken English*, parentheticals are striking by their ‘diversity in structural complexity: parentheticals can be anything from a single word to a full clause’.⁵ As linguists such as Noel Burton-Roberts, Hadumod Bussmann, and Douglas Biber *et al* confirm, however, the chief characteristic of parentheses as a linguistic entity is wholly shaped by their digressive and unintegrated structure, ‘unintegrated in the sense that it could be omitted without affecting the rest of that structure or its meaning’.⁶

Etymologically, parentheses has its root in the Greek *parentithenai*, the prefix *para* meaning ‘beside’, *en* ‘in’, and *tithenai* meaning ‘to put, place’, literally translated as ‘to put in/ place beside’: the Latin *parenthesis* and the Middle French *parenthèse* similarly translate as to ‘put in beside’. Standard definitions have since the fifteenth century adhered closely to the basic description given by Sulpitius. In *The Art of English Poesie* (1589), for instance, George Puttenham defines parentheses as the ‘first figure of tolerable disorder [...] the Inserter [...] to piece or graft in the midst of your tale an unnecessary parcel of speech, which may nevertheless be thence without any detriment to the rest’.⁷ Similarly, sixteenth-century lexicographer Richard Mulcaster in *Elementarie* (1582) emphasises the typographical value of parentheses:

⁵ Nicole Dehé, *Parentheticals in Spoken English: The Syntax-Prosody Relation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 1.

⁶ Noel Burton-Roberts, ‘Language, Linear Precedence, and Parentheticals’, in *The Clause in English*, ed. by Peter Collins and David Lee (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1999); Hadumod Bussman, *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics* (London: Routledge, 1996); Douglas Biber *et al*, *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 1999); see Dehe, p. 38.

⁷ George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesie*, ed. by Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 252.

Parenthesis is expressed by two half circles, which in writing enclose som perfit branch, as not mere impertinent, so not fullie coincident to the sentence, which it breaketh, and in reading warneth vs, that the words inclosed by them, ar [sic] to be pronounced with a lower & quikker voice, then the words either before or after them.⁸

Another sixteenth-century grammarian, Henry Peacham in *The Garden of Eloquence* (1577), characterises parentheses under the term *hyperbaton*, defined as an inversion or alteration of the proper order of words, either to emphasise or de-emphasise (what Puttenham refers to as the ‘Trespasser’), and occurring ‘when a sentence is set asunder by the interposition of another, or, when a sence is cast between a speache, before it be all ended, whiche although it give some strength, yet when it is taken away, it leaveth the same speech perfect inough’.⁹ Sixteenth-century definitions of parentheses have in common a general dislike for the effect caused by their introduction into the text. Puttenham’s ‘Inserter’, for instance, or Mulcaster’s ‘impertinent [...] sentence’ suggests an irritation – even bewilderment – by the extraneous function of parentheses. Peacham’s definition, however, adopts a tempered approach to reading parentheses. To be sure, Peacham does not stray too far from the standard definitions given by his contemporaries Puttenham and Mulcaster: parentheses is still extraneous to the text proper. But he does admit to the capacity for parentheses to *emphasise* rather than strictly *de-emphasise*, as is more commonly stated. The application of parentheses can, Peacham writes, ‘give some strength’ to the general meaning of a given passage, although such strength is moderated by the content of the parenthetical clause. Such ‘strength’ is also moderated,

⁸ Richard Mulcaster, *The first part of the elementary which entreateth chefelie of the right writing of our English tunge, set furth by Richard Mulcaster* (London: Thomas Vautrollier dwelling in the blak-friers by Lud-gate, 1582), p. 148; reprinted by Early English Books Online Text Partnership.

⁹ Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (1577; Menston: Scolar Press, 1971).

however, by the conditions under which parentheses is employed. Indeed, the thesis to Lennard's aforementioned study, *The Exploitation of Parentheses*, is that parentheses have been and continue to be exploited by writers to encompass allegorical, rhetorical, interpretative, and symbolic readings. He maintains that the general apathy for a subject such as the exploitation of parentheses is because contemporary and historic definitions are, as we have seen, strongly biased to believe parentheses to be nothing more than 'an explanation, aside, or afterthought'. Thus, Lennard affirms that

The repetitive insistence of grammarians and lexicographers that parenthetical clauses are subordinate makes the idea of emphatic lunulae strange to the modern reader; but lunulae only distinguish. Their valency, whether that which they distinguish is subordinate, neutrally isolated, or emphatic, is determined by the pressures of use, definition, and convention on the context in which they are employed: and there is nothing in principle or practice to prevent them from being as inevitably emphatic as a box drawn around an item on a list.¹⁰

Lennard's conclusion, then, is that individual uses of parentheses function much the same as other punctuation, frequently breaking away from convention and definition to be exploited for the intended purpose of applying meaning (sometimes emphatic; sometimes subtle) to the text, which in turn establishes a binary value for parentheses: they are both paratextual (external to the text proper insofar that parentheses is represented by a typographical symbol like round brackets), and decidedly textual: internal indications of meaning.

¹⁰ Lennard, p. 5.

The general assumption about parentheticals, as offered by Dehè, is that ‘parentheticals may be deleted without affecting the grammaticality of the overall structure’.¹¹ This is accurate insofar that it offers a basic description of parentheses that agrees with other assessments, contemporary and historical. As Dehè herself maintains, however, this description is wholly inaccurate, even misleading, when taking into account the various individual and historical motivations influencing the composition of a text — and, more crucially, influencing how punctuation is applied in accordance with changing historical convention and usage.

Indeed, here it might be beneficial to borrow from bibliographer D.F. McKenzie’s seminal *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (1999), a study in which McKenzie addresses the implications even the most minor variations in the presentation of the text can have to its future reception and interpretation.¹² Writing about the opening epigraph to William K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley’s influential article ‘The Intentional Fallacy’ (1946), extracted from William Congreve’s *The Way of the World* (1700), McKenzie maintains that, startlingly, ‘this famous essay on the interpretation of literature opens with a misquotation in its very first line’.¹³ Where the 1710 authorised version reads ‘He owns, with Toil, he *wrought* the following scenes’, Wimsatt and Beardsley’s revision omits the punctuation and exchanges the archaic ‘wrought’ with the modernised ‘wrote’, thus: ‘He owns with toil he *wrote* the following scenes’.¹⁴ Small though this alteration may seem, it nevertheless alters the meaning of the text sufficiently enough for an entirely new reading to be given, one not based on an authorial version of the text, and thus unsupported by the historical evidence; a reading, in short, defined

¹¹ Dehè, p. 18.

¹² D.F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 19.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 19.

by and responsive to conventional practice in accordance with the editors' (Wimsatt and Beardsley), not the author's (Congreve), contemporary moment. Thus, for McKenzie, this example embodies many of the

most obvious concerns of textual criticism – getting the right words in the right order; on the semiotics of print and the role of typography in forming meaning; on the critical theories of authorial intention and reader response; on the relation between the past meanings and present uses of verbal texts. It offers an illustration of the transmission of texts as the creation of the new versions which form, in turn, the new books, the product of later printers, and the stuff of subsequent bibliographical control. These are the primary documents for any history of the book. By reading one form of Congreve's text (1700/1710), we may with some authority affirm certain readings as his. By reading other forms of it (1946), we can chart meanings that later readers made from it under different historical imperatives.¹⁵

McKenzie's thesis has powerful repercussions for the interpretation of texts: the alteration of later, non-authorial versions of the authorial text (such as critical editions), be it the modernisation of language and punctuation, to the modification of structure and layout, are determined by the 'historical imperatives' of the editor's contemporary moment, not the author's. In the case of McKenzie's example (given above), 'wrote' not 'wrought' adheres to contemporary, twentieth-century convention, and therefore Wimsatt and Beardsley are perhaps justified in their revision. However, this simple revision has the effect of altering the angle of vision for a generation of readers as to the interpretative value of the text. In short, with even

¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 21-22.

the most simple of revisions, new meaning is implied and the original meaning is lost (or, if not lost, hidden), to the detriment of critical interpretation.

It is here important to state that punctuation is no less important than words to the composition of an edition. McKenzie observes the extraction of commas as equally significant to the exchange of 'wrote' for 'wrought' in the above-mentioned example: the removal of two commas from the text is an editorial choice unsupported by the authorial text – and therefore unjustifiable *except* that the omission adheres to contemporary standards (to Wimsatt and Beardsley's own 'historical imperatives'). For texts such as Congreve's *The Way of the World*, which is extant in his authorised version of 1710, a preferred edition should aim to mirror the authorised version of the text in language and punctuation, providing explanatory notes for archaic language and punctuation in place of modernisation. Such practice might be termed a best-case-scenario for the editor *if* the text allows for the opportunity of only mild editorial intervention. Congreve's language and punctuation might prove a challenge for the modern reader, but not so challenging that the issue cannot be resolved with detailed explanatory notes and commentaries which encourage the reader to think beyond their own 'historical imperatives' to focus on the imperatives of the author's own contemporary moment. This issue is complicated, however, when we factor in those texts that are so obviously alien to the modern reader (in their composition, language, structure, and grammar) that the editor must intervene more forcefully to render the text readable for its intended audience. This could be anything from the introduction of paragraphing and chapter breaks, to the inclusion of syntactic punctuation which adheres to contemporary practice. And nowhere is this issue more prevalent than in the editing of those texts which fall under the broadly-defined umbrella of 'medieval literature'.

Assessing the implications of applying modern punctuation to a medieval text such as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Howell Chickering in his seminal article 'Unpunctuating Chaucer', remarks upon the multivalent function grammatical markers give to a text for which punctuation is an entirely editorial choice. Chaucer's authority over the text, Chickering maintains, begins and ends at his own 'organisation of words into lines of verse'.¹⁶ Everything else, punctuation included, is added later, at the discretion of the editor. Consequently, 'this state of affairs', as Chickering continues, 'has significant consequences for both teaching and literary interpretation.'¹⁷ Such consequences include, as we have already seen from the Congreve example, a reading which cannot in the truest sense be called *authorial* because it does not conform exactly to any particular authorial plan or layout, assuming that such a plan existed in the first place. Punctuating a text written by Chaucer or any medieval author, however, is a wholly more complex task than is Congreve or a later writer, because it requires consistent, line-by-line enhancement if the text is to be both more accessible to the modern reader while adhering to contemporary convention defining punctuation usage. Such practice, however, might eliminate altogether our ability to read the text as written (that is, from the author's point of view) thus denying the reader the opportunity to access the text in accordance with the author's own historical imperatives, with the imperatives here influenced by the grammatical conventions with which the author is accustomed. Medieval authors and scribes, as critics such as M.B. Parkes have written about, had no conception of syntactic punctuation like commas, periods, and colons.¹⁸ What little punctuation they did use, such as the virgule (/) or double virgule (//) was not used syntactically, but was intended solely to signal a pause.

¹⁶ Howell Chickering, 'Unpunctuating Chaucer', *The Chaucer Review* 25 (1990), 96-109 (p. 96).

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 96.

¹⁸ See M.B. Parkes, *Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1992), p. 307.

Reading a well punctuated edition of, say, the *Canterbury Tales*, then, inevitably begs the question: are we really reading Chaucer in the truest sense of the word if the text is subject to modern punctuating? For Chickering, the answer is a resounding no and therefore the solution is a simple one: ‘unpunctuating Chaucer can help us to read his poetry more flexibly and vivaciously’.¹⁹ In other words, by removing punctuation, Chaucer’s poetry is rendered altogether more Chaucerian because the text is read as it was written.

A similar argument is made by D. Thomas Hanks Jr. and Jennifer Fish in defence of unpunctuating the *Morte Darthur* — or, to be more specific, of reading the earliest extant witness to the *Morte*, the Winchester manuscript, sans punctuation.²⁰ Hanks and Fish maintain that Malory’s paratactic style of writing is suggestive of aural performance (that is, the text was written to be read aloud), and provides all the necessary cues for the text to be successfully navigated without the need for syntactic punctuation. As critics such as Jeremy Smith and Bonnie Wheeler have noted, Malory’s paratactic style is ‘intensely audience-centred’.²¹ In the absence of syntactic punctuation, Malory emphasizes what Michael W. Twomey labels ‘parataxis and repetition as a means of assisting memory’, a method Malory would have known

¹⁹ Chickering, p. 96.

²⁰ D. Thomas Hanks Jr. and Jennifer L. Fish, ‘Beside the Point: Medieval Meanings vs. Modern Impositions in Editing Malory’s ‘Morte Darthur’’, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 98 (1997), 273-89.

²¹ Jeremy Smith, ‘Language and Style in Malory’, in *A Companion to Malory*, ed. by Elizabeth Archibald and A.S.G. Edwards (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996), pp. 97-115; Bonnie Wheeler, ‘Romance and Parataxis and Malory: The Case of Sir Gawain’s Reputation’, in *Arthurian Literature XII*, ed. by James P. Carley and Felicity Riddy (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1993), pp. 109-32.

very well from his own extensive reading of the French Arthurian canon.²² The aurality-theory for reading Malory has gained increasing support in the last two decades, with a 2003 issue of the journal *Arthuriana* titled ‘Reading Malory Aloud, Then and Now’, bringing together a collection of essays dedicated to exploring this theory in greater depth.²³ Consequently, for critics like Hanks and Fish, editorially imposed punctuation ‘wholly obscures a major element of Malory’s expectation of his audience – an expectation which today one most often terms “reader response”’.²⁴ Like Chickering, Hanks and Fish reject a well-punctuated edition in favour of an authentic reading, which they find in the 1976 photographic facsimile of the Winchester manuscript edited by N.R Ker for the Early English Text Society, arguing that such a reading renders ‘Malory’s stylistic genius more apparent than it is in a pre-punctuated text’.²⁵ Hanks and Fish forcefully conclude their essay by urging their fellow scholars to abandon the edition and ‘turn to Malory’s unpunctuated text for their own study and for a significant part of their own teaching’.²⁶

The final statement made by Hanks and Fish is noble but wholly unrealistic. Editions exist because students cannot be expected to engage with a text as it appears in manuscript. The most important point made in the articles by both Chickering and Hanks and Fish, however, is an important one, and is still rarely made about editions of medieval texts. Punctuation is important because, as we saw in the example given by McKenzie, it signifies meaning. As standards of punctuation evolve, so too does our application. Caxton’s edition of Malory is

²² Michael W. Twomey, ‘The Voice of Aurality in the “Morte Darthur”’, *Arthuriana* (2003), 103-18, quoted from abstract.

²³ See *Arthuriana* 13 (2003), ‘Reading Malory Aloud’.

²⁴ Hanks and Fish, p. 274.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 280.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 285.

punctuated but it looks nothing like a modern edition, just as Strachey's 1868 edition is also punctuated differently. Editions are made in accordance with the customs and expectations of their own age. As such, editions are always sites of interpretation. Punctuation as small a comma can add or change meaning, and it is therefore paramount to the critical role of interpretation that we assess the value of punctuation in respective editions. Just as I have shown that paratextual elements such as the contents page and the presentation of editorial marks in the editions of Vinaver and Field allow for an interpretative reading, so too, I aim to show in this chapter, does the inclusion of parentheses in de Worde's 1529 edition. By way of an introduction to the subject of parentheses in this edition, I begin this chapter with a case study, looking at what I consider to be the most important and the most influential aspect of de Worde's second edition. Like the example given by McKenzie, which focused on the most minute of changes, just a single word and a comma, the following case study is premised also on the exchange of only a single word: the name of the knight Sir Ector is replaced for that of the knight Sir Bors in de Worde's second edition of the *Morte*.

II A Case Study: The Question of Ector's (?) threnody, 1529

This case study begins with a simple but hitherto unexplored premise: for nearly three centuries the most famous speech in *Le Morte Darthur* was attributed to the wrong speaker. Malory's eulogy for Lancelot at the end of the tale is universally accepted as belonging to Lancelot's half-brother, Ector de Maris, hence the more oft-quoted title for the speech, Ector's threnody. In every modern edition of the *Morte*, the eulogy is both contextually and verbally assigned to Ector. Thus, upon his arrival at Joyous Garde, Ector is told of Lancelot's death by his fellow Round Table knight sir Bors de Ganis at which time he 'threwe hys shelde, swerde, and helme frome hym [...] And whan he waked it were harde for ony tonge to telle the doleful

complayntes that he made for his brother'.²⁷ If the context of this passage is not enough (and it should be) to support attribution of the eulogy to Ector, then the double-quotative Malory introduces in the ensuing clause unambiguously affirms attribution of the eulogy to Lancelot's half-brother: "A, Launcelot!", *he sayd*, "thou were hede of al Crysten knyghtes! And now I dare say", *sayd Syr Ector*, "thou Sir Launcelot, there thou lyest, that thou were never matched of erthely knyghtes hande" (emphasis mine).²⁸ Here I am quoting directly from Field's 2013 edition, but the speech remains the same in all editions going back the last two centuries. The eulogy as it appears in all modern editions is edited from Caxton's 1485 *editio princeps* (hereafter C). The most authoritative extant witness to the *Morte*, the Winchester Manuscript (hereafter W), is missing its final gathering of eight leaves, leaving Caxton's edition as the sole witness to the eulogy. Both Caxton and his immediate successor, de Worde, whose first edition of the *Morte* would follow in 1498 (hereafter deW98), attribute the eulogy to Ector. In de Worde's second edition, however, printed in 1529 (hereafter deW29), the speech is given instead by Bors de Ganis.

Caxton, 1485

/ A Launcelot he fayd thou were hede of
al cryften knyghtes / & now I dare fay **fayd fyr Ector** thou fir
Lancelot there thou lyest²⁹

²⁷ *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. by Field, p. 939

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 939.

²⁹ Sig. ee5v. A facsimile image featuring the threnody in C is accessible via the online resource 'The Malory Project'.

De Worde, 1498

A Launcelot he
fayd / þ^{ou} were heed of all cryften knyȝ/
tes. And now I dare fay **fayd fyr Ec**
tor thou fyr Launcelot ther thou lyeft³⁰

De Worde, 1529

A fyr Laūcelot fayd he /
thou were heed of all chryften knightes
And now I dare faye (**fayd fyr Bors**) þ^{ou}
fyr Launcelot there thou lyeft³¹

Tsuyoshi Mukai has shown how the text of every black-letter edition of the *Morte* printed between 1498 and 1634 (five in total) ‘is based solely on its immediate predecessor’, with all editions following deW29 subject to inconsistent and often negligible editorial intervention.³² Consequently, the three black-letter editions following deW29, printed in 1557, 1582, and 1634, include the same misattribution of the eulogy to Bors. The 1634 edition, edited by William Stansby, would thereafter function as the copy-text for the next two editions, both printed in 1816 after a lacunae of nearly two centuries: these, too, attribute the eulogy to Bors. Another edition, printed in 1817 and based on C, would be the first since 1498 to correctly

³⁰ Sig. E4v, 2nd col. This reading is from the 1498 edition held at the John Ryland’s Library, Manchester, accessible online.

³¹ Sig. E4v, 2nd col.

³² Tsuyoshi Mukai, ‘Stansby’s 1634 Edition of Malory’s *Morte*: Preface, Text, and Reception,’ *Poetica* 36 (1992), 38-54 (39).

assign the eulogy to Ector. From 1817, every successive edition to the present adopts the reading for the eulogy as it is given in C, thus attributed to Ector.

It is easy to assume that because both C and deW98 assign the eulogy to Ector, the substitution of Ector for Bors in deW29 must be a mistake, the result of a careless compositor, perhaps, or else amended from a (now lost) auxiliary copy-text. I am not convinced by such a conclusion, however, and indeed aim to show how unlikely the variant is to be the result of either compositor error or based upon an antecedent witness. For the sake of clarity, it is here crucial to state that I *do not* believe the reading in deW29 to be accurate: on the contrary, the textual and contextual evidence overwhelmingly negate such a view. But nor do I believe it to be a mistake. Rather, I want to explore the possibility that the variant is in fact a deliberate amendment made based upon an even-handed (but ultimately incorrect) judgement about the text and context of the *Morte Darthur*. I draw this conclusion from the mise-en-page of the eulogy as it is presented in deW29. Specifically, the quotative clause attributing the eulogy to Bors, '(sayd syr Bors)', is enclosed in parentheses (round brackets), punctuation entirely absent from C and deW98.

The significance of parentheses to the variant in question is twofold: on the one hand, that the variant is enclosed by round brackets renders the likelihood of it being accidental (the result of compositor error) unlikely, because the inclusion of parentheses ensures that the enclosed text received more than a cursory notice by the compositor responsible for type distribution. As John Lennard remarks in his seminal *The Exploitation of Parentheses*:

While it may be that on occasion a mark of punctuation appears without the author's or compositor's intention at a particular point in the text, as a result of, for example, the

careless distribution of type, it is unlikely that such a consideration could ever apply to lunulae [parentheses], because most uses require the setting of two pieces of type.³³

Compositor error presumes a degree of negligence that the inclusion of parentheses contradicts because the offending clause must have been acknowledged when de Worde's editor/compositor set the type representing both the opening and closing brackets — all the more so, perhaps, because the variant occurs in the penultimate leaf and last chapter of the edition wherein the printer's colophon and emblem are also located. Put another way: to frame a particular clause within two pieces of type ensures that the offending clause underwent additional editorial scrutiny thus negating the possibility for error.

In the absence of error, then, we are left to conclude that the variant was made with deliberate intent, begging the obvious question: why? Why would de Worde's editor/compositor knowingly contradict a reading given in both C and deW98 by attributing the eulogy to Bors? By way of an answer, I will show that the variant is based upon a reasoned but ultimately incorrect judgement about the text and context of the *Morte Darthur* deriving from the editor/compositor's implementation of parentheses located sporadically throughout the edition. Only seventy-two instances of parentheses occur in deW29 despite its considerable length, comprising twenty-one books and 506 chapters, with the majority of examples located in the final four books. Two such examples are noteworthy in that they occur in relation to speeches given by Bors in defence of both Lancelot and Guinevere, employing language similar to that found in the eulogy. Both speeches begin with the exclamatory phrase 'and now I dare say', an expression that also directly precedes the eulogy. It is my opinion that de Worde's editor/

³³ Lennard, p. 11.

compositor decided to attribute the eulogy to Bors because they recognised a verbal and contextual similarity between the eulogy and the earlier two speeches, all of which beginning with the phrase ‘and now I dare say’, and all occurring in close proximity to a parenthesised clause. In this way the variant should be read not as a mistake, but as an improvement. In support of this argument, I refer to the earlier criticism of Mukai and Field, both of whom have noted the profusion of corrections made by de Worde, often based upon nothing more than memory and a profound insight about the text and context of the *Morte Darthur*. The appendix to Field’s 2013 edition is particularly illuminating on this point, and will be used throughout this case study.

In what follows, then, is my attempt to examine the variant as indicative of and responsive to the implementation of parentheses in deW29. To begin I consider two possible explanations for the variant, compositor error and a possible antecedent witness, both of which the evidence reveal unsatisfactory conclusions to the question of why the modification was made. Next I analyse the variant in relation to the two aforementioned speeches, arguing that the inclusion of parentheses and the repetition of the phrase ‘and now I dare say’ offer the most likely explanation for the variant.

