HOW DO THE REPRESENTATIONS AND FUNCTIONS OF CHIVALRIC NARRATIVES EXPRESS THE NATURE OF CHIVALRY DURING THE MIDDLE AGES?

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Abstract

This thesis explores the expressions of chivalry within Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, what Malory deems to be suitable chivalric behaviours and life lessons to which his audience can learn from. It aims to show that Malory's narrative was composed with his own specific agenda and furthermore that it was adapted to suit a variety of purposes, spreading to various audiences through various genres. It was also aimed at both men and women with women becoming an increasing audience for Malory's narrative. Furthermore the themes originating within the manuscript have importance and relevance to audiences across various centuries, a reason behind William Caxton's publications of it.

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Introduction

What is more medieval than the legend of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table, jousting for honour and to win the hearts of the ladies within court? However there has been a great deal of debate as to whether Arthur existed and if so where Camelot was situated. If he did exist then as Oliver Padel states Arthur was a 'legendary warrior and…king of Britain' although there is some debate over whether he was a king or just a warrior.[1] There has been scepticism surround Arthur's existence since the twelfth-century, with mention of Arthur first appearing in the ninth-century in the *Historia Brittonum*, a Welsh history about British inhabitants.[2] The greatest accepted view is that if Arthur existed then he was most likely a British battle leader against the English in the sixth-century.[3] However this does not stop people arguing that Arthur was based in various locations across Britain, nor does it stop people trying to locate Arthur's battlefields, most famously Camlann (Arthur's final battle) which varies between Hadrian's Wall to Wales.[4] Despite these debates what has emerged is the creation of a large legend based upon this figure; out of this two people did the most to create this legend, the first is Geoffrey of Monmouth in the twelfth-century and the second Sir Thomas Malory in the fifteenth-century.

Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, the original known to a modern audience as the Winchester Manuscript after its discovery in Winchester College in 1934, provides a modern audience with a guide to fifteenth-century attitudes towards themes such as behaviour and

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[1] Padel, O.J. (2007). Arthur (supp. fl. in or before 6th cent.). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* Retrieved from http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/703.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.

attitudes towards women.[5] Thus the narrative serves a great importance for historians studying the fifteenth-century and the outside political themes which impacted upon narratives such as Malory's. The themes Malory wished to emphasise as a gender specific behavioural code will be the focus here, using *Le Morte*'s examples. *Le Morte* played such an important role that monarchs, particularly Henry VII, would use King Arthur as a comparison to themselves and their rule. *Le Morte* was composed during a period of major political upheaval, known within the modern era as the Wars of the Roses (referred to from this point as 'the Wars'). There is great debate as to the exact period of the Wars, spanning from c.1420 until the marriage of Henry VII to Elizabeth of York in January 1486, although it is possible to argue that the Wars continued into Henry VII's rule. The Wars saw a period of political skirmishes designed to unseat one of the two kings of the period (Edward IV and Henry VI) and replace them with another. It saw families often divided in their support of either the house of Lancaster (whose king was Henry VI) or the house of York (led by Edward IV). Broadly speaking, the conflict between Edward and Henry ran from the death of Edward's father Richard, 3rd Duke of York in 1460 until Henry's death on 21 May 1471, after which Edward ruled in peace until his own death in April 1483.[6]

Craig Taylor states that 'Chivalric biographies were a flourishing genre in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries' in reference to the biography of Boucicaut, 'one of the most prominent [French] knights of the Middle Ages.'[7] Further presented 'as a flower of chivalry and the

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[5] British Library. (2009). *Thomas Malory's 'Le Morte Darthur'*. Retrieved from http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/englit/malory/.

[6] Watts, J. (2004). Richard of York, third duke of York (1411–1460). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* Retrieved from http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23503. See also Griffiths, R.A. (2015). Henry VI (1421–1471). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* Retrieved from http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12953 and Horrox, R. (2011). Edward IV (1442–1483). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* Retrieved from http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8520.

[7] Taylor, C. & Taylor, J.H.M. (2016). *The Chivalric Biography of Boucicaut, Jean II le Meingre*. Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/lib/hud/reader.action?docID=4721176, pp. 1-7.

embodiment of the highest qualities expected of a knight.'[8] Chivalric romances had thrived

since the twelfth-century, embodying a popular genre in which authors could present their

own behavioural guide to an audience through the use of characters who could easily be

contrasted to 'real' people and events; allowing narratives to be reproduced numerous times

and present later audiences with the sense of nostalgia alongside cautionary messages.[9] This

is particularly true of *Le Morte*, originally written around the late 1460s, whilst Malory was

serving a treason sentence against Edward IV.[10] William Caxton published *Le Morte* in 1485,

bringing it to a much wider audience, and it has been republished many times since.[11]

Malory's synthesis of a variety of Arthurian narratives including The Vulgate Cycle (thirteenth-

century French Arthurian legend) and French prose such as *Tristan*, is arguably the definitive

Arthurian narrative upon which adaptations since 1485 have been based.[12] Although Arthur

is an invented character, his importance lies in the fact that to a medieval audience he was

presented as a real historical character and related to aspects of their own lives and

experiences (especially for those of a higher status reading *Le Morte*). More importantly, as

already noted, Arthurian legend remains of great importance presenting representations

which help to understand 'the political culture of fifteenth-century England.'[13]

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[8] Ibid, p. 1.

[9] Armstrong, D. (2003). *Gender and the Chivalric Community in Malory's Morte d'Arthur*. Retrieved from https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=hXhoJHKdQz8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=women+and+the+chivalric+code+in+malory%27s+morte+d%27arthur&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false, p. 7.

[10] Nall, C. (2012). *Reading and War in Fifteenth-Century England: From Lydgate to Malory*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, p. 147.

[11] Field, P.J.C. (2011). Malory, Sir Thomas (1415x18–1471). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved from http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17899.

[12] Kennedy, B. (1997). Adultery in Malory's Le Morte d'Arthur. *Arthuriana, 7* (4), 63-91. doi: https://doi.org/10.1353/art.1997.0037, p. 63. See also Whetter, K.S. (2017). *The Manuscript and Meaning of Malory's Morte Darthur: Rubrication, Commemoration, Memorialization*. Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hud/reader.action?docID=4793142, pp. 2-3.

[13] Grummitt, D. (2014). *A Short History of the Wars of the Roses*. Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hud/reader.action?docID=1675890, p. 41.

Timothy Lustig argues later medieval Arthurian stories 'introduced ideas about Englishness [but]…this was not their only theme.'[14] Roger Sherman Loomis agrees stating that 'there may be hidden influences and subliminal motives which only the author could reveal'.[15] In this thesis Sherman Loomis' argument is contested as it will be argued that Malory's messages within *Le Morte* are not subliminal at all but clearly observable within its fifteenth-century context, through the use of certain behavioural codes and themes. Malory through *Le Morte* expresses clearly his own ideas about the way which medieval people should behave through a gender-specific behavioural guide. Before explaining the structure of this thesis, first Malory and Caxton will be considered alongside the importance of the narrative which they jointly helped to make one of the most iconic narratives of the Middle Ages.