Critical appraisal of de Worde’s editions tends towards the bibliographic than the interpretative, with most criticism focusing on de Worde’s first edition, about which a small but growing body of work is concerned. As the second edition of the *Morte* following Caxton’s *editio princeps*, printed only thirteen years apart, it is perhaps inevitable that deW98 should take preference over its much later successor, printed three decades after deW98 and forty-

three years after C. Recent work by Siân Echard and David Eugene Clark covers the early printed history of the *Morte*, with the latter focusing on the paratexts of the blackletter editions, but both offer only a cursory mention of deW29, confined to a synthesis of previous criticism instead of advancement.³⁴ To date, so far as I can find, nothing has been written to advance our understanding (beyond the purely bibliographic) of de Worde's second edition, with one exception. In a 2019 article on de Worde's later career, Julia Boffey, though not offering sustained treatment of deW29, nevertheless makes some interesting observations, which, when applied to the present article, justify reassessment of de Worde's latter output.³⁵ Indeed, the mere fact that de Worde chose to reprint the *Morte* thirty-one years after his first edition is reason enough to reconsider the merits of his second edition, more so, perhaps, as the '1529 edition of Malory stands out as one of the very few folio-sized books printed at this stage in his career.'³⁶ Reading deW29 against its direct antecedent reveals a 'mixture of continuities and innovation', a fact here written by Boffey but first noted in the late nineteenth century by another editor of Malory, H. Oskar Sommer.³⁷ The appendix to Sommer's three-volume edition, printed in 1889-91, remains the most sustained treatment of deW29 to date. As Sommer notes about the edition, alterations were made 'with the intention of modernising and of rendering the text more readable. [...] Sentences begin with capital letters, as do all names of

³⁴ See Siân Echard, 'Malory in Print', in *A New Companion to Malory*, pp. 96-125; see also, David Eugene Clark, 'The paratexts of 15th-17th Century Editions of the *Morte Darthur* Informed by Computational Design', *Arthuriana* 30 (2020), 68-100.

³⁵ Julia Boffey, 'The Printing of English Narratives in Wynkyn de Worde's Later Career', in *Early Printed Narrative Literature in Western Europe*, ed. by Bart Besamusca, Elisabeth de Bruijn and Frank Willaert (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), pp. 125-43.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 138.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 130.

persons and places. Full-stops and commas are distinguished'.³⁸ 'On the whole', concludes Sommer, deW29 'is superior to Caxton's, both in exactness and correctness: I can hardly call to mind a misprint'.³⁹ This view directed Sommer's preference for deW29 for collation with C, writing:

There exist difference between Caxton's text and Wynkyn de Worde's editions of 1498 and 1529. I have decided upon giving the various readings from the third edition (1529): firstly, because the lapse in time between the first and second edition is too short to allow manifest change in the language; secondly, on account of the imperfect condition of the only known copy of the second edition; lastly and chiefly, because all later Black letter editions, and all modern reprints, with the sole exception of Southey's and Sir E. Strachey's, can be traced back to Wynkyn de Worde's edition of 1529.⁴⁰

Sommer estimated over 10,000 variant readings between C and deW29, which has since been challenged, and he covered over 100 pages of his edition recording these in what remains the most substantial, but not exhaustive, record of variant readings in deW29. Interestingly, despite his inability to 'call to mind a misprint' in deW29, Sommer fails to document the misattribution of the eulogy to Bors, and no mention of this is given elsewhere in the prolegomena to his edition, which is extensive.

Sommer is correct in his final remark, however: with the exception of the 1817 and the 1868 editions, every edition of the *Morte* printed between 1557 and 1816 relates directly back to

³⁸ *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. by Sommer, II, p. 43.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 43.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 43.

deW29. As such, attribution of the threnody would, for three hundred years, belong to Bors, a fact that did not go unnoticed by nineteenth-century critics. Despite the absence of a new edition for nearly two centuries, for example, the *Morte* (and the eulogy) was well known enough for George Burnett in his 1813 *Specimens of English Prose-Writers* to remark: ‘The speech for sir Bohort [Bors], towards the end, over the dead body of Lancelot, has often been quoted as the perfect character of a knight errant’.⁴¹ Burnett may here be referring to the earlier multi-volume *The British Bibliographer*, printed in 1810, in which the eulogy is described as ‘one of the most interesting specimens of the pathetic in the English or any other language’, quoted with attribution to Bors.⁴² Half a century later, in an unsigned review of Thomas Wright’s three-volume edition of the *Morte* (which, though based on the Stansby Malory, attributes the eulogy correctly, to Ector), is written:

But there is no sound penitence in the grand proud words pronounced over him by his comrade Sir Bors; after a life of falsehood to the king and his friend [...] faithful only to an adulterous love, he goes to his grave with that well-known eulogy, whose magnificent language has blinded many an admiring reader to its perilous application.⁴³

This is followed, in 1861, by another reference, made by George L. Craik, who refers in his *A Compendious History of English Literature* to the ‘much admired’ final chapters of the *Morte*,

⁴¹ George Burnett, *Specimens of English Prose-Writers*, 3 vols (London: Hamblin and Seyfang, 1813), I, p. 258.

⁴² Samuel Egerton Brydges, *The British Bibliographer*, 10 vols (London: printed for R. Triphook by T. Bensley, 1810-14), I, p. 60.

⁴³ Unsigned review of Wright’s Edition’, *Blackwood’s Magazine* 88, September 1860, 311-37; also in Marilyn Jackson Parins, *Sir Thomas Malory: The Critical Heritage* (Abingdon, Routledge, 1987; repr. 2013), p. 131.

quoting the eulogy as it is given in the 1816 editions, thus attributed to Bors.⁴⁴ That both Craik and the anonymous reviewer refer to the eulogy as belonging to Bors instead of Ector is testament to the success of the 1816 editions: by 1860, two new editions had appeared of the *Morte*, in 1817 and 1858, both of which correctly attribute the eulogy to Ector. It is to the 1816 editions, however, as Barry Gaines has written, that the majority of nineteenth-century writers and critics would defer, Tennyson included, therefore ensuring that a variant first printed in 1529 would remain the dominant reading well into the nineteenth century.

Perhaps the most important nineteenth-century edition to re-establish Ector as the rightful speaker of the eulogy is Strachey's 1868 edition. As the first edition since 1817 to be based on C, Strachey's edition restored some semblance of Caxon's *editio princeps*, albeit heavily bowdlerised and modernised. Strachey is, moreover, the only editor of the *Morte* to date to comment on the misattribution of the eulogy. Writing in an article for *The Athenaeum*, published in 1867, Strachey discusses a number of interpolations found in the 1817 edition, 'which involved some curious bibliographic facts'.⁴⁵ One such 'fact', notes Strachey, is that the 'panegyric for Launcelot is given by Southey to Sir Ector, but in the Caxton to Sir Bors.'⁴⁶ Strachey ends his short article by questioning 'How [...] can we explain the odd fact that Caxton puts the panegyric on Launcelot in the mouth of Sir Bors, and so does the edition of 1529, as well as the modern 24mo. Editions [of 1816], while those of 1498 and 1634, as well as that of Southey, give it to Sir Ector?'⁴⁷ Strachey's assessment is here inaccurate insofar that

⁴⁴ George L. Craik, *A Compendious History of English Literature from the Norman Conquest with Numerous Specimens* (London: Griffin, Bohn, and Company, 1861), I, pp. 377-78.

⁴⁵ Edward Strachey, 'Interpolations in Southey's "Morte D'Arthur"', *The Athenaeum* 2080, September 7, 1867, p. 306.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 306.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 306.

only C, deW98 and the 1817 edition attribute the eulogy to Ector; all others between 1529 and 1816 give it to Bors. Nevertheless, this question, first asked 156 years ago, remains unanswered. Why would de Worde (or his editor/compositor), with two editions from which to base a new edition, both C and deW98, alter the reading so radically as to substitute one speaker for another? And why, after making such a modification, would the offending clause then be enclosed in parentheses?

Even were the offending clause not placed in parentheses, several reasons remain which cast doubt on the assumption that the variant could be the result of compositor error. Indeed, de Worde was, as Mukai and Field have noted about deW98, an unusually conscientious editor, correcting errors (including wrong names) as he found them in C based either upon context or memory alone, therefore demonstrating a thorough awareness for the text and context of the *Morte Darthur*.⁴⁸ Most major corrections were made to deW98, although de Worde continued to add many small changes (exchanging pronouns for proper names; modernising language; adding quotative clauses where they are previously omitted) to deW29. The meticulousness by which de Worde approached the text of both editions does not accord with the variant under discussion. One such correction made to deW98, as noted by Mukai, provides a ‘good example of the kind of improvement that an editor would have been able to work out from the context that can be observed in the textual revision at the scene of interaction’.⁴⁹ The scene in question, found in Caxton’s Book ten, Chapter fifty-three, features an interaction between Palomides,

⁴⁸ See Tsuyoshi Mukai, ‘De Worde’s 1498 *Morte Darthur* and Caxton’s Copy-Text’, *The Review of English Studies* 51 (2000), 24-40; P.J.C. Field, ‘De Worde and Malory’, in *The Medieval Book and a Modern Collector: Essays in Honour of Toshiyuki Takamiya*, ed. by Takami Matsuda, Richard A. Linenthal, and John Scahill (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2004), pp. 285-95.

⁴⁹ Mukai, ‘De Worde’s 1498 *Morte Darthur*’, p. 26.

Tristram, and Breuse Saunce Pite, in which Caxton misattributes a portion of spoken discourse to Palomides rather than to Breuse Saunce Pite. According to Mukai:

De Worde's editor noticed the contradiction in Palomides' response to his own tidings, and altered the reporter of the first chunk of discourse, replacing 'said sir Palomydes' in his exemplar with 'sayd Breuse saūce pyte'.⁵⁰

Breuse Saunce Pite is a relatively minor knight appearing only sporadically in the text. If, as Mukai argues, the correction was made based solely upon the context of the scene, then it is reasonable to assume that the text underwent a thorough examination by an editor well able to spot even the most minor of inaccuracies. This renders the misattribution of the eulogy all the more intriguing, however, because 1) the variant was not handed down from a previous edition (as is the above example), but is unique to deW29; and 2) the theme and characters pertaining to the eulogy (the death of Lancelot) are considerably more thematically significant than the example given by Mukai. From a thematic perspective, the context of the scene clearly presents Ector as speaker rather than Bors. Thus, upon being told by Bors of Lancelot's death, Ector

threwe his lheelde / his swerde
and his helme from hym. And whan he
behelde fyr Laucelots vyfage / he fell
down in a fwowne. And whan he awa
ked / it were harde for ony tongue to tell
the dolefull complayntes that he made

⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. 26-27.

for his brother.⁵¹

The last clause of this extract for his brother leaves no ambiguity that the following ‘dolefull complayntes’ encompassing the eulogy are made by Ector only. The following sentence, beginning with the exclamatory ‘A fyr Laūcelot fayd he thou were heed of all chryften knightes’, again reinforces attribution to Ector. In both C and deW98, attribution to Ector is further assured by the next clause, beginning ‘And now I dare fay fayd fyr Ector’, after which the eulogy is given in full.⁵² It is at this point in deW29, following the exclamatory ‘And now I dare faye’, that the eulogy is assigned to Bors. Sustained treatment of the expression ‘And now I dare faye’ will be given shortly. At present, however, it is enough to emphasise that the context of the scene thematically and unambiguously assigns the eulogy to Ector, not Bors. Indeed, two more points need to be made in support of this argument. Firstly, in the chapter heading appended to the opening of book twenty-one, chapter thirteen, Ector is explicitly named: ‘how fyr Ector founde fyr Launcelot / his brother deed’.⁵³ Although no mention of the eulogy is given, the fact that Ector is named, as is his relationship to Lancelot, supports the context by which attribution of the eulogy is given to Ector. Secondly, Ector is also named in the opening lines to the chapter, though with a slight deviation in deW29. Where both C and deW98 read ‘And whan fyr Ector herde fuche noyfe...’, deW29 reads, ‘And whan fyr Ector *de Marys* / herde fuche noyfe’. This is an intriguing addition, because it indicates that de Worde’s editor/compositor amended Ector’s name to its full style only to then just seventeen lines down exchange Ector’s name for Bors’. The textual evidence overwhelmingly supports attribution of the eulogy to Ector, rendering the variant all the more curious as it does not seem to adhere to

⁵¹ deW29, Sig. E4v, 2nd col.

⁵² Reading from deW98, Sig. E4v, 2nd col.

⁵³ deW29, Sig. E4v, 1st col.

typical changes made by de Worde (such as that given by Mukai) in accordance with the profound knowledge regularly displayed about the text and context of the *Morte*.

Further evidence of de Worde's careful handling of the text to his second edition can be found at book twenty-one, chapter six. In this example, de Worde's editor/compositor corrects a misspelling as it is found in both C and deW98, which read 'And there was Nynyue the che / yf ladi of the Lake', replacing the initial 'n' with the correct 'm' giving the accurate reading '& there was Nymue the chefe / lady of the lake'.⁵⁴ Small though this correction is, it further supports the argument for de Worde's careful handling of the text: if de Worde can be found to alter a single letter to ensure accuracy, why would he then endorse such a drastic change as that made to the eulogy?

Before addressing this question, we must first conclude that the variant is not the result of something other than human error. For instance, based on the extant textual evidence, it is equally unlikely that the variant derives from a now lost auxiliary copy-text antecedent to C. Again, both Mukai and Field have established a connection between deW98 and Caxton's exemplar, citing nineteen instances where de Worde corrects an error in C based upon the exemplar 'which are sufficiently superior to their counterparts' in the Winchester MS to be considered authoritative.⁵⁵ One such correction, likely based on Caxton's exemplar, occurs in the same chapter as the eulogy and provides strong evidence that the variant is not supported by an auxiliary source. Thus, following the eulogy, we are told that Sir Constantine is made king of England, after which time nine knights, Ector and Bors among them, 'drew them to

⁵⁴ De Worde 1498, Sig. E1r, 1st col.

⁵⁵ *Le Morte Darthur*, Field, II, p. 690; on the same page can be found a full list of passages corrected by de Worde using Caxton's exemplar.

theyr contreyes' wherein they lived as 'holy men'. The name of one of these knights is corrected by de Worde for his first edition from a misspelling in C, a reading accepted as authoritative by Field; as follows:

Caxton: Wyllyars de Valyaunt

deW98: Vyllyars le Valyaunt

In the appendix to his 2013 edition, Field writes that this small correction first given in deW98 (de Worde replaces the initial *W* with a *V*, and distinguishes between *le* and *de*) 'must derive either from a remarkable memory [the last appearance of the name is in book twenty], or from C's exemplar'.⁵⁶ 'The latter', continues Field, 'is more likely'.⁵⁷ If we accept Field's hypothesis, that de Worde made the correction based upon the exemplar, it means that de Worde was using the exemplar in exactly the same chapter as, and in the next column of text to, the eulogy. This then begs the question: if in Caxton's exemplar the eulogy was assigned to Bors instead of Ector, can we then assume that this reading would have been included in both C and deW98? In deW98, de Worde makes a point of correcting the name of a relatively unimportant knight because he wishes to present the reading as accurate to that found in the exemplar. The eulogy is considerably more important than the misspelt name of an obscure knight, however. We can surmise, therefore, that if de Word is prepared to go to the trouble of correcting the spelling of a little-known name, it seems likely that he would exchange one name for another if the evidence (in this instance the exemplar) supports such an amendment. The fact remains, however, that he did not: deW98 reads Ector, not Bors. That de Worde left attribution of the eulogy to Ector untouched in deW98 despite using Caxton's exemplar to correct an error in the same chapter, suggests that the variant is not supported by an auxiliary

⁵⁶ Ibid, pp. 835-36.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

witness. Conversely, even if one does not support Field's reasoning that de Worde emended the text based on Caxton's exemplar, then his second point (that de Worde possessed a 'remarkable memory') is equally valid. As it has been shown, most of the corrections made to de Worde's editions are based on nothing more than context or memory alone. From both could de Worde or his editor have ascertained the inaccuracy of the variant, and indeed a 'remarkable memory' would not have been necessary to copy down the eulogy, as de Worde already had as copy-text both C and deW98, both of which correctly attribute the eulogy to Ector.

From the evidence thus far presented, we arrive at the following twofold conclusion: first, the variant is unlikely to be the result of human error, because 1) corrections made elsewhere to the text attest to de Worde's superior memory and knowledge about the *Morte*; 2) the possibility for error is equally unlikely because the presence of parentheses enclosing the variant assumed a degree of editorial revision; and 3) both C and deW98 read Ector instead of Bors, and de Worde (or his editor) were certainly working from these editions. Secondly, the likelihood of the variant deriving from an auxiliary text is equally improbable because textual revisions made to deW98 suggest that de Worde used Caxton's copy-text to emend the spelling of a single, minor name in the same chapter as the eulogy. That neither C nor deW98 attribute the eulogy to Bors, strongly suggests that the copy-text from which they were working assigns Ector as speaker of the eulogy. From this, then, we arrive at the probability that the variant in question was made deliberately – that de Worde or his editor knowingly attributed the eulogy to Bors rather than Ector.

The question this naturally leads to, therefore, is why? Why would de Worde's editor who has elsewhere demonstrated a remarkable propensity for recognising even the most minor mistakes, make such a revision when it is not supported by previous editions? The answer can

initially be sought by reviewing the mise-en-page of the eulogy as it appears in both C and deW29.

/ A Launcelot he fayd thou were hede of
al cryften knyghtes / & now I dare fay **fayd fyr Ector** thou fir
Lancelot there thou lyeft **Caxton**

A fyr Laūcelot fayd he /
thou were heed of all chryften knyghtes
And now I dare faye (**fayd fyr Bors**) þ^{ou}
fyr Launcelot there thou lyeft **DeW29**

In C, Caxton divides one clause (ending with ‘cryften knyghtes’) with another (beginning ‘& now I dare fay’) with a *virgule plana* which, according to M.B. Parkes, ‘marks the briefest pause or hesitation in a text’ and ‘could be used for all pauses except the final one’.⁵⁸ Caxton’s use clearly indicates a small pause, followed by the exclamatory phrase ‘& now I dare fay’; his use of an ampersand in place of ‘and’ (likely compositorial, intended to fit the page), suggests that the clause is a direct continuation of that which it follows. In de Worde, however, who had more choice in his use of punctuation than did Caxton, the difference is more apparent. He omits the *virgule* altogether, starting on the next line after ‘chryften knyghtes’ with ‘And now I dare faye’. The addition of ‘And’ in place of Caxton’s ampersand and with a capitalised ‘A’ clearly marks it as a new sentence, not a subsidiary clause, as in Caxton. In C, the phrase ‘& now I dare fay’ is intended as a continuation, with a slight pause, of the previous clause. In de

⁵⁸ M.B. Parkes, *Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of Printing in the West* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1992), p. 307.

Worde, ‘And now I dare faye’ is presented as an interjection, beginning a new sentence. As the two quotative clauses ‘he fayd’ and ‘fayd fyr Ector’ refer to the same person in C, the short pause (punctuated with a *virgule*) clearly marks this as an unbroken block of text, all of it spoken by Ector. In deW29, however, the first quotative ‘fayd he’, refers to Ector, who praises Lancelot as the ‘heed of all chryften knyghtes’; Ector’s lament is then interrupted by Bors, beginning ‘And now I dare faye’, and followed by the quotative ‘(fayd fyr Bors)’ which introduces the eulogy.

In C, then, the exclamatory phrase ‘& now I dare fay’ functions as a continuation of the previous clause, all spoken by Ector. In deW29, however, it functions as an interjection: Bors interrupts Ector’s grief to speak the lament for Lancelot. The *Concordance* lists forty instances of the phrase ‘and now I dare say’ or some variation thereof; from an examination of each example, I have found no other instance of the phrase functioning as an interjection.⁵⁹ That is, the phrase is exclusively employed in relation to the same character, rather than as an interjection of one speaker to another. Nevertheless, there are two specific instances in the *Morte* of the phrase being used by Bors, one is praise of Lancelot, and the second in defence of Guinevere, both employing language similar to that found in the eulogy, and both appearing withing very close proximity to a parenthesised clause in deW29; as follows:

(1) Madame
fayd dame Bryfen (**the whiche had ma
de the enchauntement before bytwene
fyr Launcelot & her**) I praye you her
tely let fyr Bors departe and hye hym

⁵⁹ See Tomomi Kato, *A Concordance to The Works of Sir Thomas Malory* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1974), p. 317.

with all his myght as fast as he may
to feke fyr Launcelot / for I warne you
he is clene out of his mynde / and yet he
shall be well holpen / and but by myra
cle. Than wepte dame Elayne / and so
dyd fyr Bors de Ganys. And so they
departed. And fyr Bors rode streyght
vnto quene Gueneuer. And whan she
fawe fyr Bors / she began to wepe as
she had ben wood. Fye vpon your we
pynge fayd fyr Bors / for ye wepe ne
uer but whan there is no boote. Alas
fayd fyr Bors that euer fyr Launcelots
kynne fawe you. For now haue ye loft
the best knyght of all our blode / and he
that was the leder of vs all and our so
courer. **And I dare well faye** and make
it good that all kynges chrysten nor he
then may not fynde suche a knyght / for
to speke of his noblenesse and curteyfye
with his beaute and gentylnesse. Alas
fayd fyr Bors / what shall we do that
ben of his blode. Alas fayd fyr Ector de
Marys / alas fayd fyr Lyonell.⁶⁰

(2) / but at all tymes as ferre as I
euer coude knowe / she was alwayes a
maynteyner of good knyghtes. And al
waye she hath ben large and free of her
goodes to all good knyghtes / and the
moost bounteous lady of her gyftes

⁶⁰ Sig. I6v, 1st col.

and her good grace that euer I fawe or
herde speke of / and therefore it were a
grete fhamme (**fayd fyr Bors**) vnto vs all
to our moost noble kynges wyfe / and
we suffred her to be fhamefully flayne.
And wyte ye well fayd fir Bors / I wyll
not suffre it. **For I dare faye** fo moche
the quene is not gylty of fyr Patryce
dethe / for she oughte hym neuer none
euyll wyll / nor none of the .xx. knygh
tes that were at that dyner. For I dare
well faye / that it was for good loue she
badde vs to dyner / and not for no male
engyne / and that I doubte not shall be
preued here after. for how someuer the
game goth / there was treason amonge
some of vs.⁶¹

As we can see, the phrase ‘and now I dare say’, or a similar variation thereof, occurs in both examples just a few lines line from a clause enclosed in parentheses, on both occasions spoken by Bors. In example one, ‘And now I dare well faye’ is, like the eulogy, an exclamatory phrase which introduces a speech in praise of Lancelot. Bors’ description of Lancelot is verbally reminiscent of the eulogy: Lancelot’s ‘nobleneffe and curteyfe’, ‘beauty and gentyneffe’ make him the greatest knight in the *Morte*. Critics such as R.M. Lumiansky and Derek Brewer have commented on the steadfastness and loyalty shown by Bors to Lancelot.⁶² Bors remains for much of the *Morte Malory*’s most faithful retainer, ‘the patient bearer of protective

⁶¹ Sig. T2v, 2nd col.

⁶² R.M. Lumiansky, ‘Malory’s Steadfast Bors’, *Tulane Studies in English* 8 (1959), 5-20; *The Morte Darthur: Parts Seven and Eight by Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. by Derek Brewer (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968).

responsibility for Lancelot'.⁶³ Example one testifies to Bors' respect and admiration for Lancelot. Example two, however, demonstrates the profound loyalty shown by Bors for Lancelot. Again, the phrase 'for I dare faye' introduces a speech given by Bors, this time in defence of Guinevere. After Guinevere is accused of poisoning Sir Patrice, she is sentenced to death unless a knight will defend her. Bors elects to fight for Guinevere in deference of his loyalty to Lancelot; as Keith Swanson observes: 'justice is finally established in this episode not as a result of the rational determination of truth, but because of the prior ethical and emotional commitment of Bors and Lancelot.'⁶⁴ Despite Bors' initial reluctance to fight for Guinevere after she banishes Lancelot from court, Bors, as Victorial L. Weiss notes, agrees to protect Guinevere 'only when Arthur says, "I require you, for the love ye owghe unto sir [Launcelot]"'.⁶⁵ It is particularly poignant that Arthur does not ask Bors to fight for Guinevere on his own behalf, but invokes Lancelot name instead; Bors' loyalty to Lancelot is stronger than his fidelity to Arthur. Both speeches characterise Bors' intense devotion to Lancelot, and, more importantly, I argue, suggests to de Worde's editor that attribution of the eulogy was contextually more befitting to Bors than Ector.

That is to say, de Worde's editor replaces Ector's name for Bors' because he judges Bors to be the rightful speaker of the eulogy based upon previous speeches wherein Bors praises both Lancelot and Guinevere in language strikingly similar to that found in the eulogy; the editor's decision, moreover, is governed by repetition of the phrase 'and now I dare say', which is used

⁶³ Lumiansky, 'Malory's Steadfast Bors', p. 5.

⁶⁴ Keith Swanson, "'God Woll Have A Stroke": Judicial Combat in the *Morte Darthur*,' *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library of Manchester* 74 (1992), 155-74 (p. 165).

⁶⁵ Victoria L. Weiss, 'Grail Knight or Boon Companion? The Inconsistent Sir Bors of Malory's *Morte Darthur*,' *Studies in Philology* 94 (1997), 417-27.

repeatedly by Bors in praise of Lancelot. We have already seen the extent to which de Worde or his editor made corrections based upon the context (or their memory of) a particular episode. A similar argument, I conclude, can be made in support of the variant as it appears in deW29. To be sure, I am not suggesting that the variant is correct; on the contrary, as has already been stated, the textual evidence overwhelmingly supports attribution of the eulogy to Ector. Rather, de Worde's editor exchanges the names based upon a precedent already established by which textual revisions are made. Contextually, the attribution of the speech to Bors is supported if we take into account (which, I argue, the editor in fact did), the evidence from the previous speeches. The textual evidence, however, does not support the variant. In this instance, then, the variant can be attributed to a misjudged revision based upon a rigorous appraisal of the text and context of the *Morte* (as has occurred elsewhere) which nevertheless results in an incorrect reading – a reading which would remain the dominant form for the next three-hundred years.

III The Distribution of Parentheses in deW29

The distribution of parentheses in deW29 is markedly inconsistent. Of the twenty-one books and 506 chapters from which deW29 is composed, there are only seventy-two parenthesised clause spread across sixteen books and fifty-eight chapters. If we divide the total number of examples by the number of books represented, we arrive at a mean figure of 4.8 examples per book. However, as the following table shows, a per-book sample is wholly disproportionate insofar that nine books include no more than two examples each, while some individual chapters include as many as nine examples:

Table 1: Distribution

<i>Book</i>	<i>Number of parentheses by book</i>	<i>Chapter</i>
1	1	3-4
2	1	2
6	2	9, 11
8	3	15, 29, 30
9	2	14, 37
10	16	3, 5, 9, 17, 20, 36, 55, 58, 63, 65, 70, 73, 78, 79, 81, 82
11	4	2, 9, 14
12	2	6, 7
13	1	2
14	2	7, 8
16	2	1, 2
17	1	7
18	6	1, 2, 5, 11, 16, 18
19	4	6, 8, 10
20	21	5, 6, 8, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19
21	4	4, 11, 13

Chapters with multiple examples

Book 11, chapter 14 – 2 examples

Book 19, Chapter 8 – 2 examples

Book 20, chapter 6 – 3 examples

Book 20, chapter 8 – 3 examples

Book 20, chapter 11 – 9 examples

Book 21, chapter 13 – 2 examples

As we can see, of the sixteen books inclusive of parentheses, the majority (ten) include no more than three examples. Four books have a single example each; five books, two examples; and book eight has three examples. A further three books include four instances each. The third best represented book, with six examples, is book eighteen. Book ten, the longest in the *Morte*, with eighty-eight chapters, accounts for sixteen instances. While book twenty, with twenty-one examples, is by far the best represented. Based on the evidence supplied in table one, it is notable that the number of examples (or, indeed, their inclusion) is not premised upon the length of individual books. Book seven, for instance, with thirty-six chapters, is the third longest in the *Morte*, but includes no example. While books one and seventeen, with a single example each, are respectively the fifth and sixth longest books, with twenty-eight and twenty-three chapters. Conversely, book fourteen, with ten chapters, is the second shortest but has two examples, the same number as book nine, which, with forty-four chapters, is the second longest. With three examples, book eight, as the joint third shortest book, with twelve chapters, is equally disproportionate: the number of examples in book eight equates to the same number across books one, two, and seventeen, which between them account for seventy chapters. Large gaps appear in the text wherein no example is found. Eighty-one chapters separate an example at book two, chapter two, for instance, and the next example at book six, chapter nine. Book eighteen, with six examples and twenty-four chapters, is vastly disproportionate if we consider that a similar sample can be found across five books totaling 108 chapters. As the longest book in the *Morte*, with eighty-eight chapters, the sample at book ten, featuring sixteen examples,

appears to be less disproportionate when compared to others books. However, if we divide the number of examples with the total number of chapters in book ten, we arrive at an average figure of 5.5, not dissimilar to the same average of 5.25 for book twenty-one, the fifth shortest book in the *Morte*, with thirteen chapters, but with a disproportionate sample of four examples. By far the most disproportionate sample, however, in accordance with the length of the book, is book twenty, which has twenty-one examples against twenty-two chapters, nearly thirty percent of the total number throughout the entirety of deW29. Indeed, the last four books (books eighteen to twenty-one) account for just under half the total number, with thirty-five examples covering seventy-two chapters, vastly disproportionate when measured against the remaining thirty-seven examples covering twelve books and 326 chapters. Parentheses appear far less frequently in the first half of deW29 than in the second. Books one through nine, for instance, cover 242 chapters and yet total only nine examples across five books. Even if we account for the sample found in book ten, this still leaves just twenty-five examples out of seventy-two, distributed across 330 chapters — more than half the text. While books eleven to seventeen account for twelve examples against 104 chapters.

The distribution of parentheses in deW29 becomes even more disproportionate when we account for multiple examples found in a single chapter. As table one shows, six chapters include more than one example, with three chapters featuring two examples each. Once again, it is in book twenty that the preponderance of examples is most startling: with three examples, chapters six and eight, despite their short length, covering just two folios each, include more instances than nine books. The most disproportionate sample in deW29, however, occurs in book twenty, chapter eleven, which, with nine examples across a short chapter covering just one, two-sided folio, accounts for 12.5% of the total number. To put this into perspective, book twenty, chapter eleven contains more examples than those found across five books and 150

chapters. That such a disproportionate sample should be contained to a single chapter leads us naturally to question why this chapter should be accorded so great a representation (of which see below). The sheer dearth of examples combined with their inconsistent and vastly disproportionate distribution suggests that the inclusion of parentheses in deW29 is not guided by the length of any individual book or chapter.

Indeed, inconsistency of usage appears to be a common trend among early printers such as de Worde as they begin to experiment with extra-lexical characters. Writing about de Worde's use of parentheses in his editions of John of Trevisa's translation of Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon* (1502) and John Skelton's *The bowge of courte* (1499), Colette Moore notes that de Worde's works 'show a [...] haphazard use of punctuation that is starting to become linked to the function of direct speech reporting but not coherently or consistently from work to work, nor even always across a whole text'.⁶⁶ De Worde, writes Moore, 'is at the forefront of the development of conventions in punctuation usage', and his earlier editions demonstrate so 'haphazard' an approach because he is experimenting with the application of extra-lexical figures like parentheses for the purpose of representing direct speech.⁶⁷ In his earlier works, de Worde does not use parentheses to represent the quotative clause indicating direct speech ('said he', for example), but envelops the speech itself in parentheses. The conventionalisation of parentheses to report quotative clauses does not begin until the mid 1520s, attributed by Moore to a 'translation of Sallust's history of the Jugurthine War (1525) printed by Richard Pynson'.⁶⁸ Moore notes, however, that Pynson's practice does not extend beyond localised usage, and the

⁶⁶ Colette Moore, 'Before Quotation Marks: Quotative Parentheses in Early Printed Books', in *Speech Representation in the History of English: Topics and Approaches*, ed. by Peter J. Grund and Terry Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 29-51 (p. 38).

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 38.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 38.

‘marks are not consistently adopted by printers or authors’ at this time.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, despite the inconsistency by which editors like de Worde utilise parentheses in their earlier (pre-1520) editions, ‘we see that extra-lexical characters in type are being used to mark discursive boundaries – represented speech is emerging as one kind of discourse worth setting apart’.⁷⁰

The inconsistency by which parentheses are distributed in deW29, therefore, appears in keeping with the general usage seen in other texts of the same period. Of the more than 2000 quotative clauses dispersed throughout the *Morte* (that is, clauses that precede and introduce spoken discourse with the quotative ‘said’), only thirty-eight are enclosed in parentheses in deW29. One such example, from book twenty, chapter five, is as follows:

And than
that noble knyght fyr Launcelot tolde
them all / how he was harde bestad in
the quenes chambre / and how and in
what maner he efcaped from them / &
therfore **(fayd fyr Launcelot)** wyte ye
well my fayre lordes / I am fure there
is not but warre vnto me & myne / and
for bycaufe I haue flayne this nyght
these knyghtes / as fyr Agrauayne fyr
Gawaynes brother / and at the leest . xi

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 39.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 40.

of his felowes⁷¹

Quotative clauses are the most commonly parenthesised clause in deW29, accounting for just over half the total number. Their primary function is to represent direct speech, akin to the modern quotation mark. The difference between quotation marks and parentheses, however, as noted by Moore, is that ‘inverted commas mark the speech itself and the parentheses mark the reporting clause’.⁷² In the example given above, for instance, the quotative clause, ‘(fayd syr Launcelot)’, directs the attention of the reader inward, to the speech spoken by Lancelot. In its simplest form, writes Lennard, the exploitation of parentheses is used ‘to command attention to something that does not deserve it’.⁷³ In the given example, the quotative clause is fairly innocuous and certainly not unique: similar such clauses appear very consistently throughout the *Morte*. We must question, then, why de Worde should choose to enclose just thirty-eight of these clauses (out of thousands) in parentheses. Such a disproportionate sample is partly explained by what Moore writes regarding the inconsistency by which extra-lexical figures are employed by early printers. If we judge parentheses in deW29 based solely upon their distribution, then we arrive at a similar conclusion: that their inclusion appears to be seemingly arbitrary, lacking in either design or consistency. Consistency here, however, is measured against the sample size on a book-by-book and chapter-by-chapter basis. We can see from the evidence supplied in table one that usage does appear to be more consistent in the later books (books eighteen to twenty-one) than earlier in the text. With only thirty-five examples across four books and seventy-two chapters, however, the number of examples from the last four

⁷¹ Sig. [2nd] B1v, 1st col.

⁷² Colette Moore, *Quoting Speech in Early English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 74.

⁷³ Lennard, p. 37.

books is consistent only when measured against the remaining examples spread across twelve books; that is to say, thirty-five examples, while a relatively small number, do demonstrate an increasingly consistent approach based upon the dearth of examples found in earlier books.

Nevertheless, if we define consistency based not upon the number of parenthesised phrases found in deW29 but on their thematic placement (that is, where in the text they are located, and the significance of the speech they represent) then it is possible to determine a function for parentheses beyond their semantic value. We must consider, for instance, why de Worde highlights certain clauses over others. Why parentheses are employed more rigorously in the final books. And why single chapters (such as book twenty, chapter eleven) contain more examples than those found across six books. In short, despite the evidence thus far given indicating the general inconsistency by which extra-lexical figures like parentheses are employed in early sixteenth-century editions, inconsistency of inclusion nevertheless remains a useful starting point by which to measure the function of parentheses if we think beyond consistency based upon the total number of examples found in the edition and question instead alternate methods by which to measure the consistency and distribution of parentheses in deW29.

In this way, the paucity by which parentheses are inserted aids rather than hinders our attempt at ascertaining an interpretative function for parentheses in deW29. If de Worde can be shown to have inserted hundreds of examples, parenthesising quotative clauses consistently throughout his edition, for instance, then the evidence would point towards conventional practice intended to consistently represent reported speech. That parentheses encasing quotative clauses appear so sporadically in deW29, despite the overwhelming number of other such clauses, leads us to question the thematic significance of these clauses over others.

As it should by now be clear, based on the above-quoted comments of Lennard and Moore, in the example of parentheses enclosing quotative clauses, it is not the clause itself that is important but the ensuing speech introduced by the quotative. That is to say, on a number of occasions in deW29, parentheses function as discourse markers, intended to convey direct speech. The example given above, for instance, at book twenty, chapter five, is thematically significant insofar that the speech following the quotative '(fayd fyr Launcelot)' discloses to the reader important information about events that will follow. Specifically, the speech refers to Lancelot's adulterous affair with Guinevere and its implications after they are found together in Guinevere's chamber by the knights Agravaine and Mordred. In the speech, Lancelot relays to his assembled knights the story of his escape from the chamber, how he slew several Round Table knights, and of his certainty that his actions will ultimately result in 'warre vnto me and myne'. The ensuing war between Lancelot and Arthur encompasses the remainder of the *Morte* and leads to the final downfall of both Lancelot himself and of Arthur's kingdom. Indeed, in the next chapter (book twenty, chapter six), three examples of a quotative clause placed in parentheses appear within the same small parcel of speech, acting as a direct continuation of the example given in the previous chapter. Having relayed to his knights the story of his battle in Guinevere's chamber, Lancelot then declares before them all:

O good

lord Jesu defende me from shame (**fayd
fyr Launcelot**) and kepe and faue my
lady the quene from vylany and from
shamefull dethe / and that she neuer be
destroyed in my defaute. And therefore
my fayre lordes / ye that be of my kynne

and my frendes (**fayd fyr Launcelot**)
what wyll ye do. Than they fayd all /
we wyll doo as ye wyll doo your felfe.
I put this to you (**fayd fyr Launcelot**)
that yf my lorde kynge Arthur by euyll
counfeyle / wyll to morowe in his hete
put my lady the quene to the fyre ^{/74}

When read in isolation, these examples do not appear to be immediately significant. However, if we read these examples as part of a wider cluster, then a specific theme emerges indicative of an interpretative response for the implementation of parentheses in deW29: specifically, that de Worde inserts parentheses to those clauses that refer directly to the ongoing affair between Lancelot and Guinevere. The three examples given in book twenty, chapter six directly inform (and, in essence, are informed by) the example given in the previous chapter because they are united by this shared theme — a fact that defies conventional definitions for the implementation of parentheses. Similarly, in another example, at book nineteen, chapter six, de Worde uses parentheses to signpost for the reader Lancelot’s capture by the knight Meliagraunt in Guinevere’s chamber: ‘ye fhall not (**fayd fyr Meliagraunce**) faye nay with your proude language / for here ye may all fe [...] / that by þ^e quene this nyght a wounded knyghte hath layen.’⁷⁵ When read together, these five examples across three chapters demonstrate a thematic basis on which to read parentheses in deW29, whereby distribution is not primarily decided by the grammatical function of the enclosed clause but in accordance with its thematic content. De Worde uses parentheses to signpost clauses that introduce specific ideas and themes. Of the

⁷⁴ Sig. [2nd] B1v, 2nd col.

⁷⁵ Sig. Y5r, 1st col.

five examples thus far considered, we might claim coincidence as a reasonable explanation for their shared subject matter were it not for the dearth of examples found elsewhere in deW29. While five examples are not enough to suggest too specific a theme or editorial intention for the implementation of parentheses, we can nevertheless clearly identify an emerging focus on the topic of Lancelot and Guinevere, which leads us naturally to question if other examples in deW29 adhere to this same theme.

The circumstances of Lancelot's affair with Guinevere are not isolated to these two instances alone, however. Earlier in the text, at book eighteen, chapter one, their relationship is further highlighted by the insertion of parentheses around a reference to Malory's French book:

And passyng gladde was the
kyng & the quene of fyr Launcelot and
of fyr Bors / for they had ben passyng
longe awaye in the queft of þ^e Sangre
all. Than **(as the frenche booke sayth)**
fyr Launcelot began for to reforte vnto
quene Gueneuer agayne / and forgate
the promesse and the perfeccyon that he
made in the queft.⁷⁶

This is one of nine references to Malory's French book enveloped in parentheses in deW29. Arguably, the inclusion of parentheses around such a phrase does not elicit immediate attention, conforming, in fact, to standard definitions of parentheses, such as those given by the Oxford

⁷⁶ Sig. S6r, 1st col.

English Dictionary as an ‘explanation, aside, or afterthought [inserted] into a passage with which it has not necessarily any connection’.⁷⁷ Certainly our reading of the text would not suffer were we to omit this clause altogether; and it is the very extraneous nature of such a parenthesised clause that, when read in isolation, the inclusion of parentheses in deW29 appears wholly unremarkable, even conventional. How then do we ascertain an interpretative function for a pair of extra-lexical characters so unremarkable in their application? In answer to this, we must consider what the text surrounding the parenthesised clause is telling us. And here the meaning is immediately apparent. Having returned from the Grail Quest, Lancelot, despite the noble ideals of perfection and virtuous living so intrinsic to the attainment of the Grail, begins again ‘for to reforte vnto quene Gueneuer’. The significance of this passage is aptly summarised by Dorsey Armstrong:

This passage identifies all of the elements of the final collapse of the Arthurian order: the fractious nature of the Round Table fellowship, seriously weakened in that only a “remanaunte” return to court from the Grail Quest; the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere, once a source of support for the community, now the site of much suspicion and gossip.⁷⁸

By enclosing a relatively innocuous clause within parentheses, de Worde draws attention to the subject immediately following, which in this instance is not just thematically significant to the remainder of the *Morte Darthur*, but is in fact deemed by de Worde to be so important that the

⁷⁷ See the entry ‘parentheses’ in the online edition of the oxford English Dictionary < https://www.oed.com/searchType=dictionary&q=parentheses&_searchBtn=Search >

⁷⁸ Dorsey Armstrong, *Gender and the Chivalric Community in Malory’s ‘Morte Darthur’* (Florida: University of Florida Press, 2003), p. 174.

moment at which Lancelot begins again ‘to reforte vnto quene Gueneuer’ is captured in a woodcut appended to the opening of book eighteen. The woodcut shows four persons, Arthur and Bors talking in the background, with Lancelot and Guinevere standing front-and-centre before a castle. Guinevere, as D. Thomas Hanks, Jr. has written, ‘points to Lancelot with her left hand; her right hand is at his waist, either pushing him gently backward or — possibly — caressing him’.⁷⁹ ‘The combined figures’, continues Hanks, ‘comprise a major statement’.⁸⁰ Had de Worde’s reader been left with any uncertainty about the subject of the woodcut, the parenthesised clause appearing atop the next folio (and opposite the woodcut) erases any ambiguity about the identity of the two lovers. Indeed, in this instance, parentheses actualises the woodcut, providing a textual parallel to the pictorial scene. De Worde further erases any doubt the reader may have about the nature of Lancelot and Guinevere’s relationship by the placement of the next parenthesised clause, coming in the next chapter, book eighteen, chapter two. Again referencing Malory’s French book, in this example we encounter Guinevere’s inner turmoil at Lancelot’s departure from court: ‘So whan fyr Launcelot was departed / the quene made no maner of outwarde sorowe / [...] but [...] (as þ^e frenllhe booke fayth) she toke greate thought’.⁸¹

Throughout books eighteen to twenty-one, de Worde continues to parenthesise clauses pertaining to the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere. Thus, in book nineteen, chapter eight, we encounter Lancelot trapped within a cave ‘in full grete payne’ where ‘euery daye there came a lady and brought hym his meet and his drynke / & wowed hym to haue layen by

⁷⁹ D. Thomas Hanks Jr., ‘Women in Wood in Wynkyn de Worde’s 1498 *Morte Darthur*’, *Arthuriana* 30 (2020), 54-72 (p. 66).

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 67.

⁸¹ Sig. S5v, 2nd col.

her'.⁸² Ever the 'noble knyght', however, Lancelot rejects the advances of this lady, at which time he is admonished by her and told 'ye may neuer come out of this pryson but yf ye haue my helpe'. The lady then proceeds to tell Lancelot that Guinevere will be 'brente in your defaute / onles that ye be there at the daye of batayle'.⁸³ Upon finding that Guinevere is due to be put to death at the stake, Lancelot exclaims his misery at this news, but he nevertheless remains steadfast in his refusal to lie with the lady, expressing instead his confidence that in his absence 'some good knyght / eyther of my blode / or els some other that loueth me / [...] wyl take my quarrel in hande'.⁸⁴ He then repeats his knightly oath, declaring, 'And yf there were no moo women in this lande but you / I wolde not haue ado with you'. To this, the lady replies:

Than art thou
 fhamed (**fayd the lady**) and defstroyed
 for euer. As for worldes fhame (**fayd
 fyr Launcelot**) Jefu defende me / and
 as for my dyftresse / it is welcome what
 fomeuer it be that god sendeth me.⁸⁵

In this example, not only does de Worde capture both quotative clauses in parentheses, but the second clause, '(fayd fyr Launcelot)', is unique to deW29; it does not appear in either C or deW98. By adding the second clause, de Worde distinguishes between speakers, thus ironing

⁸² Sig Y6r, 1st col.

⁸³ Sig. Y5v, 2nd col.

⁸⁴ Sig Y5v, 2nd col.