Thomas Malory (or at least the Thomas Malory presumed to have written *Le Morte* as there are multiple others around the same period) was clearly writing for an audience of those of middling-status and above, in fact Malory himself was an elected MP for Warwickshire in 1445, further becoming MP for Bedwin in Wiltshire and was highly respected, or so it appears.[16] Upon closer inspection Malory's behaviour becomes, as Lustig describes, 'erractic – crazy even' from c.1450.[17] During the Wars, Malory appears to have changed political allegiances at least twice during his life.[18] This was not uncommon for the Wars with many people switching their allegiances to suit their political aspirations. Amongst the most famous examples are Elizabeth Woodville Edward IV's queen, who married a Lancastrian before

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[14] Lustig, T.J. (2014). *Knight Prisoner*. Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/lib/hud/reader.action?docID=1572158, p. 5.
[15] Sherman Loomis, R. (1963). *The Development of Arthurian Romance*. London: Hutchinson & Co., p. 7.
[16] Lustig. *Knight Prisoner*, pp. 63-64. See also Field. *Malory*.
[17] Lustig. *Knight Prisoner*, p. 64.
[18] Field, *Malory*.

changing to York to marry Edward.[19] Richard Neville, Lord Warwick who alongside Edward IV's brother George Duke of Clarence changed from Yorkist to Lancastrian, aiding Henry VI to the throne again in 1470; further cementing his support through the marriage of his youngest daughter Anne to Henry's son Prince Edward.[20] Lastly Henry VII's stepfather Thomas Stanley who along with his brother William, famously split their allegiances between York and Lancaster, so that there was always a Stanley on the winning side who could encourage the monarch to forgive their brother through using their loyalty to that house.[21] Malory's changing allegiance however did not succeed as well as some of the examples above, with Malory apparently deemed a dangerous political enemy to the Yorkist court, given their refusal to grant him pardon in July 1468 and again in February 1470.[22] Not only does this explain why Malory was imprisoned by Edward IV, but further emphasises his difference to the noble, loyal characters within *Le Morte*. His narrative according to Eugène Vinaver is one: 'Conceived in the midst of the greatest political upheaval of the century [and]…attempt[s] to show what had been and what could still be achieved 'through clean knighthood'.'[23] It seemed inappropriate that Malory would write *Le Morte* given all that has been discussed, but in fact his status helped him to write the narrative as he would have an understanding not only of what would be popular with this audience, but further what important lessons needed to be given to them.

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[19] Hicks, M. (2011). Elizabeth (c.1437–1492). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved from http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8634.

[20] Pollard, A.J. (2008). Neville, Richard, sixteenth earl of Warwick and sixth earl of Salisbury [*called* the Kingmaker] (1428–1471). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved from http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19955.

[21] Bennett, M.J. (2008). Stanley, Thomas, first earl of Derby (*c.*1433–1504). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved from http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26279.

[22] Field, *Malory*.

[23] Vinaver, E. (Ed.) (1967). *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory In Three Volumes: Volume 1* (2nd ed.). Oxford: The Clarendon Press, p. xxxii.

Through *Le Morte* Malory aims to teach his audience how to behave respectably, chivalrously and most importantly in a way which God approves. This aim is explicitly made by Caxton in his preface to *Le Morte*, as will be discussed below. Reflecting a major contrast between Malory's character after 1450 and those represented in *Le Morte*. Numerous times Malory was imprisoned and escaped only to be re-arrested and re-imprisoned. Vinaver emphasises that Malory was not always convicted of the charges against him but was nevertheless accused 'of several major crimes alleged to have been committed in the course of eighteen months, from January 1450 to July 1451.'[24] These included accusations of robbery, cattle-raids, extortions, rape and attempted murder.[25] Malory is not unlike many in the period, some whom will be discussed below, who were accused of crimes of which they were not necessarily guilty, but the accusations served a purpose. Malory was guilty of some crimes he was accused of, with evidence that on two occasions he broke into Combe Abbey stealing ornaments and money totalling £86.[26] It therefore seems inappropriate that a criminal like Malory should write a narrative like *Le Morte* presenting a code of behaviour for his audience. For this reason early commentators were reluctant to believe that a criminal would compose such an important and popular narrative depicting acceptable codes for behaviour. Malory clearly stated in the final chapter that his book was created 'by Sir Thomas Maleore' and before this he begged his audience to pray for him in both life and death.[27] It has been argued that Malory's confession of his prisoner status appears in an earlier chapter in which three knights are imprisoned and likely to die, pray that God grants them good health

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[24] Ibid, p. xxii.

[25] Ibid, p. xxii.

[26] Lustig, *Knight Prisoner*, p. 66.

[27] Malory, T. (2013). CHAPTER XIII. How Sir Ector found Sir Launcelot his brother dead, and how Constantine reigned next after Arthur; and of the end of this book. In Project Gutenburg (Ed.) *Le Morte D'Arthur in two volumes - volume II.* Retrieved from https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1252/1252-h/1252-h.htm. Volume II references referred to from this point as Author. Chapter….Volume II.

and deliverance.[28] This eerily echoes Malory's later words and therefore the revelation of Malory's authorship would likely have been a great shock to his audience. Following Malory's begging of his audience's prayers he attempted to justify his imprisonment stating that 'he is the servant of Jesu both day and night.'[29] Malory through this is expressing not only that his actions were for God's work (strange given that he robbed an abbey), but also the importance of religion and redemption within contemporary society. Furthermore it could be argued that *Le Morte* was to an extent an act of penance, not only through the overall length and detail of the narrative, but the time taken by Malory to read other texts and turn them into his own synthesis of Arthurian legend.

Before Malory there were various Arthurian texts available to audiences, most influential was Geoffrey of Monmouth's *The History of the Kings of Britain*, written c.1136. Monmouth's chapter on King Arthur would ultimately help to shape the legends which Malory in particular would adopt in his narrative. Monmouth's texts, originally in Latin, profess to be history with Monmouth taking the trouble to show the extent of his further 'historical' reading, making 'an occasional modest remark about some other historian.'[30] His aim was not only to profess Arthur was a real British king, but the greatest king specifically stating: 'the fame of Arthur's generosity and bravery spread to the very ends of the earth'.[31] James Bruce sums up Monmouth's text perfectly by stating that:

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[28] Pollard, A.W. (2013). BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE. In Project Gutenburg (Ed.) *Le Morte D'Arthur in two volumes - volume I*. Retrieved from http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1251/1251-h/1251-h.htm. Volume I references referred to from this point as Author. Chapter….Volume I. For details of the knights' story see Malory. CHAPTER XXXVII. How Sir Tristram, Sir Palomides, and Sir Dinadan were taken and put in prison. Volume I.
[29] Malory. CHAPTER XIII. How Sir Ector found Sir Launcelot his brother dead, and how Constantine reigned next after Arthur; and of the end of this book. Volume II.
[30] Thorpe, L. (1966). Introduction. In Of Monmouth, G. (1966). *The History of the Kings of Britain*. (L., Thorpe, Trans.). London: Penguin Books. (Original work published c.1136), pp. 22-23.
[31] Of Monmouth, G. (1966). *The History of the Kings of Britain*. (L., Thorpe, Trans.). London: Penguin Books. (Original work published c.1136), p. 222.

The conception of Arthur as a great medieval monarch, the ideal representative of chivalry – not a merely fairy-tale king – originated, we may say, entirely with Geoffrey of Monmouth. He succeeded in embodying this idea in his work in a truly imposing literary form, and the pretended historical character of the *Historia* gave a dignity to the theme which it had not hitherto possessed.[32]

Monmouth was not only a bishop but a historian, therefore it was easy for him to source materials for his work but further gave Arthurian narrative a feeling of authenticity and historicity, something which arguably existed throughout the Middle Ages.[33] Monmouth would influence others such as Chrétien de Troyes, who themselves would go on to inform *Le Morte*. Chrétien's tales such as *Perceval: the Story of the Grail*, his final piece composed c.1191, was completely in verse form and like *Le Morte* was expanded and in this case finished by someone else.[34] It is also important to remember here that like Monmouth's work, Chrétien was also greatly popular with audiences, therefore *Le Morte*'s similar themes would help to boost *Le Morte*'s popularity. Monmouth's inspiration to other Arthurian writers of the Middle Ages stresses a bridge between the twelve and fifteenth-centuries, a mantle arguably taken thereafter by Malory. Monmouth's popularity has further been argued by twentieth-century historians to have subsequently increased rather than decreased with the 'triumph of the Tudors…[bringing] about a revival of interest in Geoffrey's work.'[35] It is argued in this thesis however that it was Malory's work which brought about the revival of interest in

[32] Bruce, J.D. (1958). *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance From the Beginnings Down to the Year 1300* (Second ed.). Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, p. 20.
[33] Crick, J.C. (2004). Monmouth, Geoffrey of (*d.* 1154/5). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved from http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10530.
[34] Bryant, N. (2015). *The Complete Story of the Grail: Chrétien De Troyes' Perceval and its Continuations*. Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hud/reader.action?docID=1812801, p. xvii.
[35] Parry, J.J. & Caldwell, R.A. (1959). Geoffrey of Monmouth. In R. Sherman Loomis (Ed.) *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History* (pp. 72-93). London: Oxford University Press, p. 89.

Arthurian texts, largely due to its relevancy and relatability to the fifteenth-century in particular, but mostly due to Caxton's publication allowing the narrative to survive and flourish. After all had it not been for Caxton, Malory's work would arguably have remained unknown until the twentieth-century discovery of the Winchester Manuscript. Furthermore when compared to previous writers such as Monmouth, Malory wrote in English as opposed to Latin which was imperative to *Le Morte*'s message spreading further and reaching a wider audience than Monmouth's.

Malory created his synthesis through the combination of various chivalric narratives, which Caxton then divided into twenty-one books with chapters.[36] Each of these chapters places focus upon a certain theme or knight which play an important role within the narrative; these include the conception of Arthur within the first book, and the theme of the Sangreal (the Holy Grail) which spreads across various books. Although Arthur's knights feature as a group within most of these books, special focus is paid towards certain knights and their deeds, whether or not these deeds are deemed to be honourable or not. Examples of these are Launcelot, Tristram and Galahad, ergo it is clear that Malory wished these knights' actions to be focused upon as lessons. Dispersed within these books are stories of the adventures of Arthur's knights, within Camelot's walls but mostly outside of them, stories which are brought back to Arthur and Guenever traditionally during the feast of Pentecost and told to the gathering of knights who annually met to share such tales. These draw together elements such as witchcraft and women's trickery, or the discovery of other knights who challenge Arthur's knights, and for the most part are defeated. Each book however shares a common theme of the types of contests knights endure, mainly jousts with other unknown knights,

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[36] Malory. CHAPTER XIII. How Sir Ector found Sir Launcelot his brother dead, and how Constantine reigned next after Arthur; and of the end of this book. Volume II.

traditionally resulting in hand-to-hand combat with swords after one knight is struck from his horse. The loser then reveals his identity to the other and for the most part they submit their skills to Arthur's service agreeing to pledge homage to Arthur at the great feast; expanding Arthur's Round Table of knights. Although there is the occasional tournament present within *Le Morte* the main focus remains upon the deeds of individuals during jousts and other individual 'adventures', as it is these which gain knights most honour.[37] It must not be forgotten however that although the narrative is predominantly about the knights, there are also many women characters within it, such as Guenever and Morgan Le Fay who also play an important role within the narrative, therefore they are also an important theme which Malory emphasises. This is something which Malory would have inherited no doubt from the sources he used to compose his narrative.

William Caxton brought the printing press to England in c.1475 and his published works were very popular with late medieval readers.[38] Caxton throughout his life published various books of various genres from historical, pious, practical books to those of a more entertaining nature.[39] This explains why he published *Le Morte* which contained a mixture of most of the themes of his previous works, the only theme missing in *Le Morte* is the historical element. Malory does not talk about the narrative's historical setting, it is Caxton who spends a good deal of his preface doing this.[40] Unlike Monmouth who claimed that his piece was historical throughout, Malory never professed this, it was merely a behavioural guide with relatable

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[37] The term tournament is used generally, as discussed in a later chapter.
[38] Blake, N.F. (2008). Caxton, William (1415x24–1492). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved from http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4963.
[39] Sherman Loomis, *The Development of Arthurian Romance*, p. 167.
[40] Caxton, W. (2013). PREFACE OF WILLIAM CAXTON. In Project Gutenburg (Ed.) *Le Morte D'Arthur in two volumes - volume I*. Retrieved from http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1251/1251-h/1251-h.htm.

characters. It was Caxton who in his preface professed the same historical element as Monmouth (that Arthur is real) stating:

Then to proceed forth in this said book, which I direct unto all noble princes, lords and ladies, gentlemen or gentlewomen, that desire to read or hear read of the noble and joyous history of the great conqueror and excellent king, King Arthur…[41]

This historicity was greatly important for Caxton to profess in order to make *Le Morte* into a more influential model and guide. In order for people to take example from the teachings within the narrative, Caxton had to express Arthur's 'realness', thus explaining why within his preface he talks about Arthur within the context of the Nine Worthies, specifically mentioning real historical men such as 'Godfrey of Boloine' and 'Charlemain'.[42] To place Arthur into this context was a deliberate attempt to stress his existence by Caxton in order to persuade his audience to read *Le Morte* and take examples from it. It was this historicity, in Caxton's eyes at least, which would make *Le Morte* popular. Furthermore Caxton's direct aiming of his piece to this middling-status and above audience presents an idea about the types of books which this audience was interested in, including historical pieces. *Le Morte* is Caxton's attempt to increase his popularity and reputation, increasing his repertoire to include 'historical' works. Most importantly Caxton emphasises the exemplary nature of *Le Morte*, in which the characters are better role models for a fifteenth-century audience because they were deemed to have actually existed, rather than being pure fiction. Emphasising Arthur was real was Caxton's attempt to answer any contentions within the period about Arthur's existence; thus showing that even with Monmouth's texts professing Arthur existed, not everyone believed

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[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.

this to be true.[43] Caxton publishing 'historical' narratives saw his popularity rise amongst the upper-classes, earning him sponsors such as Margaret Beaufort (Henry VII's mother) and Edward IV who Caxton specifically identifies within his preface.[44] Through claiming his work is historically worthy Caxton is replicating authors of chivalric biographies of medieval 'heroes', something which Craig Taylor and Jane Taylor argue presented 'their books as memorials to the fame and glory of their subjects; their works, they said, would serve as inspiration for future knights.'[45] This joins Malory and Caxton together. Caxton is professing that *Le Morte* is a memorial to Arthur, and Malory through his text aims to inspire knights and ladies to behave a certain way; reviving certain elements of the past which could be deemed to be missing from the early fifteenth-century. Especially jousting and the performance element of a knight and lady, in which the knight is seen to compete specifically for the honour of a specific lady; a further interpretation of knights competing for a lady's love. In this a lady has the fundamental role of providing the man with honour rather than being of great importance on her own. Caxton also expresses *Le Morte* should be used as guide, more explicitly than Malory stating that:

I, according to my copy, have done set it in imprint, to the intent that noble men may see and learn the noble acts of chivalry, the gentle and virtuous deeds that some knights used in those days, by which they came to honour, and how they that were vicious were punished and oft put to shame and rebuke; humbly beseeching all noble lords and ladies, with all other estates of what estate or degree they been of, that shall see and read in this said book and

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[43] Even in the fifteenth-century there seems to be a debate as to whether Arthur existed, although this debate is not relevant to thesis.