⁸⁵ Sig. Y6r, 1st col.

out any ambiguity, while attaching special import to what is being said: Lancelot's refusal of the lady's advances further testifies to his loyalty to Guinevere. Indeed, in a further example (again referencing Malory's French book) at book twenty, chapter eight, Lancelot rescues Guinevere as she is about to be executed and thereafter 'rode his way with the queen (**as the frenflhe booke fayth**) vnto Joyous garde / and there he kepte her as a noble knyght lholde do'.⁸⁶ Finally, near the end of the *Morte*, at book twenty-one, chapter eleven, Guinevere's dying words are set apart by parentheses:

I befeche almygh
ty god that I may neuer haue power
to fe fyr Launcelot w^t my worldly eyen.
And this (**fayd al the ladyes**) was euer
her prayer all theſe two dayes / ⁸⁷

From the examples thus far given is it possible to determine an interpretative design for the implementation of parentheses in deW29. None of these examples seem to be in any way peculiar or anything but conventional; and thus, when read in isolation, the implementation of parentheses appears hardly to merit consideration. Reviewing parentheses in deW29 based solely upon their distribution, however, is an inadequate solution by which to question their implementation because their placement within the text appears too infrequently to occupy, upon initial inspection, an interpretative function. As such, by questioning only *where* in the text parentheses are placed, rather than *how* they are used, the results of such an analysis will be limited based upon the dearth of examples. Thus, by thinking beyond the semantic value of parentheses, focusing instead upon the text surrounding, but not encased within, the brackets,

⁸⁶ Sig. [2nd] B3v, 1st col.

⁸⁷ Sig. [2nd] E3r, 2nd col.

a pattern has begun to emerge: on multiple occasions, parentheses exhibit a special interest in Lancelot and Guinevere. With the total number of examples (seventy two) being so few, such a pattern cannot be mistaken for coincidence. If parentheses in deW29 are not to be read as purely arbitrary, then, we must conclude that their presence is deliberate (as deliberate as a woodcut) and our response should therefore consider the interpretative value of parentheses as indicative of meaning. To quote Lennard:

The repetitive insistence of grammarians and lexicographers that parenthetical clauses are subordinate makes the idea of emphatic lunulae [parentheses] strange to the modern reader, but lunulae only distinguish. Their valency, whether that which they distinguish is subordinate, or emphatic, is determined by the pressures of use, definition and convention on the context in which they are employed: and there is nothing in principle or practice to prevent them from being as inevitably emphatic as a box drawn around an item on a list.⁸⁸

Put another way: parentheses in deW29 are intended to emphasise, not de-emphasise.

A unique feature of parentheses in deW29 is that they frequently refer/ relate to events elsewhere in the text that are also marked by brackets — a matter we have thus far considered with the above-mentioned examples. The aforementioned reference to Malory's French book, for instance, given in book eighteen, chapter one, relates directly to an earlier example found in book eleven, chapter fourteen. By resorting 'vnto quene Gueneuer agayne', Lancelot, as we have discussed, forgets the 'promesse and perfeccyon that he made in the queft'. Lancelot's failure in the Quest is indicative of his own inherent imperfection; indeed, as we learn earlier

⁸⁸ Lennard, p. 5.

in the *Morte*, the Grail can only be seen by a perfect knight. Thus, at book eleven, chapter fourteen, dying from their injuries sustained in a joust, Sir Percival and Sir Ector are healed of their wounds by the coming of the Holy Grail, at which point Ector's ensuing speech reveals the perfection a knight must attain if he is to see the Grail:

O Je

fu fayd fyr Percyuale / what may this
meane that we ben thus heled / & right
now we were at the poynt of dyenge.
I wote full well (**fayd fyr Ector**) what
it is. It is an holy vessell that is borne
by a mayden / and therin is a parte of
the holy blode of our lorde Jesu Chryft
bleffed mote he be / but it may not be
seen (**fayd fir Ector**) but yf it be by a per
fyte man.⁸⁹

Spoken by Lancelot's half-brother, Ector de Maris, this short speech clearly alludes to the symbolic importance of the Grail as a mark of knightly perfection. Ector's reference to the 'perfyte man' foregrounds Lancelot's inability to attain the Grail, which is attributed to his imperfection due to his relationship with Guinevere. There is, moreover, an analogue to this example found slightly earlier at book eleven, chapter two, wherein the Grail is first introduced. In this example, a damsel enters the court of King Pelles bearing a 'vessel of golde bytwene her

⁸⁹ Sig K3r. 2nd col.

hands', at which point those present 'kneled deuoutly and fayd his prayers'.⁹⁰ Upon seeing the vessel, Lancelot exclaims, 'O Jesu [...] what may this mean', to which King Pelles replies:

This is (**fayd kynge Pelles**) the
rychest thyng þ^t ony man
hath lyuyng. And whan this
thyng goth aboute / the
rounde table shall be broken.
and wyte ye well fayd kynge
Pelles / that this is þ^e holy
Sancgreall which ye haue here
seen.⁹¹

This is the only instance in deW29 in which Pelles' name is placed in parentheses. Interestingly, neither the Winchester MS., C, or deW98 read '(fayd kynge Pelles)', reading instead 'fayd the kyng', with Pelles' name omitted. In this speech, Pelles foregrounds the same themes as those present in the example at book eighteen, chapter one, specifically what Armstrong refers to as the destruction of the Round Table due to the loss of so many knights during the Quest. This example corresponds directly to Ector's speech given above. Ector's description of the Grail as an 'holy vessel borne by a mayden' reminds the reader that just a few chapters earlier the Grail is introduced before Pelles and his court by a 'damoyfell passyng fayre and yonge'. The parenthetical clause in both examples corresponds directly to each other while establishing the common theme of perfection as intrinsic to success in the Quest.

⁹⁰ Sig I2r, 1st col.

⁹¹ Ibid, 2nd col.

Lancelot's imperfection in the Grail Quest is further highlighted by de Worde via parentheses in another example, at book sixteen, chapter one. Here, a speech delivered by Gawain is intended to mark Lancelot as the equal (but for one factor) of those three knights, Percival, Bors and Galahad, who are successful in the Quest. Thus, as Gawain encounters Sir Ector during the Quest, the following exchange is emphasized in deW29:

One thyng meruayelet me fayd fyr
Ector / I haue mette with .xx. knygh
tes felowes of myne / and they all com
playne as I do. I meruayle (**fayd fyr
Gawayne**) where fyr Launcelot your
brother is. Truly fayd fyr Ector / I can
not here of hym / ne of fyr Galahad / fyr
Percyuale / nor of fyr Bors. Let them
be fayd fyr Gawayne / for they haue no
erthly peres. And yf one thyng were
not in fyr Launcelot / he had no felowe
of none erthly man. But he is as we be
but yf that he toke more payne vpon
hym.⁹²

This passage corresponds closely to that found in book eighteen, chapter one, insofar that Gawain's speech alludes to the fact that Lancelot's spiritual imperfection is what sets him apart

⁹² Sig. P1r, 2nd col.

in the Quest from Galahad, Bors and Percival, all of whom are successful. Specifically, Gawain comments that ‘yf one thyng were not in fyr Launcelot’ (in other words, were it not for a single flaw in his character, namely his love for Guinevere) then Lancelot would have no ‘felowe of none erthly man’. It is because of Lancelot’s imperfection, however, that Lancelot, as Gawain says, ‘is as we be’. It is made clear by Gawain that ‘yf [...] he toke more payne vpon hym’, that is, if he set aside his romantic attachment for spiritual attainment, then Lancelot would succeed in the Quest. That he does not is remarked upon by Malory (and highlighted by de Worde) following the reference to the French book at book eighteen, chapter one. By forgetting the ‘promesse and the perfeccyon that he made in the queft’, Lancelot is superior to Gawain among the Round Table but inferior (when compared to Percival or Galahad) in his spiritual attainment because he ‘began for to reforte vnto quene Gueneuer agayne’.⁹³

What these examples collectively demonstrate is that there is a consistency in the distribution of parentheses in deW29 if we account for the thematic content of each individual inclusion. My reading of parentheses is conducted upon the premise that they should not be read as single units but as forming clusters from which a common theme emerges. Lancelot’s imperfection and failure in the Grail Quest as a result of his relationship with Guinevere is repeatedly highlighted by de Worde across a number of parenthetical clauses distributed across multiple books and chapters. Indeed, Lancelot is by far the most oft-represented character in deW29 by the number of parenthetical-quotative clauses attributed to him, with eleven examples. The following table outlines the attribution of each speaker to the book and chapter in the text wherein the parenthetical-quotative clause is located:

⁹³ Sig. S6r, 1st col.

Table 2: Attribution

<i>Character</i>	<i>Number of Quotatives</i>	<i>Book and chapter</i>
Lancelot	11	6.11
		19.8
		20.5
		20.6
		20.6
		20.6
		20.11
		20.11
		20.11
		20.11
		20.17
Gawain	6	16.1
		20.8
		20.8
		20.11
		20.11
		20.11
Bors	3	18.5
		18.16
		21.13
Ector	2	11.9
		11.9

One example each

Kay	10.3	Palomides	10.82
Lamorak	10.17	Pelles	11.2
Tristram	10.65	Galahad	17.7
Arthur	10.78	Meliagraunt	19.6
Guinevere	10.81	Lucan	21.4

*Examples where attribution
is to an unnamed character*

Good man	14.7	She	14.8
He	16.2	Lady	19.8
Lady	19.10	Ladies	21.11

With eleven examples out of thirty-eight in total, Lancelot is disproportionately represented against other significant characters. It is also clear that, with the exception of the first quotative clause, which appears at book six, chapter eleven, the next ten parenthetical-quotative clauses attributed to Lancelot all appear in books nineteen and twenty. Similarly, Gawain, with six examples, is the second best represented character, and except for one example, the majority of clauses feature in book twenty. While Bors, with three examples, is the third best represented character, again all featuring in the later books (the example at book twenty-one, chapter thirteen, however, is an anomaly and its attribution to Bors is unique to deW29). Once again, the first nine books are disproportionately underrepresented, with only a single parenthetical-quotative clause given out of 242 chapters. Interestingly, many of the leading characters in the *Morte*, Arthur especially, feature hardly at all in de Worde's parentheses. Thus, among others, Arthur, Guinevere, Galahad and Tristan are each given only a single reference, while characters such as King Mark, Mordred, Percival and Merlin are omitted from inclusion altogether.

It is obvious, then, that de Worde places special emphasis on Lancelot in his choice of quotative clauses to be enclosed in parentheses. Table two refers only to the thirty-eight parenthetical-quotative clauses in deW29, but among the remaining examples, Lancelot is also disproportionately represented. Two examples are particularly noteworthy because they highlight Lancelot's pre-eminence within the text, and are oft-quoted as such by critics. In book

twelve, chapter seven, Lancelot, assuming the pseudonym Le Chevalier Malfet, is described as being the ‘fayrest knyght and the myghtyft man’ alive:

Also we haue in this castell the fayrest
knyghte and the myghtyft man that
is **(I dare well faye)** now lyuyng / and
he calleth hymselfe le cheualler malfet.⁹⁴

The phrase ‘dare well say’, or some variation thereof, is used frequently by Malory in praise of a knight to whom there is general agreement is worthy of the highest regard. Indeed, to publicly speak in favour of a knight, to ‘dare well faye’, at once legitimises the knight before the eyes of the court because it is a public declaration of the knight’s unrivalled reputation. In another example, at book ten, chapter seventy-three, de Worde adds parentheses to the following remark about Lancelot:

And as for fyr Laūcelot and there
had ben fyue houdred knyghtes in the
medowe / he wolde not haue refused one
of them / and yet he fayd he wolde
refuse me / by that agayne I wyft that
it was fyr Launcelot / for euer he forbe
reth me in euery place / and sheweth me
grete kyndres. And of all knyghtes I
out take none **(fay what men wyll fay)**

⁹⁴ Sig. L1r, 1st col.

he bereth the floure of all chyualry / tell
it hym who wyll / and he be well an
gred / and that hym lyft to do his vtter
meft / without fauoure /⁹⁵

Tristram gives this speech immediately after rebuking Sir Palomides for having knocked both Lancelot and Arthur from their horses, which he did to impress Isode, for whom he bears an unrequited love. The importance of this scene is in how each knight recognises their fellows based upon their respective acknowledgements. Tristram, for instance, knows it to be Arthur who Palomides has unseated only after Lancelot refers to him as a ‘man of great worship’: in the hierarchy of Malory’s world, Lancelot, as the ‘floure of all chyualry’, is outranked in prowess by Arthur alone. Thus, when Lancelot gives such praise to Arthur, Tristram understands that he could only be referring to Arthur. As the greatest knight ‘(faye what men wyll faye)’, Lancelot is both internally (within the *Morte*; before the eyes of the court) and externally, to the reader, exalted above all others. By encasing both these phrases in parentheses, de Worde explicitly highlights for the reader the position Lancelot occupies within the text. Moreover, Tristram’s recognition of Arthur through Lancelot’s praise further enforces the knightly hierarchy underpinning much of the *Morte*. Indeed, in the following case study, I introduce another type of parenthetical clause in deW29, what I am here terming ‘prepositional phrases’ because they all begin with the preposition *except*. These attest to Lancelot’s pre-eminence while also demonstrating an interest on behalf of de Worde in highlighting the established position of Malory’s three best knights, in order: Lancelot, Tristram, and Lamorak.

⁹⁵ Sig. G6v, 2nd col.

III The Preposition *except* in Parentheses

The preposition *except* appears relatively infrequently in the *Morte* but when it does it is typically used to compare one knight to another by means of exclusion. In one example, of all earthly men, Lancelot loves best Sir Lamorak ‘excepte fyr Triftram’.⁹⁶ In another example, Percival is peerless of holy deeds ‘excepte fyr Galahad’.⁹⁷ Partiality of acceptance through the preposition *except* is Malory’s preferred method for establishing a hierarchy of knighthood based upon who is judged to be the better knight against who is ranked as best. Praise through exception, however, is not intended to undermine the position of those knights ranked beneath another, most often Lancelot, who, as the flower of chivalry, occupies the highest position after Arthur himself. On the contrary, praising Tristram as the best knight *except* for Lancelot elevates his position to the second best knight of the Round Table, while Lamorak as the best knight *except* for Tristram is therefore ranked as the third best knight in the *Morte*. Associating with or jousting against a high-ranking knight can secure a knight’s status among the Round Table. Sir Gareth, for instance, at book seven, chapter eleven, upon being told that he shall ‘mete with the a knyght [...] of mooft worlhyp in the worlde / excepte kyng Arthur’, replies: ‘I wyll it well [...] the more he is of worlhyp / the more shall my worlhyp increase’.⁹⁸ To meet with a knight second only to Arthur (which could only be Lancelot), elevates Gareth’s position within Malory’s hierarchy of knighthood.

In another example, *except* is employed this time to highlight the pre-eminence of Arthur’s court. In the episode commonly referred to as ‘The Healing of Sir Urry’, Urry’s mother brings

⁹⁶ Sig, E1r, 2nd col.

⁹⁷ Sig, [2nd] A2r, 1st col.

⁹⁸ Sig, I4v, 2nd col.

her son to Arthur's court to be healed of his wounds, explaining that for seven years she has without success 'paffed through all the lands chryften for to haue hym heled by / excepte this one'.⁹⁹ After gathering all of the knights of the Round Table, Urry is healed by Lancelot, proving Arthur's court to be the *exception* among all Christian lands, wherein Urry's mother had failed. While the preposition *except* is predominantly used to praise the prowess of one knight against another, higher ranking, knight, it is occasionally employed to demonstrate the strained relationship between certain knights of the Round Table. For example, on his return to Winchester, Arthur makes great joy of Lancelot, as does 'fyr Gawayne and all the knyghtes of the roūde table / excepte fyr Agrauayne and fyr Mordred'.¹⁰⁰ The contrast between the exalted reception received by Lancelot from the court with the exception of Agravain and Mordred brings into focus the simmering tension present within Arthur's court, which will ultimately contribute to its final collapse. Similar acrimony is again preceded by the preposition *except* earlier in the *Morte*, when Lamorak is commended by Guinevere 'and all good knyghtes [...] excepte fyr Gawains brethren'.¹⁰¹ The simultaneous praise and rejection of Lamorak reminds the reader of how unstable the Round Table really is, while also questioning the integrity of Gawain and his brothers: if all 'good knyghtes' *except* the Orkney brothers praise Lamorak, does their hostility therefore render them as unworthy of occupying a seat at the Round Table? The preposition *except* is again employed by Malory as a reminder that while Gawain and his brothers demonstrate frequent hostility towards the Round Table knights, Lamorak especially, one Orkney brother, Sir Gareth, is the exception:

Fye vpon trefon fayd fyr Tryfram /

⁹⁹ Sig, [2nd] A1v, 1st col.

¹⁰⁰ Sig, U6r, 2nd col.

¹⁰¹ Sig, E1v, 2nd col.

for it kylleth my herte to here this tale.
 So doth it myne fayd fyr Gareth / bre
 therne as they be myne I fhall neuer
 loue them / nor drawe me to theyr felaw
 fhyp for that dede. Now speke we of
 theyr dedes fayd fyr Palomydes / & let
 hym be / for his lyfe ye may not gete a
 gayne. That is the more pyte fayd fyr
 Dynadan / for fyr Gawayn and his bre
 therne **(excepte you fir Gareth)** hate all
 the good knyghtes of the rounde table
 for the mooft partye. for well I wote
 and they myght pryuely / they hate my
 lorde fyr Launcelot and all his kynne /
 and grete preuy despyte they haue at
 hym / and that is my lorde fyr Launce
 lot well ware of / ¹⁰²

Here, the prepositional clause referring to Sir Gareth is contextually significant insofar that it testifies both to Gareth's loyalty to Lancelot over his own brothers and to Lancelot's awareness of the Orkney brothers' hostility towards him.

More pertinent to this study, however, is the fact that de Worde, as we can see, encloses the prepositional clause, '(excepte you fir Gareth)', in parentheses. The *Concordance to the Works*

¹⁰² Sig. F4r, 1st col.

of *Sir Thomas Malory* lists thirty-six instances of the preposition *except* in the *Morte*; eight of these are enclosed in parentheses in deW29. Prepositional clauses placed in parenthesis are significant for a number of reasons, not least because they provide compelling evidence in favour of an interpretative function for parentheses in deW29. Grammatically, their appearance defies standard definitions of parentheses as extraneous to the text-proper. As the above example indicates, the preposition *except* is grammatically and contextually relevant to the text, and not intended to be read as a rhetorical aside. Unlike other parenthesised clauses in deW29, such as those pertaining to Malory's French book '(as the frenllhe booke fayth)', which function as obvious parenthetical asides and could be omitted without disrupting or altering the primary context, prepositional clauses are directly relevant because they explicitly contribute to the ongoing narrative while engaging with Malorian notions of good knighthood. The above example, for instance, relating to Sir Gareth, is orthographically parenthetical insofar that de Worde adds round brackets without necessarily being rhetorically parenthetical: as Sir Dinadan is speaking directly to Sir Gareth, there is a need for him to add the caveat '(except you fir Gareth)' so as not to insinuate that Gareth like his brothers 'hate all the good knyghtes of the rounde table'. This distinction is directly relevant and can hardly be called extraneous: Gareth's close friendship with Lancelot, despite the animosity felt by his brothers, will have tragic consequences later in the *Morte*.

Indeed, shortly before Dinadan's praise of Gareth with the preposition *in parentheses* '(excepte you fir Gareth)', another parenthesised clause is given by de Worde at book ten, chapter fifty-five, in which Tristram rebukes the Orkney brothers for the murder of Sir Lamorak. Tristram denounces Gawain and his brothers as being 'the greteft destroyers and murtherers of good knyghtes that ben now in all this realme', adding:

For it is but late
agone (**as I herde faye**) that fyr Ga
wayne and ye flewe amonge you a bet
ter knyght than euer ye were / whiche
was the noble knyght fyr Lamoracke
de Galys.¹⁰³

Tristram's rebuke is followed by his regret that 'I wolde I had ben by fyr Lamoracke at his deth'. To this, Gaheris replies, 'Than sholdest thou haue gone the same waye as he dyd'.¹⁰⁴ The arrogance displayed by Gaheris in thinking the Orkney brothers to be a match for Tristram, the second best knight after Lancelot, is answered by Tristram's warning reply: 'than had it ben nede to haue ben many moo knyghtes than ye are'.¹⁰⁵ Tristram's acknowledgement of his own superiority over the Orkney brothers is tempered by his realisation that, as Arthur's nephews, they are immune to retribution for the crime of killing Lamorak. 'For kynge Arthurs fake', says Tristram, 'I shall let you passe'.¹⁰⁶ By enclosing both this and the aforementioned prepositional clause in parentheses, de Worde emphasises the divisions present within Arthur's kingdom. The Orkney brothers *except* for Sir Gareth 'hate all the good knyghtes of the rounde table' and therefore fail to adhere to the chivalric oath exemplified by Malory's best knights, Tristram included. Moreover, Tristram's wish to fight alongside Sir Lamorak is symbolic of his status: ranked second after Lancelot but ahead of Lamorak, Tristram is best placed to fight alongside

¹⁰³ Sig. F1v, 2nd col.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

or avenge Lamorak's death, and in any other circumstance (namely, had the offending knights not been Arthur's kin) this is the likely outcome.

This is not the only example in deW29 in which de Worde highlights with parentheses Gawain's special status as Arthur's nephew. Later, at book twenty, chapter eleven (wherein nine parenthetical clauses are included, the largest single cluster in deW29), Gawain is once again marked as the exception among knights in his distrust of Lancelot (of which more below). In the present analysis, however, we can see from the two examples just given that they are not intended to be read as mere parenthetical asides. On the contrary, they are contextually analogous, the first example denouncing the Orkney brothers as 'murderers of good knightes', and the second pardoning Gareth from such censure. Other examples, too, follow a similar pattern in deW29. That is, prepositional clauses placed in parentheses frequently correspond closely to other examples, such as parenthetical-quotative clauses, forming clusters from which a particular theme emerges. We have discussed already, for instance, how Malory establishes within the *Morte* a triptych hierarchy of knighthood from which the three best knights are Lancelot, Tristram, and Lamorak. This is signalled specifically through use of the preposition *except*, which is used by Malory for the purpose of comparison and contrast. In deW29, the eight parenthetical clauses inclusive of the preposition *except* appear chiefly to highlight the hierarchical structure pertaining to Malory's knightly triptych, with Lancelot, once again, featuring prominently.

The first example of the preposition *except* appearing in parentheses, for instance, occurring in book six, chapter nine, begins shortly after Lancelot's defeat of the knight Sir Tarquin, who had won the shields of many knights of the Round Table, and is described by Lancelot as the

‘byggyst man that euer I mette withal’. Upon his defeat of Tarquin, Sir Gaheris marvels at Lancelot’s prowess in battle, declaring:

and this daye I faye
ye are the beft knyght in the worlde /
for ye haue flayne this day in my syght
the myghtyest man and þ^e beft knyght
(excepte your felfe) that euer I fawe.
Fayre fyr sayd fyr Gaherys / I praye
you tell me your name. Syr my name
is fyr Laūcelot du lake / whiche ought
to helpe you of ryght for kyng Arthurs
fak / and in especyall for my lorde fyr
Gawaynes fak your dere brother / ¹⁰⁷

Malory’s use of the preposition *except* makes it clear that Lancelot has just slain one of the best knights alive; having witnessed the event, Gaheris is compelled to compliment Lancelot indirectly by declaring that he has slain ‘the myghtyest man and þ^e beft knyght’ Gaheris had, to that time, encountered. With Tarquin defeated, Lancelot now occupies the position not only of the ‘beft knyght’ but of saviour of the Round Table. This is revealed through Lancelot’s recognition of the shields Tarquin had taken in his defeat of Arthur’s knights: ‘I haue seen’, Lancelot says to Gaheris, ‘many of theyr fheldes that I know / on yonder tree’.¹⁰⁸ This particular scene is crucial to establishing Lancelot’s position in the *Morte*. By rescuing Gaheris (Gawain’s

¹⁰⁷ Sig. i7r, 1st col.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

brother and Arthur's nephew), Lancelot simultaneously kills a known enemy of the Round Table, thus elevating his status before Arthur's court, while also rescuing a member of Arthur's own family, therefore securing the king's loyalty. Upon Lancelot's return to court at the conclusion to book six, 'kyng Arthur & all the court were full glad of his comynge'.¹⁰⁹ Gaheis, having witnessed Lancelot's defeat of Tarquin, publicly declares:

I fawe
all the batayle from the begynnyng to
the endyng / and there he tolde kyng
Arthur all how it was / & how fyr Tur
quyne was the strongest knyght that
euer he fawe / excepte fyr Launcelot / ¹¹⁰

Again, through use of the preposition *except* to praise Lancelot through comparison with Tarquin, Gaheis's pronouncement elevates Lancelot's status within the court, ensuring that all knights know the details of Lancelot's battle and defeat of the formerly 'strongest knyght'. As Ruth Lexton writes about the public nature of worship in the *Morte*:

Lancelot is 'the beste knight in the worlde' not simply because he slew 'the beste knyght' but because Gaheis saw him do it [...] and is prepared to testify to his reputation. The performance of worship must happen publicly, before at least one witness, for it to count in a knight's record of achievement [...] Naming himself and then going on to

¹⁰⁹ Sig. k4v, 1st col.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

name the knights he has rescued from Tarquin, Lancelot confirms his worshipful status before the Round Table.¹¹¹

By the end of book six, Lancelot has attained the ‘gretest name of ony knyght of the worlde / and moost was he honoured / bothe of hygh and lowe’.¹¹² Lancelot’s worshipful status as the ‘best knyght’ is drawn by Malory but highlighted specifically to the reader by de Worde. By enclosing the prepositional clause ‘(excepte your felfe)’ in parentheses, de Worde draws attention to Lancelot’s unrivalled status within the text.

This is not the only occurrence in which Lancelot’s prowess in battle is highlighted by de Worde, however. Only two chapters after the prepositional clause, at book six, chapter eleven, Lancelot liberates the castle of Tintagel from two giants, at which time the assembled gentlewomen declare this to be the ‘moost dede of worlhyp that euer ony knyght dyd in this worlde’.¹¹³ Having succeeded where many ‘fayre and goodly knyghtes’ have failed, Lancelot then proceeds to cement his reputation with the following exhortation:

Now may
ye faye (**fayd fyr Launcelot**) vnto your
frendes how and who hath delyuered
you / & greet them from me / & yf I come
in to any of your marches / fhewe me

¹¹¹ Ruth Lexton, *Contested Language in Malory’s Morte Darthur: The Politics of Romance in Fifteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014), p. 84.

¹¹² Sig. k4v, 1st col.

¹¹³ Sig. [2nd] i8r, 2nd col.

fuche chere as ye haue caufe / and what
treafour there is in this castell / I gyue
it you for a rewarde¹¹⁴

As the information provided in table one indicates, between books one and nine, totalling 242 chapters, this is the only example of a quotative clause enclosed in parentheses, despite the *Concordance* listing more than 800 other such clauses in the same area; the next example of a parenthetical-quotative clause does not occur until book ten, chapter three. Of the eleven parenthetical-quotative clauses attributed to Lancelot in deW29, the placement of this one example is unique when measured against the remaining ten instances, all of which occur much later in the text, at books nineteen and twenty. The double sample in book six is the first occasion in deW29 when multiple examples occur within close proximity; prior to this, only two instances are given. The first, at book one, chapter three/four, is a reference to Malory's French book, citing St. Paul's Cathedral as the possible site wherein Arthur retrieves the sword from the stone.¹¹⁵ The second example in deW29, at book two, chapter two, follows a similar pattern: determined to retrieve the sword despite his poor appearance, Sir Balin is 'fully assured to do as well (**yf his grace happened hym**) as ony knyght that was there'.¹¹⁶

The disproportionate sample at book six relative to the other examples found in the earlier books of deW29 leads us naturally to question why de Worde should have accorded a greater representation of parentheses to this book than those before. Both examples are analogous

¹¹⁴ Sig. i8r, 2nd col.

¹¹⁵ Sig. a3r, 2nd col. 'So in the greteft chir/che of Londō (**whether it were Poulls / or not the frenflhe boke maketh no mencyon**)...'

¹¹⁶ Sig. c3r, 2nd col.

insofar that they testify to Lancelot's exemplary performance, first against Sir Tarquin and then against the giants, in his determination to liberate the castle of Arthur's birth, Tintagel. For critics such as David R. Miller, Malory's 'Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot Du Lake' (book six in deW29) is composed primarily of a series of tests through which Lancelot affirms his 'supremacy as the best of the knights'.¹¹⁷ This appears to be de Worde's view, too. That de Worde highlights with parentheses two such 'tests' cannot be coincidence given the overwhelming dearth of examples found in the first nine books. Indeed, both examples exhibit the public nature of worship as critical 'for it to count in a knight's record of achievement', as Lexton notes. Gaheris's public declaration of Lancelot's prowess is matched by Lancelot's own request to tell 'how and who hath delyuered / you': Lancelot is subject to the public gaze both internally (before the eyes of Arthur's court) and externally (from the reader), as de Worde emphasises through parentheses Lancelot's elevated status. Moreover, the public nature of worship is further affirmed by de Worde via the woodcut appended to the opening of book six. The scene depicts a joust taking place before a castle, two knights (one is presumably Lancelot) battling on horseback, two standing, each pair with their swords raised. To the right, a cluster of knights stand to bear witness; gazing down from a turret watches Arthur and Guinevere. Crudely drawn, the symbolism is nevertheless clear: the attainment of worship is a public act. Parentheses only reinforces this notion.

Two more examples in deW29, both references to Malory's French book, are worthy of comment because they again emphasise Lancelot's exalted status in the *Morte*. At book ten, chapter seventy-nine, Lancelot performs 'meruaylous dedes of armes' in a joust alongside Arthur and Tristram, continuing: 'For that tyme (**as the booke recordeth**) fyr Laūcelot fmote

¹¹⁷ David R. Miller, 'Sir Thomas Malory's "A Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot Du Lake" Reconsidered', *Quondam et Futurus* 1 (1991), 25-43 (p. 27).

downe & pulled downe .xxx. knyghtes'.¹¹⁸ Upon seeing the 'noble dedes that fyr Launcelot dyd', Tristram 'meruayled gretely therof'. Later, at book eighteen, chapter eleven, in another joust, 'fyr Launcelot w^t his fwerde fmote and pulled downe **(as the frenffhe booke maketh mencion)** moo than .xxx. knyghtes / and the mooft partye were of the roūde table'.¹¹⁹ The *Concordance* lists more than fifty instances of the digression 'as the [French] book seyth' or some variation thereof in the *Morte*; only nine instances are enclosed in parentheses in deW29. Five of these reference Lancelot explicitly, the two just given and three in connection to his relationship with Guinevere (see above). The consistency by which de Worde emphasises with parentheses the character of Lancelot is startling, and when all of the examples are read together, provides the strongest evidence in favour of an interpretative function for parentheses in deW29.

Lancelot is not the only character to be signposted by parentheses, however. Other examples in deW29 in which de Worde draws attention to the triptych hierarchy of knighthood follow a similar pattern. At book nine, chapter fourteen, for instance, in a famous and oft-quoted debate between Lamorak and Meliagraunt over whose lady is fairest, Lamorak says to Lancelot:

Syr fayd

fyr Lamoracke / I am loth to haue ado
with you in this quarel / for euery man
thynketh his owne lady fayreft / and
though I prayfe the lady that I loue
mooft / ye fholde not therefore be wroth /

¹¹⁸ Sig. H3r, 2nd col.

¹¹⁹ Sig. T6v-U1r, bottom of 2nd col. top of 1st col.

for though my lady quene Gueneuer
be the fayrest in your eye / wyte ye well
quene Morgaufe of Orkeney is þ^e fay
rest in myne eye / and so euery knyght
thynketh his owne lady fayrest / and
wyte ye well fyr ye are the man in the
worlde (**excepte fyr Trystram**) that I
am mooft lotheft to haue ado withall.¹²⁰

As the previous examples show, worship is won by publicly defeating a knight of high status, therefore overtaking his place within the hierarchy of knighthood. As the third best knight in the world, Lamorak acknowledges his position as immediately behind that of Sir Tristram. Tristram, as second behind Lancelot, is the man ‘in the worlde’ that Lamorak is ‘lotheft to haue ado withall’ because he could not win worship in a joust against him but face public ridicule. Lamorak’s prowess in battle is captured by de Worde, however, in another example, at book ten, chapter seventeen. In this example, Sir Palomides encounters the castle of Morgan le Fay, ‘kyng Arthurs fyfter’, both of whom, it is told by Sir Dinadan, ‘haue ben at debate / and fryfe’.¹²¹ Having ‘made warre on kyng Arthur’, Morgan le Fay holds many dangerous knights ‘for to destroye all those knyghtes that kyng Arthur loueth’.¹²² On hearing this, Palomides declares his intention to ‘destrye that fhame / full custome’. Preparing to fight, Palomides is interrupted by a disguised Lamorak ‘rydyng with a reed sheelde and two squyers after him’, who requests to fight in Palomides’s place, saying:

¹²⁰ Sig. s3r, 1st col.

¹²¹ Sig. B5v, 1st col.

¹²² Ibid.

Fayre and
gentyll knyght arraunt I requyre the
for the loue that thou owest vnto the
ordre of knyghthode / that thou wylte
not haue adoo here with thefe men of
this caftell (**This was fyr Lamoracke
de galys that fayd thus**) for I came
hyther to feke this dede / and it is my
request / & therefore I befeche the knight
let me deale with it / and yf I be beten
reuenge me.¹²³

The ensuing battle between Lamorak and the knights of Morgan le Fay's court is witnessed by an assembly of 'lordes and ladyes' watching from the 'walles of the caftel', who cry out in their praise of Lamorak, 'Well haue ye iufted ye knyght with the reed sheelde'.¹²⁴ At the end of the chapter, the highest praise is given to Lamorak by Sir Dinadan, who declares him to be 'as good as fyr Launcelot or fyr Tryftram'.¹²⁵ Shortly thereafter, at book ten, chapter twenty, another example cements Lamorak's reputation when he is praised by Tristram before king Arthur:

My lorde
fayd fyr Tryftram / meruayle ye noo
thyng therof / for at myn aduyfe there

¹²³ Sig. B5v, 2nd col.

¹²⁴ Sig. B6r, 1st col.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

is not a more valyaunter knyght in all
the worlde lyuyng / for I knowe his
myght. And now I wyll faye to you /
I was neuer foo wery of no knyght /
but yf it were fyr Launcelot / and there
is no knyght in the worlde (**excepte fyr
Launcelot**) I wolde that dyd fo well
as fyr Lamoracke.¹²⁶

Once again, Malory employs the preposition *except*, which is then highlighted by de Worde to establish hierarchy through comparison. Tristram is best placed to praise Lamorak here because he is the second best knight of the Round Table.

One more example in deW29, at book ten, chapter sixty-three, firmly establishes the triptych hierarchy of knighthood while asserting the Saracen knight, Sir Palomydes, as being (possibly) the fourth best knight in the *Morte*. Palomydes is welcomed by Sir Hermind, a minor knight in the *Morte*, who says:

A well be ye foude sayd þe knyght
vnto fyr Palomydes / for of all
knyghtes that ben now lyuyng (**ex
cepte thre**) I had leueft haue you. The
fyrft is fyr Launcelot du Lake / the fe
conde fyr Trystram de Lyones / & the

¹²⁶ Sig. C2r, 1st col.

thyrde is my nyghe cofyn fyr Lamo
racke de Galys. And I am brother vn
to kynge Hermaunce that is deed / and
my name is fyr Hermynde.¹²⁷

The implication is clear: Hermind praises Palomides by stating that, if he can have neither Lancelot, Tristram, or Lamorak to fight on his behalf, then Palomides is the next best ranked. According to Donald L. Hoffman, however, what distinguishes Palomides within the *Morte* is that he is simultaneously included and excluded [...] irrelevant and essential'.¹²⁸ Palomides, as an un-Christened, Saracen knight, is othered within King Arthur's court, struggling despite frequent acts of prowess to occupy a strong position at the Round Table. Conversely, for critics such as Kevin Grimm, Hermind's speech is testament of Palomides' successful assimilation.¹²⁹ Shortly after Hermind's speech, Palomides informs him of Lamorak's death by the Orkney brothers, 'leaving the reader', as Grimm maintains, 'with the clear implication that Palomides himself is now the third knight of the world'.¹³⁰ In this example, however, the status of the speaker, is, I would argue, essential to ascertaining the rank enjoyed by Palomides. Hermind is essentially a minor character, appearing only sporadically in the *Morte*. In the majority of examples where Malory employs the preposition *except* to compare knightly achievement, the speaker is typically themselves a knight of high regard. In the examples given above, for instance, each knight who is praised *except* for another knight, is done so by a high-ranking member of Arthur's court: Lamorak praises Tristram at book nine, chapter fourteen; Tristram

¹²⁷ Sig. F7r, 1st col.

¹²⁸ Donald L. Hoffman, 'Assimilating Saracens: The Aliens in Malory's "Morte Darthur"', *Arthuriana* 16 (2006), 43-64 (49).

¹²⁹ Kevin T. Grimm, 'The Love and Envy of Sir Palomides', *Arthuriana* 11 (2001), 65-74.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 72.

praises Lancelot at book ten, chapter twenty, and Gaheris praises Lancelot at book six, chapter nine. In total, I have found twelve instances of the preposition *except* being used as a means of comparison between knights, and on every occasion both knights are prominent members of the court. If Tristram judges Lamorak to be second only to Lancelot, then the compliment (and, above all, Lamorak's status) is legitimised because it is Tristram, as the second best knight, who is speaking. Palomides, on the other hand, is praised as 'best' by an inconsequential knight, whose status both within the Arthurian world and to the reader is wholly negligible. (Indeed, this is the only speech given to Hermind in the entirety of the text, and he is given only passing mention twice more). As such, it is questionable whether Hermind's praise of Palomides expressed by the prepositional '(excepte thre)' does indeed symbolise Palomides' ascension to the position of third best knight after Lamorak's death. Moreover, contrary to the (very public) praise we have seen directed at Lancelot, Tristram and Lamorak, Hermind's speech is given privately: he does not declare Palomides to be 'best' before the court, which might judge it so, but in a private audience only, thus casting further aspersions upon Palomides' already indeterminate status in the *Morte Darthur*.

This is not the only example in deW29 in which de Worde appears to focus particular attention on the character of Palomides. Towards the end of book ten, in the episode commonly titled, 'The Tournament at Lonazep', five parenthetical clauses are given which, when read together, offer a sequential overview of Palomide's envy of Tristram as a result of his love for Isode. At book ten, chapter sixty-five, for instance, Palomides recommends himself to fight four knights in Tristram's place, to which Tristram replies: 'I wyll that ye haue it (**layd fyr Tryftram**) at your pleasure'.¹³¹ This is then followed, at book ten, chapter seventy, with a parenthesised reference to Malory's French book. Upon seeing Isode, Palomides is

¹³¹ Sig. G1r, 2nd col.

fo enamoured in her loue / that
 hym femed at that tyme that yf bothe
 fyr Tryftram & fyr Launcelot had ben
 bothe agaynft hym / they fholde haue
 wonne no worlhyp of hym. And in his
 herte (**as the booke fayth**) fyr Palomy
 des wyllhed that with his worlhyp he
 myght haue ado with fyr Tryftrā be
 fore all men / bycaufe of la beale Ifoude¹³²

Having witnessed Palomides' performance in the joust, Tristram declares him to be 'a passyng good knyght and a well enduryng'.¹³³ Tristram's praise for Palomides is disputed by Sir Dinadan, however, who 'to hym felfe he fayd / and yf ye knewe for whose loue he doth all these dedes of armes / soon wolde fyr Tryftram abbate his courage'.¹³⁴ When measured against the noble deeds committed by Lancelot and Lamorak, which, as we have seen from previous examples, are performed unselfishly and always with a view to attaining honour, both personally and for the Round Table, Palomides' action is here wholly selfish: he wishes to joust against Lancelot and Tristram not to advance his own standing before the court but solely to gain the attention of La Beale Isode. Indeed, this is made further apparent when Palomides' dishonour in combat is laid bare before the court in the next example, at book ten, chapter seventy-eight. Owing to Palomides' selfishness during the tournament, Lancelot and Tristram become divided, which leads King Arthur to ask, 'But for what cause (**fayd kynge Arthur**)

¹³² Sig. G4v, 1st col.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

were ye fyr Tryftram agaynft vs'.¹³⁵ Shortly thereafter, Palomides is admonished by Arthur, who proclaims before the court: 'So god me helpe / fayd kynge Arthur / that was unknighthly / done of you.'¹³⁶ So as to contrast the actions of an honourable knight with those of a self-seeking knight, de Worde juxtaposes the examples relating to Palomides with two (aforementioned) examples pertaining to Lancelot: at book ten, chapter seventy-three, Lancelot is praised by Tristram as the 'floure of all chyualry', '**(faye what men wyll fay)**'. And again, at book ten, chapter seventy-nine, Lancelot's prowess in battle is captured in parentheses: 'for that tyme **(as the booke recordeth)** fyr Laūcelot fmote downe & pulled downe .xxx. knyghts'. Both of these examples occur in close proximity to those pertaining to Palomides, painting a vivid picture for the reader of what an honourable knight (Lancelot) looks like against the actions of a dishonourable knight, Sir Palomides.

Indeed, this juxtaposition between Lancelot and Palomides is made further apparent in the next example, at book ten, chapter eighty-one. The knights Bleoberis and Ector depart from Tristram and Isode and come to 'a castell by the fee fyde' where is lodged Guinevere, who asks them: 'how doth fyr Tryftram **(fayd quene Gueneuer)** and la beale Ifoude'.¹³⁷ After reporting on the beauty of Isode, Guinevere is told of Palomides' unknighthly behaviour at the tournament, wherein he 'turned agaynft the partye [...] and that caufed hym to lese a grete parte of his worlhyp'.¹³⁸ Guinevere's response is indicative of the values underlying much of the Round Table. Condemning Palomides with the admonishment, 'Than fhall he neuer wyne worlhyp [...] an enuyous man ones to wyne worlhyp / he fhall be dihonoured twyes therfore',

¹³⁵ Sig. H2r, 2nd col.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Sig. H4r, 1st col.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 2nd col.

Guinevere then contrasts this by listing those values which form an honourable knight: ‘he that is curteyf / kynde & gentyll / hath fauour in eury place’.¹³⁹ Humbled by his experience, having lost the ‘loue of her [Isode] and of fyr Tryftram for euer’, Palomides departs alone.¹⁴⁰ Happening upon the equally sorrowful ‘woūded knyght’, Sir Epingoris, Palomides greets him as follows:

Fayre

knyght why wayle you fo / let me lye
downe and wayle with you / for doubte
ye not I am moche more heuyer than
ye are. For I dare faye (**fayd fyr Palo
lomides**) that my forowe is an hundred
folde more than yours is / ¹⁴¹

On hearing the reason for Palomides’ sorrow, Epingoris aptly summarises his predicament, declaring: ‘That is grete foly fayd fyr Epingorys for to loue quene Ifoude / for one of the best knyghtes of the worlde loueth her’.¹⁴²

Palomides’ lament by the well, occurring in book ten, chapter eighty-three, is the last example of a parenthetical clause in book ten, and the fifth pertaining directly to Palomides. Whether an interpretative design can be attributed to the examples just given is partly answerable based

¹³⁹ Ibid, 2nd col.

¹⁴⁰ Sig. H4v, 2nd col.

¹⁴¹ Sig. H4v, 1st col.

¹⁴² Sig. H4v, 1st col.

upon the disproportionate number of examples allocated near the end of book ten. Among the sixteen examples given in book ten (as seen in table one), half appear in the last quarter, between chapters sixty-five and eighty-two, a hugely disproportionate number when measured against the remainder of book ten, and more so when we consider that between book one and the majority of book ten, totalling 307 chapters (prior to book ten, chapter sixty-five), only seventeen examples are given. That is to say, eight examples are given in an area of just seventeen chapters against seventeen examples in an area totalling half the text. While distribution alone cannot solve the question of why de Worde encloses some phrases in parentheses over others, it is, as we have already seen, a useful starting point in our attempt to read parentheses beyond conventional practice, focusing instead upon questions pertaining to their placement in the text. We should ask, for example: which characters are best represented?; what theme(s) emerge from a reading of parentheses *when they are grouped together*, not read in isolation?; and what is the significance (contextually speaking) of the text around the enclosed clause? The latter is the most important, because our reading of parentheses is premised upon the idea that it is not the text *enclosed* in parentheses that matters, but the text *introduced* by parentheses. This is especially true about parenthetical-quotative phrases. Enclosing the clause '(fayd fyr Palomides)' in parentheses matters little to how we perceive such an expression. Indeed, it could only mean one thing: that the encircling parcel of speech is spoken by Palomides. Read this way, the inclusion of parentheses hardly merits consideration *if* we fail to account for the surrounding text. But, as the above analysis makes clear, the enclosed clause '(fayd fyr Palomides)' is significant when read alongside other examples to form a cluster from which meaning is implied. In deW29, Palomides' lament by the well represents the culmination of a sequence of parenthesised clauses, beginning with Hermind's speech, each of which signposting for the reader the (in)actions of Palomides as indicative of his failure to attain the ideal of knighthood of which the triptych hierarchy is the ultimate

representation. Indeed, many critics, including Kenneth Hodges, Elizabeth Archibald, Beverly Kennedy, and Elizabeth Archibald, have written at length about the knightly communities established within the *Morte Darthur*.¹⁴³ That Malory establishes a triptych of three superior knights has been noted before, although to my mind no critic has to date discussed the implication of the preposition *except* upon the wider thematic continuity of the *Morte*, and hitherto no critic has noted the subtle application of parentheses in deW29 that draws attention to Malory's established triptych. By placing parentheses around prepositional clauses that remark upon the unrivalled status of Malory's three best knights, de Worde is arguably the first person to acknowledge Malory's triptych hierarchy of knighthood. As such, de Worde employs extra-lexical characters less for their semantic value than for their function as interpretative pointers intended to convey information to the reader that is contextually significant to the wider narrative.