[44] Caxton. PREFACE. Volume I.

[45] Taylor & Taylor, *The Chivalric Biography of Boucicaut*, p. 8.

work, that they take the good and honest acts in their remembrance, and to follow the same.[46]

Caxton here describes in part his intended audience, those of middling-status and above, and he goes on to specifically emphasise this later in his preface (something which will be considered in greater detail below). The implications of this are that Caxton and Malory only reached a certain status of audience, not the population as a whole, although Caxton reached a wider audience than Malory. *Le Morte* reveals aspects of life Malory deemed most important such as being a knight and fighting for your true king, although as previously mentioned this is a grey area when discussing Malory. Crucially Malory expressed aspects and behaviours which would be taken and replicated in various ways during the fifteenth-century and beyond, most significantly is religion. Malory's narrative therefore had an important influence upon later understandings of chivalric culture. However, as discussed previously Malory wrote for a specific audience and it is unlikely that without Caxton Malory's work would have reached a wider audience. Caxton's acquiring and publishing of the Winchester Manuscript widened Malory's audience, particularly as Caxton's audiences were mainly merchants.[47] Most importantly, this merchant audience were those who could aspire to rise in status, therefore a guide to chivalric behaviour would be of great importance to these people if they were to succeed, helping to spread Malory's message further than before. This does not however mean that *Le Morte* before Caxton would be ineffective as a guide, teaching men and women alike that even the noblest are not exempt from sin and that certain sinful

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[46] Caxton. PREFACE. Volume I.
[47] Blake, *Caxton*.

behaviour could be used by their political enemies in an attempt to destroy their or their husband's reputation.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is separated into three main chapters which aim to show the significance of *Le Morte* to a fifteenth-century audience through its use as a behavioural guide. But also to reveal its usefulness to a twenty-first-century audience in understanding important themes and social issues which preoccupied Malory and his contemporaries. Although the characteristics Malory deemed to be chivalric are fluid, changing various times with changes in society, his characters are key to understanding his beliefs and the influence *Le Morte* has in the present day as the classic Arthurian narrative. This thesis analyses *Le Morte* in depth to reveal what Malory considered important for his readers to know: warnings, messages and, crucially, ways to behave. His narrative is contextualised against the Wars. However, reference will also be made to some events before this period, furthermore the final chapter includes the post-medieval period. This contextualisation allows for *Le Morte*'s popularity to be considered, especially with reference to those of middling-status and above, although as previously discussed Caxton's publication aided the broadening of this audience.

Chapters

The thesis structure is separated into three main chapters which each focus upon a different one of *Le Morte*'s key themes. These chapters are titled Defining Chivalry, Women in Malory's *Le Morte* and The Evolution of Malory.

The first chapter considers Malory's definition of chivalry and the message of ideal conduct Malory presents through the behaviour of key knightly characters within *Le Morte*. This was not uncommon for chivalric authors as Maurice Keen emphasises: 'the authors and redactors of medieval romance were enthusiastic in explaining that the stories of their heroes presented a model of true chivalry.'[48] In common with many other medieval authors such as Chrétien de Troyes, Malory provides examples of good conduct for his readers to imitate, and bad conduct for them to avoid. Furthermore Malory allows for his characters to prove themselves in various ways, allowing that if they have committed sinful acts like Launcelot, they can redeem themselves to return to true chivalrous nature. After all, Malory was the perfect author to comment upon sin and the hope for redemption. Although *Le Morte* presents a clear notion of what Malory regards chivalry to be, chivalry was used throughout the Middle Ages with different meanings which altered within different contexts and under different authorships.[49] Taylor states that chivalry 'as a theoretical term' should be resisted as it cannot be used to define every meaning as not only are there overlaps within chivalric definitions, but some contradict others.[50] Similarly Kenneth Hodges argues that Malory's fusing of various chivalric materials means that there is not one static version of chivalry depicted throughout *Le Morte* but many, which suggest variations of ideals.[51]

Malory's definition of chivalry can be separated into three main categories: those of religion, brotherhood and honour, bravery, loyalty and mercy. These themes are each covered in more detail, with the most important theme being that of religion, followed by brotherhood. Like

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[48] Keen, M. (2005). *Chivalry* (2nd ed.). London: Yale University Press, p. 2.
[49] Ibid, p. 2.
[50] Taylor, C. (2013). *Chivalry and the Ideals of Knighthood in France during the Hundred Years War*. doi: 10.1017/CBO9781107325111, p. 6.
[51] Hodges, K. (2005). *Forging Chivalric Communities in Malory's Le Morte Darthur*. Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/lib/hud/reader.action?docID=307796, pp. 1-10.

all the themes within *Le Morte*, Malory's emphasis on these characteristics not only reflects his personal opinion of these topics, but a desire to return to what he deems to be an ideal point in the past where people lived according to these standards. Furthermore these themes serve as a reflection of Malory's readership and the wider culture of which he was part, after all religion was a great influence upon medieval society. Religion and chivalry within the period were inseparable, which further complicated the notion of chivalry. Chivalry involved religion and devotion, expressed strongly through *Le Morte*'s knights, but also played a role in allowing tournament culture to spread, as we shall see. However, all these themes were used to suit Malory's own purpose, to encourage others, particularly in this case knights, to live their lives using Arthur's knights and Arthur himself as a behavioural guide. Therefore it was necessary to define these men by certain traits which could be easily replicated.

The second chapter focuses on how Malory's narrative can be directly linked to real people and events during the period in which he wrote, and thus seen as reflections of wider concerns, political, religious and social. What is more, Caxton ultimately envisaged both men and women reading *Le Morte*, specifically addressing 'all noble lords and ladies'.[52] Therefore *Le Morte* was a behavioural guide for men and women alike and importantly, female characters could be used to convey messages of ideal conduct to men as well as women. In this sense particular emphasis will be placed upon the sins Malory's women characters commit, such as adultery and witchcraft, and how these are used to express that men should be vigilant around women. This chapter focusses upon three main areas: marriage and adultery, piety and religion and witchcraft. With character examples from *Le Morte* and compared to women such as Elizabeth Woodville, Isabeau of Bavaria and Eleanor Cobham.

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[52] Caxton. PREFACE. Volume I.

Each of these themes, with perhaps the exception of witchcraft, focus upon ways women can atone, with a message that although atonement does not excuse their sins they should nevertheless ask for forgiveness before death.

Lynette Mitchell and Charles Melville argue for the vulnerability of queens within their courts stating that 'a woman in a man's world…was available to become the scapegoat for the problems the men could not solve.'[53] It will be shown that it was not solely queens who were in a vulnerable position, it was any woman who held some form of power, or perceived power, and was deemed to be a threat to a cause. Through the use of accusations women's reputations could be threatened or destroyed, but more often they were used to destroy another's reputation through that woman, especially their husband. This was the same for *Le Morte* demonstrating that Malory not only possessed a keen knowledge of court politics but could demonstrate the same characteristics through his narrative; accordingly attempting to encourage his audience to read his text the way in which he would (although not guaranteed to work). More than this, Malory used his work to encourage religious behaviours in women, not only through martyred characters such as Percivale's sister, but sinful characters like Guenever. Through Guenever in particular Malory demonstrates that simple religious acts can be achieved by anyone, emphasising just as he does through his male characters, the importance of religion within the period. Once again it is clear that Malory has his own intentions for creating *Le Morte*. The chapter ultimately reflects the use of rounded characters which for later fifteenth-century readers likely provoked thoughts of real events and individuals.