Three final examples of the preposition *except* being enveloped in parentheses support this hypothesis. At book twenty, chapter eleven, after Lancelot is accused of committing adultery with Guinevere, he asserts his own unique status within the court by declaring there to be 'no knyght vnder heuen that dare make it good vpon me / þ^t euer I was a traytour vnto your perfone'.¹⁴⁴ This is immediately preceded by the prepositional clause in parentheses '(**excepte your pfone of your hyghnes / & my lorde fyr Gawayne**)'.¹⁴⁵ Malory is here establishing

¹⁴³ See Beverly Kennedy, *Knighthood in the Morte Darthur* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1992); Andrew Lynch, *Malory's Book of Arms: The Narrative of Combat in 'Le Morte Darthur'* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997); Elizabeth Archibald, 'Malory's Ideal of Fellowship', *The Review of English Studies* 43 (1992), 311-28; Kenneth Hodges, *Forging Chivalric Communities in Malory's 'Le Morte Darthur'* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

¹⁴⁴ Sig. [2nd] B5r, 2nd col.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Lancelot's pre-eminence by declaring him to be impervious to criticism from any knight within the court *except* for Arthur. Arthur alone may criticise or condemn Lancelot's action because, as king, Arthur outranks Lancelot. The matter of rank, however, is complicated in this chapter because Gawain, despite being judged as inferior in knighthood to Lancelot, outranks him in Arthur's eyes because he is Arthur's nephew. For the same reason that Gawain and his brothers are immune from retribution for the killing of Lamorak in the example at book ten, chapter fifteen, so too is Gawain immune from criticising Lancelot. Thus, Lancelot's acknowledgement that no knight *except* for Arthur and Gawain would speak against him is characteristic of an important theme present throughout much of the *Morte* (and one already touched upon in de Worde's parentheses via the examples referencing the Orkney brothers' killing of Lamorak): the divisions caused by familial and knightly loyalty. Gawain, believing Lancelot responsible for the death of his brothers Gareth and Gaheris, places family loyalty before knightly hierarchy: Gawain is an exception because he refuses to recognise Lancelot's pre-eminence, seeing him only as the murderer of his brothers. This is further emphasised within the same parcel of speech as the first parenthetical clause, wherein, uniquely, de Worde encloses a second, similar prepositional phrase in brackets:

And as for my lady quene Gue
 neuer (**excepte your pfone of your hygh
 nes / & my lorde fyr Gawayne**) there is
 no knyght vnder heuen that dare make
 it good vpon me / þ^t euer I was a tray
 tour vnto your perfone. And where it
 pleafeth you to faye that I haue holden
 my lady your quene yeres and wynters /

vnto that I fhall make a large anfwere
and preue it vpon ony knyght that be
reth lyfe (**excepte your perfone and fyr
Gawayne**) that my lady quene Guene
uer is a true lady vnto your perfone¹⁴⁶

The second prepositional clause, occurring directly beneath the first, reinforces Arthur and Gawain's growing hostility to Lancelot. The preposition *except* here functions less as a method for establishing hierarchy than as a means to undermine the existing hierarchy, at which Lancelot occupies the first position, by signifying a break between Lancelot and Arthur and a victory of family ties over chivalric brotherhood, a theme prevalent throughout much of the *Morte*. Moreover, both of these examples further testify to de Worde's ongoing interest in emphasising the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere via parentheses.

The last example of a prepositional clause placed in parentheses, at book twenty, chapter fifteen, follows the same pattern as the two just given. Having sworn before a bishop of Rome to bring Guinevere to Arthur (at book twenty, chapter fourteen), a pledge that is captured in parentheses wherein Lancelot says 'this fame daye .viii. dayes / **(by the grace of god)** I my felfe fhall / brynge my lady quene Guneuer vnto hym', Lancelot then calls upon his own exalted position in defence of Guinevere:¹⁴⁷

My mooft redoubted lorde ye fhall
vnderstande / that by the popes

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Sig. [2nd] C1v, 1st col.

commaundement and yours / I haue
brought vnto you my lady þ^e quene / as
ryght requyreth. And yf there be ony
knyght of what someuer degree he be
(excepte your perfone) that wyll faye
or dare faye but that she is true & clene
vnto you / I here my selfe fyr Laūcelot
wyll make it good vpon his body / that
she is a true lady vnto you.¹⁴⁸

Lancelot's willingness to still acknowledge Arthur's supremacy despite the animosity felt between them contrasts with Gawain's almost total abandonment of the chivalric order over which Arthur reigns, a matter that is signposted by de Worde in the following chapter (book twenty, chapter sixteen), wherein Gawain declares: 'wyte thou well **(let the kyng do as it shall please hym)** I wyll neuer forgyue the my brethernes deth'.¹⁴⁹ Gawain makes it clear that should Arthur stand by Lancelot over his own nephew, 'he shall lefe my feruyce'.¹⁵⁰

The prepositional clauses enclosed in parentheses in deW29 place at their centre the character of Lancelot. From the first instance, at which Lancelot slays Gaheris and wins worship before Arthur's court, to the consistent hierarchy-through-exception of the knights Tristram and Lamorak, second and third behind Lancelot, and finally to Lancelot's exile by Arthur and Gawain, de Worde creates for the reader a pattern reminiscent of the Malorian themes of good

¹⁴⁸ Sig. [2nd] C2r, 1st col.

¹⁴⁹ Sig. [2nd] C3r, 1st col.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

knighthood, fraternity and familial honour. Malory's triptych is an oft-discussed theme in the *Morte*, and although the concept of the three best knights is original to Malory, it is de Worde, by the introduction of parentheses, who first draws attention to the intrinsic structure of knighthood as it is portrayed through Malory's consistent use of the preposition *except*.

Perhaps the most important statement yet written about the influence exerted over the packaging and reception of the *Morte Darthur* by de Worde belongs to Kevin Grimm, whose article, 'Wynkyn de Worde and the Creation of Meaning', sets the scene for all future engagement with de Worde's editions of the *Morte*. He writes:

De Worde [...] did not simply reproduce text inherited from his master, but in his own aggressive packaging of the text he created a set of bibliographic codes which significantly constrained the reader's approach to the narrative. In short, Wynkyn de Worde's 1498 [edition] [...] played a major role in the production of the cultural artefact which came to be known as Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur*.¹⁵¹

Critics are in general agreement that the changes made by de Worde are extra-textual in nature. That is, he introduced numerous extra-textual features, such as chapter headings, not seen in Caxton's edition, while the text itself, despite undergoing various revisions and corrections,

¹⁵¹ Kevin Grimm, 'Wynkyn de Worde and the Creation of Malory's *Morte Darthur*', in *The Social and Literary Contexts of Malory's 'Morte Darthur'*, ed. by D. Thomas Hanks Jr. and Jessica G. Brogdon (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000), pp. 134-55 (pp. 135-36).

‘seems to be largely the same as Caxton’s’.¹⁵² All major additions and changes were made to de Worde’s first edition, which, as Grimm’s above comment illustrates, has received the majority of critical appreciation. The second edition should not be overlooked, however. It is to this edition that every subsequent edition into the nineteenth century owes its existence. If de Worde ‘constrained the reader’s approach’ in his first edition, then he ensured that *his* approach would last with his second. Despite being a second edition, deW29 shows no sign of editorial disinterest. In this chapter, I hope to have introduced another ‘bibliographic code’ in my reading of parentheses as indicative of meaning. The themes presented in these pages, those of Lancelot’s relationship with Guinevere and of Malory’s three best knights, are common sources of literary criticism. It is possible, based on my reading of parentheses in deW29, that de Worde was the first to notice the thematic significance of these particular subjects.

My analysis of parentheses highlights the importance of examining, first, lesser known editions of a text, which are no less important to the text’s overall reception; and second, the importance of examining even the smallest features of an edition as indicative of meaning.

¹⁵² Ibid, p. 137.

Conclusion

This thesis has addressed three strands of critical enquiry, with frequent crossover, which together advance our understanding of the long history of the reception of Malory's *Morte Darthur*. My focus on canonisation, authorial identity, and editorial influence can be summarised with the following summation: canonisation is partially dependant on authorial identity, which is reliant on editorial practice, witnessed by the paratextual design of each respective edition. Reception of the author-figure, in turn, is supported by, but not dependent on, the results of biographical enquiry. The writer, who is the purpose of biography, remains the same, and is external to the text. The author, on the contrary, which is internal to the text, evolves with each respective edition of the text. This is the *idea* of the author. In the late nineteenth century, Strachey conjured the author as necessary to the practice of editing - as necessary, that is, to ascertaining how and with what the text was composed. The author is born out of the editor's desire to know more about the text. For Strachey, such a desire led to a re-examination of the question of authorship of the *Morte*, to positive results, which in turn established an authorial presence, meeting the cultural demand for an author and therefore precipitating the text's entrance into the literary canon.

A generation later, in 1934, the Winchester Manuscript was recovered. Structurally different to Caxton's edition, the manuscript includes a series of authorial colophons, from which Malory addresses the reader directly, writing, 'And I pray you all that redyth this tale to pray for hym that this wrote, that God sende hym good delyveraunce.'¹⁵³ These are not the words of *a* Malory, a conjured entity, but of *the* Malory, the writer himself, specifically the

¹⁵³ Field, *Le Morte Darthur* (2017), p. 288.

Warwickshire knight Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel. With these words, the status of authorship changed again; any future edition of the *Morte*, one based on the Winchester Manuscript, that is, would conjure an author-figure that is indelibly linked with the historical Malory. In short, the *man* would direct and enhance perceptions of the *author*, although the latter is still subject to the vicissitudes of editorial practice. Indeed, Malory's next editor, Vinaver, simultaneously privileged and undermined Malory's authorship. Based on his perception of the Winchester Manuscript as indicative of Malory's intention to compose a series of self-contained tales, rather than a unified narrative, Vinaver radically altered the packaging of the text, adding paratextual features — as we have seen in my assessment of the contents page to his edition, for example — that reinforced *his* idea of Malory's practice. There is the title of Vinaver's edition, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, from which the entire edition is directed by Malory's authority. These are *his* works — the author's composition. Malory is privileged, then, his authority acknowledged; what he did, what he intended, is captured. But Malory is also undermined by such a title, which is premised on Vinaver's *belief*, based on his assessment of the manuscript, about what Malory did. Such an assessment, though learned, is conjecture, and has been almost universally criticised. These are not the works of Malory, but of Vinaver. To compare the influence Vinaver exerted over the text and its packaging, one would have to look back to the editions of Caxton and de Worde, four-hundred years earlier. Comparing Caxton's edition with the Winchester Manuscript, one can see how radical were Caxton's changes, expanded upon by de Worde. Vinaver's changes, based on a new witness, were equally radical. Having discussed in this thesis the importance of authorial influence on the *Morte Darthur*, I conclude that Vinaver's edition, like Caxton's, displaces the author in favour of the editor. In short, it is the editor's influence, not the author's, that is felt in the pages of *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, witnessed through the various paratextual features (the

title, the contents page, the use of capitalisation, page-breaks, editorial apparatus and editorial marks, etc.) which, combined, shape the text in accordance with the editor's intention.

Vinaver's intention, as this thesis has shown, was to present the *Morte* in accordance with *how the author intended for it to be presented*, a controversial statement which, as the argument in chapter two sets out, isn't entirely true. We might rephrase this to say that Vinaver's intention was to present the *Morte* based on *his assumption of what the author intended*, an assumption based primarily on the *mise-en-page* of the Winchester MS. According to Vinaver, what Malory '*intended* could have been gathered long ago from his own words had they not been partly distorted in the process of transmission'.¹⁵⁴ This thesis, in part, is on the act of editorial distortion, and how such 'distortion' continually reshaped our perception of the text. Vinaver's argument is made here against Caxton, who, as Malory's first and still most influential editor, played a primary and lasting role in the *Morte*'s 'distortion'. However, in writing these words, it surely did not occur to Vinaver that the same act of distortion about which he finds deplorable he would engage in himself. Vinaver's title, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, is nothing but a distortion, and everywhere in his edition is similar such signs of distortion, all of which intended to support his theory of the *Morte* as a collection of self-contained tales. Vinaver finds Malory's references to back-and-forth incidents in the *Morte* to be little more than parenthetical asides, the removal of which would result in 'nothing of importance' being lost, certainly not as evidence for wider narrative harmony.¹⁵⁵ Field, as we have seen, disagrees entirely, and the presentation of his edition can be read as a challenge to this Vinaverian view. We know Field disagrees because he tells us so, repeatedly, not only in his own edition, but in his fifty years of critical engagement with the *Morte*. A more conjectural question might be: would de Worde

¹⁵⁴ Vinaver, 'On Art and Nature', p. 6.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 8.

agree with Vinaver's theory? My reading of parentheses suggests not. When Lancelot is praised in the parentheses at book six, chapter nine for rescuing Sir Gaheris, de Worde is setting a precedent that he would return to and highlight with parentheses again and again in his edition: that Lancelot is unquestioningly Malory's best knight. The single greatest gathering of parenthesised clauses appears in book twenty, chapter eleven, with nine examples out of a total of seventy-two. Here, we witness the argument between Lancelot and Gawain after Lancelot's accidental slaying of Gawain's brother, Gaheris. It is notable that, with so few examples given, de Worde should highlight the moment of Lancelot's first major triumph, the rescue of Gaheris, and the moment of his downfall, the death of Gaheris. These events occur, in Vinaver, at books three and eight, but are they not thematically connected? Similarly, repeated references made to Lancelot, Tristram and Lamorak occur across multiple books and chapters, connected by the preposition *except*, and always in praise of one of these three knights. This, I argue, is thematic continuity. In my reading of parentheses in de Worde's second edition, I see evidence of an engagement with the text premised on the idea that it is connected by context and theme. As such, the twenty-one books and 506 chapter that make up Caxton's edition and all editions upon which it is based all add to a whole: *Le Morte Darthur*.

In this thesis, then, I read two editions, one edited by Field and published in the twenty-first century, and the second printed by de Worde in the early sixteenth century, as presenting a challenge to the editorial approach exhibited in Vinaver's edition. In writing about his own editorial methodology, Field once stated that it is necessary to use all available evidence in order to 'recover as much as possible of [the] author's text from Time's wallet of oblivion'.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ P.J.C. Field, 'De Worde and Malory', in *The Medieval Book and a Modern Collector: Essays in Honour of Toshiyuki Takamiya*, ed. by Takami Matsuda, Richard A. Linenthal and John Scahill (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2004), pp. 285-95 (p. 293).

The same, I conclude, can be said about how we engage at a critical level with the edition. My reading of multiple editions in this thesis has revealed that the reception of Malory's *Morte Darthur* is at once an act of evolution and recursion. To appreciate an edition from one period, we must look back to those of earlier periods. To understand how the text has reached a particular critical moment, we must look back to much earlier criticism. Doing so informs not only our understanding of the long history of the reception the text, both in print and in criticism, but of our own role in contributing to that history. To that end, perhaps Vinaver is right in his final assessment of the function of interpretation. 'We can neither define nor explain. But we can point in the direction where we feel that path of genius lies and hope that in this way we may bring ourselves and others a little closer to its understanding.'¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Vinaver, 'On Art and Nature', p. 11.

Appendix to chapter 3

The following lists sequentially all instances of a clause enclosed in parentheses in Wynkyn de Worde's 1529 edition of the *Morte Darthur*. This is then further divided, with the next three sections giving the sequential placement of each parenthetical clause, representing quotative clauses, of which there are 38 examples, prepositional clauses, of which there are 8 examples, and references to Malory's French book, of which there are 9 examples. In total, there are 72 examples of a parenthesised clause in deW29.

1.3-4, a3r, 2nd col.; * 2.2, c3r, 2nd col.; * 6.9, i7r, 1st col.; 6.11, i8r, 2nd col.; * 8.15, p2r, 2nd col.; 8.29, q1r, 2nd col.; 8.30, q2r, 1st col.; * 9.14, s3r, 1st col.; 9.37, v3v, 1st col.; * 10.3, A3r, 2nd col.; 10.5, A4r, 1st col.; 10.9, B1r, 1st col.; 10.17, B5v, 2nd col.; 10.20, C2r, 1st col.; 10.36, D4v, 1st col.; 10.55, F1v, 2nd col.; 10.58, F4r, 1st col.; 10.63, F7r, 1st col.; 10.65, G1r, 2nd col.; 10.70, G4v, 1st col.; 10.73, G6v, 2nd col.; 10.78, H2r, 2nd col.; 10.79, H3r, 2nd col.; 10.81, H4r, 1st col.; 10.82, H4v, 1st col.; * 11.2, I2r, 2nd col.; 11.9, I6v, 1st col.; 11.14, K3r, 2nd col. (2 examples); * 12.6, K6v, 1st col.; 12.7, L1r, 1st col.; * 13.2, L6r, 2nd col.; * 14.7, O2r, 1st col.; 14.8, O2v, 1st col.; * 16.1, P1r, 2nd col.; 16.2, P2v, 1st col.; * 17.7, R2r, 1st col.; * 18.1, S6r, 1st col.; 18.2, S6v, 2nd col.; 18.5, T2v, 2nd col.; 18.11, T6v-U1r, bottom of 2nd col. top of 1st col.; 18.16, U4v, 1st col.; 18.18, U5v, 2nd col.; * 19.6, Y5r, 1st col.; 19.8, Y6r, 1st col. (2 examples); 19.10 [2nd], A1v, 1st col.; * 20.5 [2nd], B1v, 1st col.; 20.6 [2nd], B1v, 2nd col. (3 examples); 20.8 [2nd], B3r, 2nd col. (2 examples); 20.8 [2nd], B3v, 1st col.; 20.11 [2nd], B5r, 2nd col.; 20.11 [2nd], B5v, 1st col. and 2nd col. (7 examples); 20.14 [2nd], C1v, 1st col.; 20.15 [2nd], C2r, 1st col.; 20.16 [2nd], C3r, 1st col.; 20.17 [2nd], C3r, 2nd col.; 20.19 [2nd], C5r, 2nd col.; * 21.4 [2nd], D4v, 2nd col.; 21.11 [2nd], E3r, 2nd col.; 21.13 [2nd], E4v, 2nd col.; 21.13 [2nd], E5r, 1st col.

Parenthetical Quotative clauses:

6.11, I8r, 2nd col., 10.3, A3r, 2nd col.; 10.17, B5v, 2nd col.; 10.65, G1r, 2nd col.; 10.78, H2r, 2nd col.; 10.81, H4r, 1st col.; 10.82, H4v, 1st col.; 11.2, I2r, 1st col.; 11.14, K3r, 2nd col. (2 examples); 14.7, O2r, 1st col.; 14.8, O2v, 1st col.; 16.1, P1r, 2nd col.; 16.2, P2v, 1st col.; 17.7, R2r, 1st col.; 18.5, T2v, 2nd col.; 18.16, U4v, 1st col.; 19.6, Y5r, 1st col.; 19.8, Y6r, 1st col. (2 examples); 19.10, A1v, 1st col.; 20.5, B1v, 1st col.; 20.6, B1v, 2nd col. (3 examples); 20.8, B3r, 2nd col. (2 examples); 20.11, B5v, 1st col. and 2nd col. (7 examples); 20.17, C3r, 2nd col.; 21.4, D4v, 2nd col.; 21.11, E3r, 2nd col.; 21.13, E4v, 2nd col.

Prepositional phrases

6.9, I7r, 1st col.; 9.14, S3r, 1st col.; 10.20, C2r, 1st col.; 10.58, F4r, 1st col.; 10.63, F7r, 1st col.; 20.11, B5r, 2nd col. (2 examples); 20.15, C2r, 1st col.

Reference to Malory's (French) book

1.3-4, A3r, 2nd col.; 8.29, Q1r, 2nd col.; 10.70, G4v, 1st col.; 10.79, H3r, 2nd col.; 18.1, S6r, 2nd col.; 18.2, S6v, 2nd col.; 18.11, T6v-U1r, bottom of 2nd col. top of 1st col.; 18.18, U5v, 2nd col.; 20.8, B3v, 1st col.

The following table gives each section of the text inclusive of a parenthesised clause as it is found, verbatim, in deW29, alongside the corresponding text from de Worde's first edition, printed in 1498. Variants are placed in bold font, to highlight the differences between the two versions. Quoted material from deW29 is placed on the left, and from deW98, on the right. The book and chapter number is given below each entry. No corresponding entry for the first example is given, as deW98 is missing these leaves.

So in þ^e gretest chirche of
Londō (whether it were
Poules or not the frenllhe
boke maketh no mencyon)
1.3-5

Relevant leaf missing in
deW98

But in his herte he was
fully affured to do as wel
yf his grace happed hÿ as
ony knyght that was there.

But in his herte he was
fully affured to do as well
(yf his grace happened
hym) as ony knyght þ^t was
there

2.2

and this daye I faye ye are
the best knyght in þ^e
worlde for ye haue flayne
this daye in my fyght the
myghtyest man and the
best knyght except you
that euer I fawe /

and this daye I faye ye are
the best knyght in the
worlde / for ye haue flayne
this day in my fyght the
myghtyest man and þ^e best
knyght (except **your selfe**)
that euer I fawe.

6.9

& many tymes haue we
 wyllhed after you / **&**
 thyse two gyaūtes dredde
 neuer knyght but you /
 Now may ye saye sayd fyr
 Launcelot vnto your
 frendes how **&** who hath
 delyuered you/ **&** grete
 them **all** fro me

& **also** many tymes haue
 we wyllhed after you /
and these two gyauntes
 drad neuer knyght but
 you. Now may ye saye
 (sayd syr Launcelot) vnto
 your frendes how **and**
 who hath delyuered you /
& greet them fro me

6.11

And so as fyr Tryfram
 rode **faste** / he mette with
 fyr Andret his cofyn **that**
 by the cōmaūdement of
 kyng Marke was fente to
 brynge forth **& euer** it lay
 in his power two knyghtes
 of Arthurs courte that rode
by the coūtree to feke
 theyr aduentures.

And so as fyr Trystram
 rode he mette with fyr
 Andret his cofyn / **the**
whiche by the
 cōmaundement of kyng
 Marke was fente to brynge
 (and it laye in his power)
 two knyghtes of king
 Arthurs courte / that rode
through þ^e countree to
 feke theyr auentures.

8.15

And anone they were
rychely wedded with grete
nobley / but euer as the
frenſſhe booke fayth fyr
Tryſtram and la beale
Ifoude loued euer togyder.

And anone they were
ryght rychely wedded wth
grete **nobleſſe**. But euer
(as the frenſſhe booke
fayth) fyr Tryſtrā and la
beale Isoude loued euer
togyder.

8.29

Anone **the** kyng ſente
after fyr Tryſtram / but he
coude not be foūde / for he
was in the foreſt an
huntynge / for that was
alwayes his cultome but yf
he vſed armes to chace &
to hunte in the foreſtes.

Anone kyng **Marke** ſent
for fyr Triſtram / but he
coude not be foūde / for he
was in the foreſt on
huntynge / for þ^t was
alwayes his cultome (but
yf he vſed armes) for to
chace & hunte in foreſtes.