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[53] Mitchell, L. & Melville, C. (2013). "Every Inch a King". Kings and Kingship in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds. In L. Mitchell & C. Melville (Eds.) *Every Inch a King: Comparative Studies on Kings and Kingship in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (pp. 1-22). Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/lib/hud/reader.action?docID=1081612, p. 11.

The final chapter focuses upon what has been coined Malory's 'evolution', in other words it focusses upon how *Le Morte* had been taken and used particularly by kings, not only during the Wars but in the late fifteenth and sixteenth-century too. This usage of *Le Morte* had continued with Arthur from the fifteenth-century becoming the leading figure within literary pieces, romances and various other forms which serve various tastes and purposes into the present day.[54] The survival and evolution of Arthurian legends occurred not only because it was revived and seen as 'a cultural and a social phenomenon' but 'retained its vigour because it remained relevant to the social and political realities of the time.'[55] However, it will be clear within this thesis that within an English context *Le Morte* is central to Arthurian legends, particularly within the post-medieval period. This was clear through the categories which will be covered within the chapter, focussing upon tournament culture and the use of Arthurian legend within kingship. Mitchell and Melville comment that: 'Machiavelli's advice to medieval rulers was thus that successful rule was based upon the promotion of an image of rule. Indeed creating images of rule were central to the art of ruling.'[56] This certainly fits within this rising tournament culture, kings were seen to be similar to Malory's heroes, a conscious decision on their part. But it was Henry VII who will be shown to have embraced this the most, playing upon aspects of his heritage to draw a tangible link to himself and King Arthur and playing upon concepts suggested within *Le Morte*. The relevance of Arthurian legend within the education of young nobles will also be explored, particularly with emphasis to the benefits of the introduction of the printing press. Within this chapter there is also further discussion of women, with the suggestion that they played an important role within tournaments

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[54] Padel, *Arthur*.

[55] Keen, *Chivalry*, p. 219.

[56] Mitchell & Melville, *Kings and Kingship*, p. 9.

regardless of their inability to compete, and also with reference to their role within education and their patronage of printers and works.

Through these chapters it is hoped that Malory's popularity not only within the period but subsequent periods will be explained. The chapters are connected by their demonstration of the significance and function of Malory's message for people of middling-status and above, be it through use as a behaviour guide as Malory presumably hoped, or the use of it as a symbol of ideal kingship. What is clear is that while definitions of chivalry varied somewhat within the period, Malory's version was widely known in the later Middle Ages, thanks to Caxton. This is very valuable to a twenty-first century audience wishing to understand key themes of the medieval period. Furthermore Malory's narrative can provide clear links to real people and events, and although various modern historians debate as to the people for whom the characters are based upon, what is clear is that it is with hindsight these debates are made. Evidently there were events which both Malory and Caxton could themselves associate with the themes running throughout the narrative, and it is in line with Malory's intentions of presenting his piece as a behavioural guide, reflecting these events, in which Caxton published *Le Morte*. Overall this thesis agrees with Padel who comments that 'The power of his [Malory's] narrative gave it an enduring influence in English literature'.[57] This continues into the present day where *Le Morte* has an enduring influence in Arthurian representations of various genres, but most importantly for its use for understanding the Middle Ages.

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[57] Padel, *Arthur*.

Defining Chivalry

Introduction

Chivalry as a concept is impossible to universally define, thus this issue has provided the basis

for debate amongst modern historians for decades. Changing medieval definitions occurred

because of changes in societal views and expectations, and also across time in response to

differing events and circumstances, as Taylor has discussed.[58] Thus ideas about chivalry could

be shaped to suit an author's purpose, just as chivalric practice itself could be shaped by

knights.[59] In this chapter definitions of chivalry will be considered in terms of how they appear

and function within *Le Morte*, and the themes which Malory highlighted for his male and

female readers. The themes highlighted are religion, brotherhood, honour, bravery, loyalty

and mercy. Of these religion and brotherhood are considered in most detail, with religion

playing the most prominent role, unsurprising given the deeply religious society of the Middle

Ages. Each of these will be further analysed using examples from *Le Morte*.

Religion

The most prominent theme throughout *Le Morte* is that of religion, mostly because, as Mark

Girouard emphasises, chivalry and Christianity were fused together.[60] Indeed, previous

chivalric texts which influenced Malory also placed an emphasis upon religion, texts like

Ramon Llull's *The Book of the Order of Chivalry* (composed c.1274-1276), which effectively

dedicated the entire text to God stating: 'Honourable, Glorious God, who art the fulfilment of

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[58] Taylor, *Ideals of Knighthood*, p. 6.
[59] Hodges, *Chivalric Communities*, p. 2.
[60] Girouard, M. (1981). *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman*. London: Yale University Press, p. 61.

all good things, by Thy grace and with Thy blessing does this book begin, which is about the Order of Chivalry.'[61] Llull's work not only emphasised this religious theme, but is most important as this book was another example of Caxton's publications, therefore Malory's audience would have been familiar with Llull and understood his religious teachings. Although Llull's text comments heavily upon the theme of honour it is interesting that Llull suggests that knights cannot learn their good habits if they do not have good faith; therefore only those with faith should swear their oaths to God.[62] Another author who played upon the concept that God honours knights was Geoffroi De Charny in his book *A Knight's Own Book of Chivalry*, composed c.1350. De Charny stressed to his fourteenth-century knightly audience that in order for them to gain honour and praise after their death they must first please God, with religion standing above all else.[63] Indeed Malory, like De Charny asks his audience to pray for him whilst he was alive 'God send me good deliverance' and when dead pray for his soul.[64] De Charny asking 'Pray to God for him who is the author of this book.'[65] Author's requests for prayers have a direct link to concerns that knightly vocations could present occasions for sin, greatest emphasised not by Malory but before this clerics, particularly during the crusading period. Richard Kaeuper in his introduction to De Charny argues that:

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[61] Llull, R. (2013). *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*. (N., Fallows, Trans.). Suffolk: The Boydell Press. (Original work published c.1274-1276), p. 35.

[62] Ibid pp. 54-71.

[63] De Charny, G. (2005). *A Knight's Own Book of Chivalry*. (E., Kennedy, Trans.). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. (Original work published c.1350), pp. 47-107.

[64] Malory. CHAPTER XIII. How Sir Ector found Sir Launcelot his brother dead, and how Constantine reigned next after Arthur; and of the end of this book. Volume II.

[65] De Charny, *Book of Chivalry*, p. 107.

Tournament was the great sport thought essential to chivalric life…Yet clerics had for centuries denounced this mock warfare as unchristian. They had even denied burial in sanctified ground to knights killed in the rough sport.[66]

This reference to the denunciation by the church was not exclusive to tournament culture, but knightly culture as a whole. Alan Murray notes that twelfth-century Popes also condemned tournaments as they felt that they represented everything the church was against, but from the fourteenth-century there was a shift where Popes realised that not only could they not prohibit tournaments, they could use them.[67] Tournaments were not only popular, particularly with kings, but they could be used by Popes to not only spread their religious messages, but train knights in effective fighting for the crusades.[68] Ruth Mazo Karras states that various elements of knightly ceremony 'did not…have their origins in religious symbolism but took it on later, in an attempt by the church to claim knighthood for itself, to reduce its violence and increase its social utility.'[69] This shows that knightly culture not only needed to use religious elements to make it make relatable to an audience, but religious culture needed knights. Mazo Karras continues to argue that 'Knights could and did understand knighthood as part of the service of God'; therefore knighthood and religion are inextricably linked together.[70] This goes some way to explaining why Malory's largest theme is religion, not necessarily solely relating to its most famous theme of the Grail Quest, but to

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[66] Kaeuper, R. (2005). Historical Introduction to the Text. In De Charny, G. (2005). *A Knight's Own Book of Chivalry*. (E., Kennedy, Trans.). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. (Original work published c.1350), p. 33.

[67] Murray, A. (February 2017). *From Clermont to Mexico: The Changing Goals, Participation and Organisation of Crusading, 11th to 16th Centuries*. Poster presented at Northern Network for the Study of the Crusades Inaugural Symposium: Diversity, Manchester Metropolitan University.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Mazo Karras, R. (2003). *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 42.

[70] Ibid, p. 42.

the guidance of the knights throughout relating to their piety. The Grail Quest shows that only the most pious and pure could achieve God's quest, therefore playing upon this earlier crusader ideal. Therefore *Le Morte* greatly reflects Malory's own time and message alongside an emphasis of returning to a past ideal, mostly that of a crusading ideal. There are three themes which emphasise the importance of religion within *Le Morte* aside from the huge Grail Quest, which could only be achieved by Galahad the best knight, who exceeds even his father Launcelot as the man with the most 'worship of the world'.[71] These main themes are: Arthur ascending the throne alongside the emphasis on high mass, knights pledging their lives to religion and the element of re-introducing crusading ideas (like the superiority of Christians over other religious sects). Within this mass is the theme used most.

Arthur's ascension to the throne, a key moment in the narrative, plays greatly upon the religious theme. This could be because as Gautier rightly emphasised 'the teaching of the Church had set its seal on chivalry.'[72] Malory used the church to justify Arthur's ascension to the throne, just like during the ascensions of real medieval kings. Before Arthur is even known, Merlin approaches the archbishop for advice and to ask him to send for all the lords and gentlemen to attempt to draw Excalibur by Christmas, as due to Christ being born on that day: 'he [Christ] would of his great mercy show some miracle, as he was come to be king of mankind, for to show some miracle who should be rightwise king of this realm.'[73] This reflects the fifteenth-century through the emphasis that God chooses his king. Malory through the use of this therefore encourages his audience to trust in God's decision. It is also possible that

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[71] Malory. CHAPTER I. How Merlin was assotted and doted on one of the ladies of the lake, and how he was shut in a rock under a stone and there died. Volume I.

[72] Gautier, L. (1965). *Chivalry*. (D. C., Dunning, Trans.). London: Phoenix House. (Original work published 1895), p. 16.

[73] Malory. CHAPTER V. How Arthur was chosen king, and of wonders and marvels of a sword taken out of a stone by the said Arthur. Volume I.

this message extends an undertone for Malory's audience to not rise up against God's chosen

monarch, after all Arthur draws Excalibur from the stone several times before being crowned

king.[74] Potentially, Malory hoped his narrative would reach and be read by the king (Edward

IV), who upon picking up on this theme would see that Malory was spreading a supportive

message for his kingship, comparing Edward to Arthur and would release him. Unlikely given

that Malory is believed to have died in prison due to his grave's location in Newgate, close to

one of the gaols he was interned in.[75] Arthur's reign therefore came from God and despite his

outward low-class appearance and upbringing, meant that the people supported his rule.

What is most interesting about Arthur's ascension to the throne is the emphasis placed upon

high mass. Before Arthur draws Excalibur the nobles are reassured there was hope the sword

would be drawn through Christ's mercy on Christmas Day, but the archbishop commanded

'that no man touch the sword till the high mass be all done.'[76] The emphasis upon the

completion of mass also reoccurs various times throughout the narrative, particularly before

any mode of contest. Even before all tournament days mass is observed by the knights before

they leave for the field. This not only reflects the concept that 'Knights were pious members

of their society', but that religion was a powerful theme used not only by the Church but

authors to incite religious behaviour, particularly amongst the noble classes who arguably

showed piety through for example, book ownership, but did not necessarily practice piety.[77]

Moreover the concept of God's will was greatly important to fifteenth-century society, God

chose their king and provided them with guidance on how to live. In times of political

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[74] Ibid.

[75] Field, *Malory*.

[76] Malory. CHAPTER V. How Arthur was chosen king, and of wonders and marvels of a sword taken out of a stone by the said Arthur. Volume I.

[77] Kaeuper, R.W. (2012). *Holy Warriors: The Religious Ideology of Chivalry*. Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/lib/hud/reader.action?docID=3441617, p. 35.

upheaval this guidance was more important than ever, providing numerous opportunities to play upon this within narratives.

Although Malory's narrative greatly reflects Malory's own time and message, it also emphasises a return to a past pre-fifteenth-century ideal, mostly of a return to a crusading ideal. This is the concept of God's Holy Quest. For most this would instantly draw parallels to the Grail Quest which only the most pious and pure knight could achieve. This ideal revolves around the concept of the superiority of Christians over other specific religious sects. It could be implied this crusading concept was the result of the presence of the theme in the existing materials which Malory combined to form his narrative. This is possible but is argued here that crusading ideals were still a major influence, not only throughout the fifteenth-century but onwards; kings were still encouraged to go on crusade into the Tudor period, particularly by Martin Luther.[78] Consequently Malory was imploring for a return to a previous time and its ideals. This was particularly important given the contemporary situation regarding the rise of the Turks. By 1499 Malory's message was particularly important given the fear throughout England and Europe that a Turkish attack on Rhodes was imminent.[79] This fear continued into the early sixteenth-century, particularly after the Ottoman conquests in 1516 and 1517 of Syria and Egypt, which only decreased in the 1530s when to some extent the anxiety switched towards the threat of Protestantism and Martin Luther, who were deemed to some extent to be 'at least as dangerous as the Turks, if not more so.'[80]

Malory reflected an early revival of these views including specific reference to Saracens, miscreants and on one occasion Turks, to whom war should not necessarily be waged upon,

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[78] Housley, N. (2014). *Religious Warfare in Europe 1400-1536*. Retrieved from
http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hud/reader.action?docID=430954, pp. 86-90.
[79] Riley-Smith, J. (2005). *The Crusades: A History* (Second ed.). London: Continuum, p. 280.
[80] Ibid, pp. 280-282.

but whose religion was inferior to Christianity and therefore needed converting.[81] Every

mention of Saracens within *Le Morte* follows this pattern of being 'lesser' and within one

chapter in particular the Saracens who wage war against the knights are specifically described

as 'miscreant' (a form of 'miscreature' or unbeliever).[82] What is interesting though is that

those of varying religions in Malory's narrative are not always the enemy or criminals.