8.30

for though **that** my lady
quene Gueneuer be fayreſt
in your eye / wete ye well
quene Morgauſe of
Orkeney is the fayreſt
in myn eye / and ſo euery
knyght thynketh his owne
lady fayreſt /

for though my lady quene
Gueneuer be **the** fayreſt in
your eye / wyte ye well
quene Morgauſe of
Orkeney is þ^e fayreſt in
myne eye / and ſo euery
knyght thynketh his owne
lady fayreſt /

and wete ye well fyr ye
 are the man in the worlde
 excepte fyr Tryftram that
 I am mooft lotheft to haue
 adoo withall. But **and ye**
wyll nedes fyght w^t me I
 shal endure fo Inoge as I
 may.

and wyte ye well fyr ye are
 the man in the worlde
 (excepte fyr Tryftram) that
 I am mooft lotheft to haue
 ado withall. But yf ye wyll
 nedes fyght with me I shall
 endure **as longe** as I may.

9.14

So the porter alked **what**
his name was. Telle your
 lorde that my name is fyr
 Lukas the **botteler** a knyzt
 of the **table roūde**. So the
 porter wente vnto fyr
 Darras lorde of the place
 and tolde hym who was
 there to alke herberowe.
 Nay nay fayd fyr Daname
that was neuewe to fyr
 Darras / **faye** hym þ^t he
 shall not be lodged here /

Soo the porter alked **what**
was his name. Tell your
 lorde that my name is fyr
 Lucas the **Butler** / a
 knyght of the rounde
 table. So the porter went
 vnto fyr Darras lorde of
 the place / and tolde hym
 who was there to alke
 herborowe Nay nay fayd
 fyr Daname (þ^e **whiche**
 was neuewe vnto fyr
 Darras) **tel** hym that he
 shall not be lodged here /

9.37

And whan he wyft we wē
of kyng Arthurs **hous** / he
spake grete vylany **by** the
kyng / and ſpecyally **by**
the quene Gueneuer. And
thenne on the **morne** was
wagyd batayll for the ſame
cauſe wyth hym. And at
the fyrft encountre ſayd fyr
Kay he ſmote me downe
from my hors and hurt me
paſſing ſore.

And whan he wyft **that** we
were of kyng Arthurs
courte / he ſpake **of the**
kyng grete vylany / and
ſpecyally **of** quene
Gueneuer. And than on
the **morowe** was waged
batayle for the ſame cauſe
wyth hym. And at the fyrft
encountre (ſayd fyr Kay)
he ſmote me downe from
my hors / and hurte me
paſſyng ſore.

10.3

Then departyd fyre
Triftram. And rode
ſtreighte to Camelott to
the peron whyche Merlyn
had made tofore / where
fyre Lancior that was the
kynges ſone of Irlonde
was ſlayne by the hondes
of Balyn.

Than departed fyr
Tryſtram **&** rode ſtreight
vnto Camelot to the Peron
/ whiche Merlyn had made
tofore / where fyr Lanceor
(that was the kyges ſone of
Irlande) was ſlayne by the
handes of Balyn.

10.5

ye are **ryght** welcome
 fayd the knyghtes of the
 castell / for the loue of þ^e
 lorde of this castell / **the**
whyche hyghte fyr Tor le
 fyfe **aries**. And **thenne**
 they came in to a fayr
 court wel repayred. **&**
 they had passyng good
 chere tyll the **lyeftenante**
 of **this** castel that **hyghte**
 Berlufes **aspyed** kyng
 Mark of Cornewayle /
 Thenne fayd Berlufe / fyr
 knyghte I knowe you
 better than ye wene / for
 ye are kyng Mark that flew
 my **fader** afore myn **owne**
 eyen /

fare **&** gentyll knyght
 arraunt I requyre the for
 the loue that thou owest
 vnto knyghthode that thou
woll not haue a doo here
 wyth thyse men of this
 castell / **for** this was fyre
 Lamorak þ^t **thus** fayde /

ye are **hertely** welcome
 fayd the knyghtes of þ^e
 castell for the loue of þ^e
 lorde of this castell **that**
 hyght fyr Tor le fyfe
Aryes. And they came in
 to a fayre courte well
 repayred **and** they had
 passyng good chere / tyll
 the **lieutenaunt** of **the**
 castell (that **was called** fyr
 Berluses) **espyed** kyng
 Marke of Cornewayle.
 Than fayd **fyr** Berlufes /
 fyr knyght I knowe you
 better than ye wene / for
 ye are kyng Marke that
 flewe my **father** tofore
 myne eyen.

10.9

fayre **and** gentyll knyght
 arraunt I requyre the for
 the loue that thou owest
 vnto **the ordre** of
 knyghthode / that thou
wylte not haue adoo here
 with these men of this
 castell (This was fyr
 Lamoracke **de galys** that

for I came hyther to feke
this dede / **&** it is my
request. **And** therefore I
befeche **you** knyghte lete
me deale / and yf I be
beten reuenge me.

Syre fayd Triftram
merueylle ye no thyng
therof / for at myne aduys
there is not no valyaunter
knyghte in the worlde
lyuyng for I knowe his
myghte. And now I woll
faye you I was neuer foo
wery of knyghte but yf it
were fyre Launcelot. And
there is no knyghte in the
worlde excepte fyr
Launcelot I wold dyde so
well as fyre Lamorak

that fayd thus) for I came
hyther to feke this dede /
and it is my request / **&**
therefore I befeche **the**
knight let me deale **with**
it / and yf I be beten
reuenge me.

10.17

My lorde fayd fyr
Tryftram / meruayle ye
noo thyng therof / for at
myn aduyfe there is not **a**
more valyaunter knyght
in all the worlde lyuyng /
for I knowe his myght.
And now I wyll faye **to**
you / I was neuer foo wery
of **no** knyght / but yf it
were fyr Launcelot / and
there is no knyght in the
worlde (excepte fyr
Launcelot) I wolde **that**
dyd so well as fyr
Lamoracke.

10.20

Now torne we agayne vnto
fyr Alyfander / that att his
departynge his moder toke
wyth hym his **faders**
blody fhert. **So** that he bare
wyth hym **alwayes** tyll his
deyeng day in tokenynge
to thynke on his faders
deth. So **was** Alyfander
purpofyd to ryde to
London by the counfell of
fyr Triftram to fyr
Launcelot. And by fortune
he went by the see fyde /
and rode wronge.

Now turne we agayne vnto
fyr Alyfaunder / that at his
departynge his **mother**
toke hym his **fathers** blody
fherte / **and** that **alwayes**
he bare with hym tyll his
dyenge daye / in to
kenynge **for** to thinke
vpon his fathers deth. So
fyr Alyfaunder was
purpofed for to ryde to
London (by the counfeyle
of fyr Tryftram) **vnto** fyr
Launcelot. And by fortune
he wente by the see fyde /
and rode wronge.

10.36

Well fayd fyr Triftram for
kyng Arthurs sake I fhall
lete you paffe as atte this
tyme / But it is fhame fayd
fyr Triftram that fyr
Gawayne **&** ye ben come
of fo gret a blood that ye
foure brethern are fo
namyd as ye ben. For ye
ben callyd the greteft

Well fayd fyr Tryftram /
for kyng Arthurs sake I
fhall let you paffe as at this
tyme. But it is **grete** fhame
fayd fyr Tryftram / that fyr
Gawayne **and** ye **that** ben
comen of fo grete a blode /
that ye foure bretherne are
fo named as ye ben / for ye
ben called the greteft

dyftroyers **&** murderers of
 good knyghtes þ^t ben now
inlthys Reame. For it is
 but late agoon as I herde
 faye that fyr Gawayne and
 ye flewe amonges you a
 better knyghte thanne euer
 ye were / whyche was the
 noble knyghte fyre
 Lamorak de Galys.

deftroyers **and** murtherers
 of good knyghtes that ben
 now **in all this realme**.
 For it is but late agoone (as
 I herde faye) that fyr
 Gawayne and ye flewe
 amonge you a better
 knyght than euer ye were /
 whiche was the noble
 knyght fyr Lamoracke de
 Galys.

10.55

Now ſpeke we of **other**
 dedes fayd Palomydes &
 lete hym be / for hys lyf ye
 maye not gete agayn. That
 is the more pyte fayd
 Dynadan / for fyr
 Gawayne **&** his brethern
 excepte you fyr Gareth
 hate all þ^e good knyghtes of
 the rounde table for the
 moofte partye. for well I
 wote **&** they myght
 pryuely / they hate my
 lorde fyr Launcelot **&** all

Now ſpeke we of **theyr**
 dedes fayd fyr Palomydes
 / **&** let hym be / for his lyfe
 ye may not gete agayne.
 That is the more pyte fayd
 fyr Dynadan / for fyr
 Gawayn **and** his bretherne
 (excepte you fir Gareth)
 hate all the good knyghtes
 of the rounde table for the
 moofte partye. For well I
 wote and they myght
 pryuely / they hate my
 lorde fyr Launcelot and all

all his kynne. And grete
preuy difpyte they haue
atte hym /

his kynne / and grete
preuy defpyte they haue at
hym

10.58

A well be ye founde fayde
the knyghte to
Palomydes./ For of all
knyghtes that ben **on lyue**
excepte thre I hadde leueft
haue you. The fyrft is fyre
Launcelot du lake & fyre
Triftram de Lyones. The
thyrde is my nygh cofyn
fyr Lamorak de Galys.
And I am brother
vntokyng herma**unce** that
is deed.

A well be ye foude sayd þ^e
knyght **vnto fyr**
Palomydes / for of all
knyghtes that ben **now**
lyuynge (excepte thre) I
had leueft haue you. The
fyrft is fyr Launcelot du
lake / **the feconde** fyr
Tryftram de Lyones / **&**
the thyrde is my nyghe
cofyn fyr Lamoracke de
Galys. And I am brother
vnto kynge Hermaunce
that is deed / and my name
is fyr Hermy**nde** that is
deed /

10.63

So came a squyre to fyr
 Triftram / & askid them
 whether they wolde **jouft**
 or ells to lefe ther lady:
 Not so fayd fyr Triftram /
 tell your lorde **I**bydde
 hym come w^t as many as
 we ben and wyne her &
 take her. Syr fayd fyr
 Palomydes and it pleyfe
 you lete me haue this dede
 / and I shall vndertake
 them al foure. I woll that
 ye haue it fayd fyr Triftram
 at your pleyfur. Now go &
 tell your lord Galyhodyn /
 that this fame knyght **wyl**
 encountre wyth hym & his
 felowes.

So came a squyer to fyr
 Triftram and asked them
 whether they wolde **iufte**
 or elles lefe theyr lady.
 Not so fayd fyr Triftram /
 tell your lorde that I bydde
 hym come with as many
 as we ben / & wyne her
 and take her. Syr sayd fyr
 Palomydes / and it pleafe
 you let me haue this dede /
 and I shall vndertake them
 all foure. I wyll that ye
 haue it (fayd fyr Tryftram)
 at your pleafure. Now go
 and tell your lorde fyr
 Galyhodyn / þ^t this fame
 knyght **fhall** encoūtre with
 hym **and** his felowes.

10.65

for thorough the fyght of
 her he was so enamored in
 her loue / that he femyd at
 that tyme / that both fyr
 Tryfram & fyr Launcelot
 had ben bothe agaynst
 hym / they sholde haue
 wonne no worlhyp of
 hym. And in his herte as
 the boke sayth fyr
 palomydes wyllhed þ^t with
 hys worlhyp he myghte
 haue adoo w^t fyr Trifram
 before all men by caufe of
 La beale Ifoud.

for through the fyght of
 her he was so enamoured
 in her loue / that hym
 femed at that tyme that **yf**
 bothe sfr Tryfram & fyr
 Launcelot had ben bothe
 agaynst hym / they sholde
 haue wonne no worlhyp of
 hym. And in his herte (as
 the booke sayth) fyr
 Palomydes wyllhed that
 with his worlhyp he myght
 haue ado with fyr Trystrā
 before all men / bycaufe of
 la beale Isoude

10.70

Syr god thank you sayd
the noble knyght fyr
 Trifram & Ifoud of youre
 grete goodnes & largesse /
 for ye are peerlees. Thus
 they talkyd of **many**
 thynges and of all the
 hoole joustes. But for what
 cause sayd kyng Arthur

Syr god thanke you sayd
 fyr Tryfram and **la beale**
 Ifoude of your grete
 goodness **and** largesse / for
 ye are peerless. **And** thus
 they talked of **dyuers**
 thynges and of all the hole
 iultyng. But for what
 cause (sayd kynge Arthur)

wer ye fyr Triftram
 agaynft vs ye are a
 knyghte of the **table**
rounde of ryght ye sholde
 haue ben wyth vs /

were ye fyr Tryftram
 agaynft vs / ye are a
 knyght of þ^e **roūde table** /
 of ryght ye sholde haue
 ben with vs.

10.78

Then fyr Launcelot wyth
 kyng Arthur **&** a fewe of
 his knyghtes of fyre
 Launcelots kynne dyde
 merueyllous dedes. For
 that tyme as the boke
 recordeth fyr Laūcelot
 smote downe **&** pulled
 downe .xxx. knyghtes /

Than fyr Laūcelot with
 kyng Arthur **and with** a
 fewe of his knyghtes of fyr
 Launcelots kynne dyd
 meruaylous dedes **of**
armes. For that tyme (as
 the booke recordeth) fyr
 Laūcelot smote downe **&**
 pulled downe .xxx.
 knyghtes.

10.79

And whā Bleoberys Ector
 wer com ther as **the** quene
 Gweneuer was lodged in a
 casfell by the see fyde /

And whan **fyr** Bleoberys
& fyr Ector were comen
 there as quene Gueneuer
 was lodged in a castell by
 the see fyde / and through

& through þ^e grace of god
 the quene was recouered
 of her malady / thenn she
 alkyd the .ii. knyght3 from
 whens they came. They
 sayd þ^t they came from fyr
 Triftrame & from La beale
 Ifoud. How doth fyre
 Triftram sayd **the** quene &
 La beale Ifoud. Truely
 sayd tho two kny3tes he
 doth as a noble knyghte
 lholde do: & as for the
 quene Ifoud she is
 pereleffe of al ladyes /

the grace of god þ^e quene
 was recouered of her
 malady. Than she asked
 the **two** knyghtes frō
 whens they came. They
 sayd that they came from
 fyr Triftram & from la
 beale Ifoude. How doth fyr
 Tryfram (sayd quene
Gueneuer) **and** la beale
 Ifoude. Truly sayd those
 two knyghtes he dothe as
 a noble knyght lholde do /
and as for the quene **la**
beale Ifoude / she is
 peerleffe of all ladyes

10.81

Thenne fyre Palomydes
 rode nere hym & falewed
 hÿ myldly & sayd fayr
 knyght **what** wayle **ye** fo /
 let me lye downe & wayle

Than syr Palomydes rode
 nere hym & falewed hym
 myldly / **and** sayd. Fayre
 knyght **why** wayle **you** fo
 / let me lye downe **and**

with you / for dowte not I
am moche more heuyer
than ye are. For I dare faye
fayd Palomydes. that my
forowe is an hundred folde
more thane your is / and
therefore lete vs complayne
eyther to other.

wayle with you / for
doubte ye not I am moche
more heuyer than ye are.
for I dare faye (fayd **fyr**
Palolomides) that my
forowe is an hondred folde
more than yours is / and
therefore let vs complayne
eyther to other.

10.82

So came in a damoyfell
paffynge fayr **&** yong **&**
she bare a vessel of gold
betwyx her hondes / **&**
therto the kyng knelyd
deouwtly **&** fayd his
prayers / so dyde all that
were there. O **Jhesu** fayde
fyr Launcelot what may

So **there** came in a
damoyfell paffynge fayre
and yonge / **and** she bare
a vessel of golde bytwene
her handes / and therto the
kyng kneled deuoutly
and fayd his prayers / and
so dyd all that were there.
O Jefu fayd fyr Laūcelot /

this meane. This is fayd þ^e
 kyng the richeft thinge that
 ony man hath lyuyngē.
 And whan this thyngē
 gooth abowte / the rounde
 table fhall be broken. And
 wite þ^e well fayd the kyng
 this is the holy Sancgreall
that ye haue here feen

what may this meane. This
 is (fayd kyngē **Pelles**) the
 rycheft thyngē þ^t ony man
 hath lyuyngē. And whan
 this thyngē goth aboute /
 the rounde table fhall be
 broken. And wite ye well
 fayd kyngē **Pelles** / **that**
 this is þ^e holy Sancgreall
whiche ye haue here feen.

11.2

And wite ye well fayd
fayr Elayne to fyr Bors / I
 wold lefe my lyf for hÿ
 rather than he fhould be
 hurt / But alas **I caft me**
 neuer **for to** fe hÿ. And the
 cheif caufe of this is dame
 Gweneuer. Madame fayd
 dame Bryfen þ^e whyche
 had made the
 enchauntement before

And wite ye well fayd
dame Elayne to fyr Bors /
 I wolde lefe my lyfe for
 hym rather than he fhould
 be hurte. But alas **I fere**
me þ^t I shall neuer fe hym
 / & the chefe causer of this
 is dame Gueneuer.
 Madame fayd dame
 Bryfen (the whiche had
 made the enchauntement

betwyx fyr Launcelot &
her I praye you hertely lete
fyr Bors departe & / hygh
hym with all hys myghte
as fafte as he maye to feke
fyr Launcelot / for I warne
you he is clene out of his
mynde / and yet he fhall be
well holpe

before **bytwene** fyr
Launcelot & her) I praye
you hertely let fyr Bors
departe and hye hym with
all his myght as faft as he
may to feke fyr Launcelot
/ for I warne you he is
clene out of his mynde /
and yet he fhall be well
holpen /

11.9

O **Jhesu** fayd fyr
Percyuale: what may this
meane that we be thus
helyd / & ryght now we
were at the poynt of
deyenge. I wote full well
fayd fyr Ector what it is. It
is an holy vessell that is
borne by a mayden / &
therin is a part of the holy
blood of our lorde **Jhesu**
Cryft / bleffyd mot be be /

O Jefu fayd fyr Percyuale /
what may this meane that
we ben thus heled / & right
now we were at the poynt
of dyenge. I wote full well
(fayd fyr Ector) what it is.
It is an holy vessell that is
borne by a mayden / and
therin is a parte of the holy
blode of our lorde Jefu
Chryft bleffed mote he be
/ but it may not be feen

But it maye not be seen
 fayd fyre Ector but yf it be
 by a perfyght man.

(fayd fir Ector) but yf it be
 by a perfyte man.

11.14

Then went dame Elayne
 vnto fyr Launcelot **&** tolde
 hym all how her fader had
 deuyfed for hy & her.
 Thene came the knyght
 fyre Caſtor that was
 neuwe vnto kynge Pelles
 vnto syr Launcelot **and**
 aſkid hym what was his
 name. Syr fayde fyr
 Launcelot my name is Le
 chyualer mal fet.

Than wente dame Elayne
 vnto fyr Laūcelot / **and**
 tolde hym all how her
 father had deuyfed for
 hym & her. Than came the
 knyght fyr Caſtor (that was
 neuwe vnto kyng Pelles)
 vnto fyr Launcelot / **&**
 aſked hym what was his
 name. Syr fayd fyr
 Launcelot / my name is Le
 cheualler mal fet

12.6

here wythin this castell is
the fayrest lady in this
londe / & her name is
Elayne. Also we haue in
this castel the fayrest
knyght & the myghtyest
man that is I dare fay
lyuyng / and he calleth
hymself Le cheualer
malfet

here with in this castell is
the fayrest lady in this
lande / and her name is
dame Elayne. Also we
haue in this castell the
fayrest knyghte and the
myghtyest man that is (I
dare **well** faye) **now**
lyuyng / and he calleth
hymselfe le cheualler
malfet.

12.7

Also who that affayeth to
take that swerde & fayleth
of it / he shall receyue a
wounde by that fwerd that
he shall not be hoole longe
after. And I woll that ye
wyte that this same day
shal **theaduents** of the
Sancgreall þ^t is callid the
holy vessel begynne.

Also who that affayeth **for**
to take that swerde &
fayleth of it / he shall
receyue a wounde by that
fwerde / that he shall not
be hole longe after. And I
wyll that ye wyte that this
same daye shall **the**
aduents of the
Sancgreal (that is called
the holy vessel) begyn.

13.2

What are ye fayd fyr
 Percyuale. Syr fayd the
 olde man I am of a
 straunge countree / &
 hyther I come to comfort
 you. Syr fayd fyr
 Percyuale what
 fygnfyeth my dreme that
 I dremyd this nyghte. And
 there he tolde him al
 togider. She **whiche** rode
 vpon the lyon fayd the
 good man betokenyth þ^e
 newe lawe of holy chyrche
 þ^t is to vnderstonde faythe
 / good hope / beleue &
 bapty^m .

What are ye fayd fyr
 Percyuale. Syr fayd the
 olde man / I am of a
 ftraunge cou^{tr}ee / &
 hyther I come to cōforte
 you. Syr fayd fyr
 Percyuale / what figny
 fyeth my dreme that I
 dremed this nyght and
 there he tolde h^y all
 togyder. She **that** rode
 vpon the lyon (fayd the
 good man) betokeneth the
 newe lawe of holy chirche
 / that is to vnderfstande /
 fayth / good hope / byleue
and bapty^m.

14.7

What are ye fayd fyre
 Percyuale þ^t profreth me
 this grete kyndnesse. I am
 fayd she a gentyl woman
 that am dys^heryted /
 whyche was somtyme the
 rychest woman of þ^e
 worlde.

What are ye fayd fyr
 Percyuale that profreth me
 this grete kyndnes. I am
 (fayd she) a gentylwoman
 that am dis^heryted /
 whyche was somtyme the
 rychest woman of þ^e
 worlde

14.8

One thyng merueylled
 me fayd fyr Ector I haue
 mette with **twenty**
 knyghte felowes of myn /
 & all they cōplayne af I
 do. I merueyle fayd fyr
 Gawayne whef Launcelot
 your broð is. Truly fayd
 Ector I can not here of hy
 ne of Galahad / Percyuale
 nor / Bors / Lete them be
 fayd fyre Gawayne for
 they haue noo erthly
 perys.

One thyng meruaylleth
 me fayd fyr Ector / I haue
 mette with **.xx.** knyghtes
 felowes of myne / and
 they all complayne as I do.
 I meruayle (fayd fyr
 Gawayne) where fyr
 Launcelot your **brother**
 is. Truly fayd fyr Ector / I
 can not here of **hym** / ne of
fyr Galahad / **fyr**
 Percyuale / nor of **fyr**
 Bors. Let them be fayd fyr
 Gawayne / for they haue
 no erthly peres.

16.1

Thenne fyr Gawayne
 afskyd hym what manere
 knyghte he was and what
 was his name that knewe
 hym not. Thenne the hurte
 knyghte anwerde I am
 fayde he of kynge Arthurs
 courte.

Than fyr Gawayne asked
 hym what maner knyght
 he was / and what was his
 name / **as he** that knewe
 hym not. Than the hurte
 knyght anwered. I am
 (fayd he) of kynge Ar
 thurs courte /

and haue ben a felowe of
the rounde table. And thou
and I were **brethern
fworne togyders**. And
now fyre Gawayne thou
hafte flayne me. And my
name is Uwayne le
auoutres /

and haue ben a felowe of
the rounde table / and thou
and I were **fworne
bretherne togyder**. And
now fyr Gawayne thou
haft flayne me. And **wyte
thou well that** my name is
fyr Uwayne le auoutres.

16.2

Thenne they sayd to
Galahad in the name of
Jhesu Cryft / we pray you
that ye gyrde you wyth
this fwerde / whiche hath
ben so moche desyred in
the reame of Logrys. Now
lete me begyn sayd
Galahad to gripe this
fwerde for to geue you
courage /

Than they sayd **vnto fyr**
Galahad. In the name of
Jesu **Chryft** we praye you
that ye gyrde you with this
fwerde / whiche hath ben
foo moche desyred in the
realme of Logrys. Now let
me begyn (sayd **fyr**
Galahad) to grype this
fswerde for to gyue you
courage.

17.7

And passynge gladde was
 the kynge & the quene of
 fyr Launcelot & of fyr
 Bors / for they had ben
 passyng longe away in the
 quest of the Sancgreal.
 Thenne as the boke sayth
 fyre Laūcelot beganne to
 reforte vnto þ^e quene
 Gueneuer agayn / &
 forgate þ^e promese & the
 perfeccōn that he made in
 the quest. For as the boke
 sayth had not fyr
 Launcelot ben in his preuy
 thoughtes & in his mynde
 so sette inwardly to the
 quene as he was in semyng
 outwarde to god / there
 had no knyghte passed hy
 in the queste of the
 Sancgreal.

And passyng gladde was
 the kynge & the quene of
 fyr Launcelot and of fyr
 Bors / for they had ben
 passyng longe away in
 the quest of þ^e Sancgreal.
 Than (as the **frenllhe**
 booke sayth) fyr Launcelot
 began for to reforte vnto
 quene Gueneuer agayne /
 and forgate the promesse
 and the perfeccyon that he
 made in the quest. For as
 the **frenllhe** booke sayth /
 had not fyr Launcelot ben
 in his preuy thoughtes &
 in his mynde set inwardly
 to the quene / as he was in
 semynge outwarde vnto
 god / there had no knyght
 passed hym in the quest of
 the Sancgreal /

18.1

So whan fyr Launcelot
was departid the quene
outwarde made no
manere of forowe / in
shewynge to none of his
blood / nor to none other.
But wyte ye wel inwardly
as the boke sayth she toke
grete thoughte / but she
bare it out with a prowde
countenaunce / as though
she felt no thoughte nor
daunger.

So whan fyr Launcelot
was departed / the quene
made no maner of
outwarde forowe / in
shewynge to none of his
blode / nor yet to none
other / but wyte ye well **p^t**
inwardly (as **p^e** **fren^{ll}he**
booke sayth) she toke
greate thought / but she
bare it out with a proude
countenaūce / as though
she felte no thought nor
daunger.

18.2

And **euer** she hath ben
large & free of her goodes
to all good knyghtes / &
the moost bounteuous lady
of her yeftes & her good
grace that euer I sawe or
herde speke of / & therefore
it were sham sayd fyr Bors
to vs all to our

And **alwaye** she hath ben
large and free of her
goodes to all good
knyghtes / and the moost
bounteuous lady of her
gyftes and her good grace
that euer I sawe or herde
speke of / and therefore it
were a **grete** shame (sayd
fyr Bors) **vnto** vs all to our

moost noble kynges wyf /
 & we suffred her to be
 shamfully flayne.

moost noble kynges wife /
 and we suffred her to be
 shamefully flayne.

18.5

And **eu**er fyr Lauayne the
good knyght was wyth
 hym. and there fyre
 Launcelot wyth hys
 fwerde smote and pullyd
 downe as þ^e frenllh boke
 makyth mencōn moo than
 .xxx. knyghtes / & the
 moost partye were of the
table rounde. And fyr
 Lauayne dyde ful wel that
 day. For he smote doune
 .x. knyghtes of the **table
 rōūde**.

And **alwaye** the good
 knyght fyr Lauayne was
 with hym. And there fyr
 Launcelot w^t his fwerde
 smote and pulled downe
 (as the frenllhe booke
 maketh mencion) moo
 than .xxx. knyghtes / and
 the moost partye were of
 the rōūde table. And fyr
 Lauayne dyd full well that
 daye / for he smote doune
 x. knyghtes of the rounde
 table.

18.11

And **god wolde** fayr cofyn
 fayd fyre Bors that ye
 coude loue her / But as to
 that I maye not / nor I dare
 not counfell you /

And wold god fayre cofyn
 fayd fyr Bors / that ye
 coude loue her / but as to
 that I may not nor dare not
 coūfeyle you / but I fe well

But I fe well fayd fyre Bors
by her dylygence abowte
you þ^t ſhe loueth you
entierly. That me repentith
fayd fyr Launcelot. Syr
fayd fyr Bors / ſhe is not
the fyrft that hath loſte her
payn vpon you / & that is
the more pyte.

(fayd fyr Bors) by her
dylygence aboute you /
that ſhe loueth you
entyerly. That me
repenteth fayd fyr
Launcelot. Syr fayd fyr
Bors ſhe is not the fyrft
that hath loſte her payne
vpon you / and that is the
more pyte.

18.16

**Thenne fyre Bors de
Ganys came in the fame
tyde / &** he was nombred
that he **fmote** downe .xx.
knyghtes. And therefore the
pryce was geuen betwyxe
them both / for they began
fyrft & lengeft endured
Alfo fyr Gareth as the
boke fayth dyde that daye
grete dedes of armes /

Than came in at the fame
tyme fyr Bors de Ganys
and he was nombred that
he had **ſmytten** downe
.xx. knyghtes / & therefore
the pryce was gyuen
bytwene them bothe for
they began fyrft & longeft
endured. Also fyr Gareth
(as the boke fayth) dyd
that daye grete dedes of
armes /

18.18

Thenne whan the .x.
 kny3tes herde fyr
 Mellyagraunce words /
 they spake all in one voys
 / & fayde to fyr
 Mellyagraunce Thou sayft
 fallfly. **and** wrongfully
 putteft vpon vs fuche a
 dede / & that we woll
 make gode ony of vs /
 chese whyche thou lyfte of
 vs whan we are hoole of
 our woundes. Ye shall not
 fayd fyr Mellyagraūce /
 faye nay wyth your proude
 langage / for here ye maye
 alle fe fayde fyre
 Mellyagraunce / that bi the
 quene thif nyghte a
 wounded knyghte hath
 layne.

Than whan the .x.
 knyghtes herde fyr
 Melyagraunce wordes /
 they spake all with one
 voyce and sayd to fyr
 Melyagraunce. Thou sayft
 fallfly & wrong fully
 putteft vpon vs fuche a
 dede / and that we wyl
 make good ony of vs /
 chose whiche thou lyft of
 vs / whan we are hole of
 our woundes. Ye shall not
 (fayd fyr Meliagraunce)
 faye nay with your proude
 language / for here ye may
 all fe fayd fyr Melyagraūce
 / that by þ^e quene this
 nyght a wounded knyghte
 hath layen.

19.6

And therefore fayde fyre
 Launcelot / wyte ye well
 ye fhall not fere me. And
 yf there were no mo
 wȳmen in **all** this londe
 but **ye** / I wol not haue ado
 wyth you. Thenne arte you
 fhamyd fayde the lady / **&**
 dystroyed for euer. As for
 worldes fhame **Jhesu**
 defende me / **&** as for my
 distresse it is welcome
 what **foo euer** it be that
 god fendyth me.

And therefore fayd fyr
 Launcelot / wyte ye well
 that ye fhall not fere me.
 And yf there were no moo
 women in this lande but
you / I wolde not haue ado
 with you. Than art thou
 fhamed (fayd the lady) and
 destroyed for euer. As for
 worldes fhame (**fayd fyr**
Launcelot) Jefu defende
 me / and as for my
 dystresse / it is welcome
 what someuer it be that
 god fendeth me.

Double example. The
 second parenthetical-
 quotative clause is unique
 to this edition.

19.8

Thenne kynge Arthur lete
 calle that lady / **&** askyd
 her the cause why she
 broughte that hurt knyght
 in to that **londe**. My moost
 noble kynge fayd that ladi
 / wyte you well I brought

Than kynge Arthur let call
 that lady / and asked her
 the cause why she **had**
 broughte that hurte knyght
 in to that **countree**. My
 moost noble **lorde** kynge
Arthur (fayd that lady)
 wyte you well I broughte

DeW98

hym hether. for to be
hellyd of his woundes /

DeW29

hym hyther for to be
heeled of his woūdes /

19.10

Comments

And than that noble
knyght fyr Launcelot tolde
them all / how he was
harde beftad in the quenes
chambre / and how and in
what maner he efcaped
from them / & therefore
(fayd fyr Launcelot) wyte
ye well my fayre lordes / I
am fure there is not but
warre vnto me & myne /
and for bycaufe I haue
flayne this nyght thefe
knyghtes /

20.5

Relevant leaf missing in
DeW98

Whether ye dyd ryght or
wronge it is now your
parte to holde with the
quene / that she be not
flayne and put to a
myfcheuous deth / for and
the quene dye so / the
flame shal be yours. O
good lorde Jefu defende
me from flame (sayd fyr
Launcelot) and kepe and
saue my lady the quene
from vylany and from
flamefull dethe / and that
she neuer be destroyed in
my defaute. And therefore
my fayre lordes / ye that
be of my kynne and my
frendes (sayd fyr
Launcelot) what wyll ye
do. Than they sayd all / we
wyll doo as ye wyll do
your selfe. I put this to you
(sayd fyr Launcelot) that
yf my lorde kynge Arthur

Three examples, all
referring to Lancelot

Relevant leaf missing in
DeW98

by euyll counfeyle / wyll
 to morowe in his hete put
 my lady the quene to the
 fyre / there to be brente /
 now I praye you coufeyle
 me what is beft to be done/

20.6

Nay my mooft noble lorde
 (fayd fyr Gawayne) that
 wyll I neuer do in my lyfe
 / for wyte you well that I
 wyll neuer be in that place
 where fo noble a quene as
 is my lady quene
 Gueneuer fhall take fuche
 a fhamefull endynge. For
 wyte you well (fayd fyr
 Gawayn) that my herte
 wyll neuer ferue me to fe
 her dye /

20.8

Relevant leaf missing in
 DeW98

And than fhe thanked god
and fyr Launcelot. And fo
he rode his waye with the
quene (as the frenflhe
booke fayth) vnto Joyous
garde / and there he kept
her as a noble knyght
fholde do / & many grete
lordes and kynges fente fyr
Launcelot many good
knights. And many noble
knyghtes drewe vnto fyr
Launcelot.

Relevant leaf missing in
DeW98

20.8

But there as ye say I haue
slayne youre good
knyghtes / I wote well that
I haue done so / & tha me
sore repentith But I was
enforced to do batayll with
them / in sauynge of my
lyf / or ells I must haue
suffred them to haue slayn
me.

But there as ye fay **that** I
haue flayne your good
knyghtes / I wote well that
I haue done so / and that
me fore repenteth / but I
was enforced to do batayle
with them in fauyng of
my lyfe / or els I muft haue
suffred them to haue
flayne me. And **as** for my

And for my lady queñ
 Gueneuer except your
 perfone of your hyghnes &
 my lorde fyr Gawayne /
 there is no knyghte vnder
 heuen that dare make it
 good vpon me / þ^t euer I
 was traytour vnto your
 perfone. And where it
 pleafeth you to faye / that I
 haue holde my lady your
 quene yeres & wÿterf vnto
 that. I fhall **euer** make a
 large anſwer / & preue it
 vpon ony knyght þ^t bereth
the lyfe / except your
 perfone & fyre Gawayne /
 that my lady quene
 Gueneuer is a true lady
 vnto your perfone / & that
I woll make good w^t my
 honde.

lady quene Gueneuer
 (excepte your þfone of
 your hyghnes / & my lorde
 fyr Gawayne) there is no
 kynght vnder heuen that
 dare make it good vpon
 me / þ^t euer I was a
 traytour vnto your
 perfone. And where it
 pleafeth you to faye that I
 haue holden my lady your
 quene yeres & wynters /
 vnto that I fhall make a
 large anſwere and preue it
 vpon ony knyght that
 bereth lyfe (excepte your
 perfone and fyr Gawayne)
 that my lady quene
 Gueneuer is a true lady
 vnto youre perfone / and
 that **wyll I** make good
 with my handes.

20.11

And therefore my good & gracious lorde fayd fyr Launcelot take your quene vnto your gode grace / for she is both fayre / true & good. Fy on the fals recreaut knyghte fayde fyr Gawayne / I lete the wyte my lorde myn vnckle kynge Arthur shall haue hys quene & the maugre thys vyfage / & flee you bothe whether it pleyse him. It may wel be fayde fyr Launcelot / but wyte you well my lorde fyr Gawayne / and me lyfte to come out of this castel / ye sholde wyne me & the quene more harder than euer ye wanne a stronge batayll.

And therefore my good & gracious lorde fayd fyr Launcelot / take youre quene vnto your good grace / for she is bothe fayre / true and good. Fye on the false recreaut knyght (fayd fyr Gawayne) I let the **to** wyte that my lorde myne vnckle king Arthur shall haue his quene and the maugre thy vyfage / & flee you bothe **whereas it shall** please hym. It may well be (fayd fyr Launcelot) but wyte you well my lorde fyr Gawayne / and me lyft to come out of this castell / ye shold wyne me and the quene more harder than euer ye wanne a stronge batayle.

[...]

Alas / thou madeft hym
 knyghte thyne owne
 hondes / why flewe thou
 hym þ^t loued the fo well.
 For to excufe me fayd fyr
 Laūcelot it helpyth me not
 / But be Jhefu fayde fyr
 Launcelot. & by the fayth
 that I owe to the hygh
 ordre of knyghthode. I
 fholde wyth as good a
 wylle haue flayne my
 neuewe fyr Bors de Ganys
 atte that tyme / But alas
 that euer I was fo vnhappy
 fayde fyr Launcelot / þ^t I
 had **not** feen fyr Gareth &
 fyr Gaherys. Thou lyeft
 recreaunt knyghte fayd fyr
 Gawayne / thou flewest
 hym in dyspyte of me. And
 therefore wyte þ^e **ryht** well
 I fhall make werre to the
 all the whyle that I may
 lyue.

[...]

Alas thou madeft hym
 knyght **with** thyne handes
 / why flewest thou hym
 that loued the fo well. For
 to excufe me (fayd fyr
 Launcelot) it helpeth me
 not. But by Jefu fayd fyr
 Launcelot / and by the
 fayth that I owe vnto the
 hygh ordre of knyghthode
 / I fholde with as good a
 wyll haue flayne my
 neuewe fir Bors de Ganys
 at that tyme. But alas that
 euer I was fo vnhappy
 (fayd fyr Laūcelot) that I
 had feen fyr Gareth and
 fyr Gaherys. Thou lyeft
false recreaūt knyght (fayd
 fyr Gawayne) thou flewest
 hym in despyte of me / &
 therefore wyte thou well
 that I fhall make warre
 vnto the all the whyle that
 I may lyue. That me **fore**

That me repentyth fayd fyr
 Launcelot / for wel I
 vnderfonde / it helpyth
 not to feke none
 accordement whyle ye fyr
 Gawayne are fo
 myfcheoufly fet. And yf
 ye were not / I wolde not
 doubte to haue the good
 grace of my lorde Arthur.
 I byleue it well fals
 recreaunt knyghte fayd fyr
 Gawayne / for thou haft
 many longe dayes
 ouerladde me & vs all and
 dystroyed many of our
 good knyghtes.

repenteth (fayd fyr
 Launcelot) for well I
 vnderfande that it helpeth
 me not to feke **for** none
 accordment whyles that ye
 fyr Gawayne are foo
 myfcheoufly fet. And yf
 ye were not / I wolde not
 doubt to haue the good
 grace of my lorde **kyng**
 Arthur. I byleue it well
 falfe recreaūt knyght (fayd
 fyr Gawayn) for thou haft
 many longe dayes
 ouerladde me & vs all /
 and haft destroyed many of
 our good knyghtes.

20.11

Therefore fayde fyre
 Launcelot vnto the
 byflhop / ye fhall ryde
 vnto þ^e kyng afore me &
 recōmaunde me vnto his
 good grace. And lete hym
 haue knowledge / that
 this fame daye **eyght**

Therefor fayd fyr
 Launcelot vnto the
 byflhop / ye fhall ryde
 vnto the kyng before me
 / and recōmaūde me vnto
 his good grace / & let hym
 haue knowlege þ^t this
 fame daye **.viii. dayes**

dayes / by the grace of god
/ I myself shall brynge my
lady quene Gueneuer vnto
hym.

(by the grace of god) I my
selfe shall brynge my lady
quene Gueneuer vnto
hym.

20.14

My moost redoubted
kyng / ye shall
vnderfond. by the popes
cōmaundement & youres /
I haue brought to you my
ladi the quene as ryȝt
requyreth. And yf there be
ony knyght of what some
euer degree **that** he be
excepte youre persone /
that woll saye / or dare
saye / but that she is true &
clene to you I here myself
fyr Launcelot **du lake** /
wyll make it good vpon
his body þ^t she is a true
ladi vnto you.

My moost redoubted **lorde**
ye shall vnderstande / **that**
by the popes
commaundement and
yours / I haue brought
vnto you my lady þ^e quene
/ as ryght requyreth. And
yf there be ony knyght of
what someuer degree he be
(excepte your persone)
that wyll saye or dare saye
but that she is true & clene
vnto you / I here my selfe
fyr Laūcelot wyll make it
good vpon his body / that
she is a true lady vnto you.

20.15

Thenne all knyghtes &
 ladyes that were there /
 wept as **they were** madde.
 And the teres fel on kyng
 Arthurs chekys. Syr
 Launcelot fayd fyr
 Gawayne / I haue wel
 herde thy speeche / & thy
 grete profres / but wyte
 thou wel / lete the kyng
 doo as it **pleyfe**th him / I
 woll neuer forgeue my
 brethern death / & in
 especyall þ^e dethe of my
 brother fyr Gareth. And yf
 myn vncler kyng Arthur
 woll accorde with the / he
 shall lese my feruyce.

Than all the knyghtes and
 ladyes that were there
 wepte as **they had ben**
 madde. And the teres fell
vpon kyng Arthurs
 chekes. Syr Launcelot
 fayd fyr Gawayne / I haue
 well herde thy speche and
 thy grete profres / but
 wyte thou well (let the
 kyng do as it **shall** please
 hym) I wyll neuer forgyue
the my brethern death /
 and in especyall the deth
 of my brother fyr Gareth.
 And yf myne vncler kyng
 Arthur wyll accorde with
 the / he shall lese my
 feruyce.

20.16

but fortune is so **varyaunt**
 / & the whele so mutable /
 there nys none constaunt
 abydyng. & that may be
 preued by many olde

But fortune is so **varyable**
 / & the whele so mutable /
 there is no constaunt
 abydyng and that may be
 preued by many olde

cronycles of noble Ector
& Troylus / & Alyfaundre
the myghty conquerour /
and many **mo other**.
Whan they were mooft in
ther ryaltee / they alyght
loweft And fo fareth it bi
me fayd fyr Launcelot. For
in this realme I had
worshyp / and by me &
myn / alle the hoole
rounde table hathe be
encreacyd more in
worshypp by me & my
blood / than by ony other.

So fyr Launcelot fent **for a**
damoyfell & a dwerfe with
her / requyrynge kyng
Arthur to leue his werre
vpon his londes. And fo
she stert vpon a palfroye /
and the dwarfe ranne by
her fyde. And whan she

cronycles of noble Hector
and Troylus and
Alyfaunder þ^t myghty
conquerour and many
other moo / whan they
were mooft in theyr
royaltee / they alyghted
loweft. And fo fareth it by
me (fayd fyr Launcelot)
for in this realme I **haue**
had worshyp / and by me
and myne all the hole
table roūde hath ben
encreaced more in
worshyp by me and my
blode than by ony other

20.17

So fyr Laūcelot fent **forth**
a damoyfell and a dwarfe
with her / requyrynge
kyng Arthur to leue his
warre vpon his landes.
And fo she sterte vpon a
palfrey / & the dwarfe ran
by her fyde. And whan she

came to the pauelyon of
kyng Arthur / there she
alyghte. And there met her
a knyghte. fyr Lucan the
butteler. & fayd fayr
damoyfell come ye from
fyr Launcelot du lake.

came vnto the pauylyon of
kynge Arthur / there she
alyghted. And there mette
her a knyght (**whole name
was** fyr Lucan the butler)
that fayd. Fayre damoyfell
/ come ye from fyr
Launcelot du lake.

20.19

Whan fyr Lucan
vnderstode thys werke / he
came to the kynge alfoone
as he myȝte / and tolde
hym all what he had herde
& feen. Therefore by myn
abuys fayd fyr Lucan it is
best that we bryng you to
some towne. I wolde it wer
so fayd the kynge.

And whan fyr Lucan
vnderstode this werke / he
came vnto the kynge as
foone as he myght / and
tolde hym all what he had
herde & feen. Therefore by
myne aduyfe (fayd fyr
Lucan) it is best that we
brÿge you vnto some
towne. I wolde it were so
fayd the kynge.

21.4

Wherfore the quene sayd
 in heryng of them all I
 befeche almyghty god /
 that I maye neuer haue
 power / to fe fyr Launcelot
 wyth my wordly eyen.
 And **thus** sayd all the
 ladyes was euer her prayer
 thyfe two dayes /

Wherfore the quene sayd
 in herynge of them all. I
 befeche almyghty god that
 I may neuer haue power to
 fe fyr Launcelot w^t my
 worldly eyen. And **this**
 (sayd al the ladyes) was
 euer her prayer **all** these
 two dayes /

21.11

And whan he behelde fyr
 Launcelots vyfage he fell
 downe in a fwowne. And
 whan he awakyd / it were
 harde ony tonge to tel the
 dolefull complayntes that
 he made for his brother. A
 Launcelot **he sayd** / þ^{ou}
 were heed of all cryften
 kny3tes.

And whan he behelde fyr
 Launcelots vyfage / he fell
 down in a fwowne. And
 whan he awaked / it were
 harde **for** ony tongue to
 tell the dolefull
 complayntes that he made
 for his brother. A **fyr**
 Laūcelot **sayd he** / thou
 were heed of all chryften
 knightes

And now I dare faye fayd
 syr Ector thou fyr
 Launcelot ther thou lyeft
 that thou were neuer
 matched of non erthly
 knyghtes honde.

And now I dare faye (fayd
 fyr Bors) þ^{ou} fyr Laūcelot
 there thou lyeft / thou were
 neuer matched of none
 erthly knyghtes hādes.

21.13

Then fyr Conftantyn **that**
 was fyr Cadors ſone of
 Cornewaylle was chofen
 kynge of Englonde. And he
 was a ful noble knyghte /
 and worlhypfully he rulyd
 this reame.

Than fyr Conſtanyne
 (**whiche** was fyr Cadors
 ſone of Cornewaylle) was
 chofen kynge of Englonde.
 And he was a full noble
 knyght / & worlhypfully
 he ruled this realme.

21.13

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