Although Palomides' first mention specifically states 'Sir Palamides, the Saracen' and

therefore places specific reference towards his 'other' nature, he is regarded as one of the

greatest and most relied upon knights at that time.[83] This shows that although generally non-

Christians could be deemed to be inferior, they too could be respected for their martial ability,

rather like Saladin during the crusading era.[84] Priamus however is the greatest crusading

message delivered within *Le Morte*. Priamus is not specifically described by religion in the

main text but in the title, and is further described as 'right inheritor of Alexandria and Africa,

and all the out isles', therefore can be placed in this context to be 'the other'.[85] After fighting

Gawaine, Priamus asks Gawaine to help him as he required his 'manhood', requesting that he

'may be christened and believe on God' as he shared Gawaine's faith.[86] This ultimately fed

the notion that Christianity was believed to be the superior faith and that if war was not viable

then conversion to Christianity may be an option. Palomides too has an emphasis placed onto

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[81] For the one occasion the word Turk is used see Malory. CHAPTER XIII. How Sir Ector found Sir Launcelot his brother dead, and how Constantine reigned next after Arthur; and of the end of this book. Volume II.
[82] Malory. CHAPTER XXXII. How King Mark slew by treason his brother Boudwin, for good service that he had done to him. Volume II.
[83] Malory. CHAPTER IX. How Sir Tristram was put to the keeping of La Beale Isoud first for to be healed of his wound. Volume I. Within *Le Morte* Palomides is spelt both Palomides and Palamides, but within this thesis will be spelt Palomides unless quoted differently.
[84] Hillenbrand, C. (1999). *The Crusades Islamic Perspectives*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 194-195.
[85] Malory. CHAPTER X. Of a battle done by Sir Gawaine against a Saracen, which after was yielden and became Christian. Volume I.
[86] Ibid.

his faith, clearly justifying his 'non-Christianity' to Guenever, the Haut Prince and Launcelot stating that:

I will that ye all know that into this land I came to be christened, and in my heart I am christened and christened will I be. But I have made such an avow that I may not be christened till I have done seven true battles for Jesu's sake, and then will I be christened; and I trust God will take mine intent, for I mean truly.[87]

Palomides although feels to be a true Christian, refuses to be Christened until he completes his vow. Although this further supports Malory's theme of conversion to Christianity, it also shows that Palomides could not only be a successful non-Christian knight, but is respected by the other characters for his morals (even if frequently they state that it is a shame he is not Christened).[88] Malory's message through Palomides' Saracen heritage is clear, that he needed to become a knight and practically every mention of Palomides refers to him as the non-Christened Palomides; further emphasised when it becomes apparent that both of his brothers were already Christened.[89] Eventually Palomides is Christened and this plays a major role within the chapter, with its final paragraph dedicated to how the ceremony came about, the ceremony itself and the reaction of those at Camelot upon Palomides' return:

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[87] Malory. CHAPTER XLVII. How Sir Palomides fought with Corsabrin for a lady, and how Palomides slew Corsabrin. Volume II.

[88] Malory. CHAPTER LXIII. Of the preparation of Sir Palomides and the two brethren that should fight with him. Volume II.

[89] Malory. CHAPTER LXXXII. How Epinogris complained by a well, and how Sir Palomides came and found him, and of their both sorrowing. Volume II.

Then the Suffragan let fill a great vessel with water, and when he had hallowed it he then confessed clean Sir Palomides, and Sir Tristram and Sir Galleron were his godfathers…And so the king and all the court were glad that Sir Palomides was christened.[90]

Through the use of non-Christians Malory's message is clear that Christianity is the most desired religion and that if a return to physical crusade was not possible then it was a duty to God to convert others to 'the true faith', emphasising through Palomides especially (one of the greatest accomplished knights in the narrative) that even Palomides feels Christianity was the right path.

Pious works were not the sole responsibility of non-Christian knights wishing to convert to Christianity in *Le Morte*, after all there are very few knights within the narrative who were not Christened. There are numerous occasions where knights and others repent before their deaths feeling they have not led a pious life and are scared of punishment. This greatly reflects religious beliefs of the fifteenth-century as Kaeuper emphasises:

we might say that virtually all lay Christians in the Middle Ages trembled at the thought of death and what followed…all medieval folk knew that the punishment awaiting them on the far side of the grave was worse than anything endured on earth…[91]

This message is transmitted arguably through most medieval texts, but it is of most significance when considering Malory, and later Caxton's messages to their audiences. Through *Le Morte* Malory proves that even the best knights need repentance, with many knights in various chapters pledging their lives to God. Launcelot is amongst them leaving Guenever in a convent after she refused to love him and became a nun, he rode to a

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[90] Malory. CHAPTER XIV. How Sir Tristram and Sir Palomides fought long together, and after accorded, and how Sir Tristram made him to be christened. Volume II.

[91] Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors*, p. 18.

hermitage and chapel and after hearing mass begs to become a brother (which the bishop gladly accepts), finding solace serving 'God day and night with prayers and fastings.'[92] On searching for Launcelot a number of his kin find him, and beg the bishop Launcelot to allow them too to live like him in God's service.[93] Malory's message here is one of encouragement of his audience to also live like Launcelot, not necessarily becoming brothers or nuns but to serve God and repent their sins before it is too late, something which Malory himself does at the end of the narrative declaring himself to be 'the servant of Jesu both day and night.'[94] Ironic considering that Malory at one stage ransacked Combe Abbey, some argue by using battering rams, showing Malory's notorious side.[95] Therefore it is possible that Launcelot is in some ways a representation of Malory himself, although not guilty of the various serious crimes Malory was, Launcelot repents and is forgiven for his sins. Ergo, Malory's message of forgiveness not only extents to God, but his audience in asking their forgiveness for his crimes and to learn from his mistakes to be more like the knights in his narrative.

Brotherhood

Aside from religion the next largest theme throughout *Le Morte* is the concept of brotherhood. This theme is one which is the most common throughout all representations and narratives of Arthurian legends since Malory's, unsurprising perhaps given that it is a story about a group of knights. This brotherhood can be seen literally through the numerous brethren groups around the Round Table, such as Gawaine and his brothers, or symbolically

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[92] Malory. CHAPTER X. How Sir Launcelot came to the hermitage where the Archbishop of Canterbury was, and how he took the habit on him. Volume II.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Malory. CHAPTER XIII. How Sir Ector found Sir Launcelot his brother dead, and how Constantine reigned next after Arthur; and of the end of this book. Volume II.
[95] British Library, *Le Morte Darthur*. See also Lustig, *Knight Prisoner*, p. 66.

through the concept of the knights of the Round Table being bound together as a unit.[96] This

'unit' meant that even if knights were completing tasks at the request of a woman, they would

generally at the very least consult with their 'brothers' beforehand, a topic I will return to

shortly. There are two major themes within this to be considered. The first refers to the

concept of Hegemonic masculinities, or the most honoured way of being 'masculine'; where

men position themselves in relation to other men.[97] This will be generally considered in

regards to tournaments and jousts but in particular through one character, Beaumains'

narrative. The second theme is the concept Rachel Moss has named 'Homosociality' that is

the relationships between people of the same sex and how they support hegemonic norms

and therefore 'mainstream power structures.'[98] These bonds reflect the fifteenth-century

particularly through the various wars and tournaments seen in the period; consequently once

again expressing Malory's placing of 'real-life' into his narrative.

Hegemonic masculinities 'are embedded in specific social environments, such as formal

organizations.'[99] Consequently there could not be a Round Table without this characteristic.

Not only is this characteristic present in *Le Morte* but provides a model for the form of

masculinity which appears in Malory's narrative.[100] In *Le Morte* this quality is shown most

through the various jousts and tournaments spread throughout the narrative in which men

compete to prove themselves superior to others, these could be formal occasions or

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[96] Malory. Volumes 1 and 2.

[97] Connell, R.W. & Messerschmidt, J.W. (2005). Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept. *Gender and Society, 19* (6), 829-859. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/stable/pdf/27640853.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A31453ead04c0d557 388f6cc4e405b4df, p. 832.

[98] Moss, R.E. (2016). "And much more I am soryat for my good knyghts" Fainting, Homosociality, and Elite Male Culture in Middle English Romance. *Historical Reflections, 42* (1), 101-113. doi: 10.3167/hrrh.2016.420109, p. 103.

[99] Connell & Messerschmidt, *Hegemonic Masculinity*, p. 839.

[100] Ibid, p. 841.

spontaneous. One character whose story closely links to this concept more than any other is Beaumains, who comes to Arthur's court asking for three gifts and on not being able to reveal his identity is named Beaumains (Fair-hands) by Sir Kay and made to spend twelve months in the kitchens.[101] From this point the kitchen knave completes numerous tasks and jousts until he proves himself to the noble Launcelot who after revealing he was in fact Gareth, Sir Gawaine's brother, was made a knight.[102] This shows that knights were more than a social status, they were a way of behaving, but also that knights desired the approval of other men in order to prove themselves worthy. Beaumains himself seeks this approval when he fights on the request of the damsel Linet to rescue her sister Dame Lionesse from the siege at Castle Dangerous.[103] Before going to prove himself Linet is questioned by the knight Persant, whose advice Beaumains had sort before undertaking the task.[104] This emphasises the reliance of knights upon others, particularly before undertaking adventures. Further proving that women within *Le Morte* were not there particularly for love, but for a purpose, in this case providing the opportunity for Beaumains to prove himself. Yet it was Persant and the other knights' respect which Beaumains desired more than success. It is the success over other men rather than success in adventures which provide the ultimate encouragement for knights, demonstrating that brotherhood was not only about the love and relationships the men share, but their love for one another which sees them want others to succeed, particularly those who wish to become knights. Amanda McVitty takes this principle further through examining the consequences of treason trials upon this masculine, knightly bond. She argues

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[101] Malory. CHAPTER I. How Beaumains came to King Arthur's Court and demanded three petitions of King Arthur. Volume I.

[102] Malory. CHAPTER V. How Beaumains told to Sir Launcelot his name, and how he was dubbed knight of Sir Launcelot, and after overtook the damosel. Volume I.

[103] Malory. CHAPTER XIII. Of the goodly communication between Sir Persant and Beaumains, and how he told him that his name was Sir Gareth. Volume I.

[104] Ibid.

that knights' close bonds resulted in the constant need for a knight to defend not only this relationship, but to assert their masculine identity.[105] Furthermore knights depended on their relationship with other men which made them not only open to challenges, but made them vulnerable to treason accusations and political conflict.[106] A betrayal to this knightly relationship through 'treason' showed a confirmation of an almost anti-knightly characteristic, emphasising that all knights 'held the potential…to mutate into false ones, given the right political circumstances.'[107] Therefore this brotherhood-style relationship between knights was just as, if not more important, than the knightly prowess they show through physical tests such as jousts.

Although Hegemonic masculinities are important within brotherhood for encouraging prowess, a larger significant characteristic is Homosociality, the love which two men express for each other and how they express this. There are numerous occasions Malory uses to emphasise the love the knights have for each other and even the love Arthur shows for them, with Moss emphasising this could be because:

Late medieval patriarchy is dependent upon the homosocial bonding of elite men, and as such lionizes not only friendship between individual men, but also their collective unity as a body bound by social, political, and emotional ties.[108]

Once again demonstrating that Malory was not only providing his own definition of chivalric qualities but through *Le Morte* he is reflecting aspects of the fifteenth-century. The bond between Arthur and his knights is demonstrated best through the apparent fall of Camelot at

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[105] McVitty, E.A. (2014). False knights and true men: contesting chivalric masculinity in English treason trials, 1388-1415. *Journal of Medieval History, 40* (4), 458-477. doi: 10.1080/03044181.2014.95413, p. 462.
[106] Ibid, pp. 461-469.
[107] Ibid, pp. 459-477.
[108] Moss, *Fainting, Homosociality, and Elite Male Culture*, p. 101.

the end of the narrative. Moss argues that the greatest example of male bonding is shown through swooning, which serves as 'a physical manifestation of affective, social, and political ties that together form the foundations of a homosocial society.'[109] In other words they swoon in front of each other as emphasis of the love and bond they share as knights of the Round Table. Moss continues to emphasise that: 'In romance, the battlefield should be the ideal homosocial space, where individuality is into a collective elite identity.'[110] This is expressed no more clearly than in the fall of Camelot, effectively one large battlefield with various fronts. Muriel Whitaker argues that the symbolism of the Round Table emphasises that if rules and the harmony this creates is broken, it would create a disaster for everyone and the levels of courtesy would fall.[111] This falling of courtesy levels results in the splintering of the brotherhood, with Arthur against his closest friend Launcelot and results in Mordred usurping the throne through the deception of Arthur's death.[112] Arguably this tale serves as a reminder to Caxton's later audience of Richard III's rise to the throne, but for Malory this serves as a warning to preserve 'brotherhood' and not turn against each other in another civil war. The close bond between Arthur and his knights is most noticeable when Arthur joins his knights in swooning over deaths: with Gawaine upon finding out that Gareth and Gaheris are dead, and further when Gawaine is discovered half-dead in a boat after Mordred's bombarding of Arthur's fleet in Dover.[113] Although it could be said that both these accounts of Arthur's swooning were the result of his kin's death (Arthur was Gawaine and his brothers'

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[109] Ibid, pp. 102-103.
[110] Ibid, p. 105.
[111] Whitaker, M. (1984). *Arthur's Kingdom of Adventure: The World of Malory's Morte Darthur*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, p. 46.
[112] Malory. CHAPTER I. How Sir Mordred presumed and took on him to be King of England, and would have married the queen, his father's wife. Volume II.
[113] Malory. CHAPTER X. How King Arthur at the request of Sir Gawaine concluded to make war against Sir Launcelot, and laid siege to his castle called Joyous Gard. Volume II. See also Malory. CHAPTER II. How after that King Arthur had tidings, he returned and came to Dover, where Sir Mordred met him to let his landing; and of the death of Sir Gawaine. Volume II.

uncle) it is proposed here that it is more his grieve at loosing members of the brotherhood, and his swoon is representative of the reinforcement of the loss to this brotherhood.[114]

Both these characteristics emphasise the importance of brotherhood as a theme, with Malory's message, one of solidarity in the hope that another civil war could be prevented. As the previous centuries of war not only created vast losses, but losses within families caught on opposing sides. Therefore Malory's narrative reflects his own messages whilst also representing the era in which he is writing.

Honour, bravery, loyalty and mercy

Although the last two themes are the greatest characteristics of chivalry as defined by Malory, these last remaining few also have a significant message and role to play within the narrative. These play an underlining but important part in what is arguably a calling by Malory to the end to civil war. Within the context of *Le Morte* it is honour and bravery which play the largest role, as they did to other medieval chivalric authors. The reason for this is because loyalty is inextricably bound within brotherhood, to break the bond of brotherhood is to break the loyal bond between the brothers. Therefore their relevance to Malory will now be considered.

Honour and bravery arguably cannot be separated from one another, in order to fight a knight must show courage, particularly within tournaments which not only involved a great number of men within the mêlée, but carried death risks. Michael Ovens suggests that true knights are not bothered by the injuries inflicted upon them, but upon the psychological injuries of the loss of honour; hence it is easy to see why honour is used within *Le Morte* as

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[114] Moss, *Fainting, Homosociality, and Elite Male Culture*, p. 110.

the greatest characteristic surrounding tournaments.[115] Moreover the concept of honour was not an individualistic feature, in *Le Morte* in particular if one knight risked his honour he consequently risked the honour of every knight of the Round Table. Demonstrating the importance of brotherhood also. David Santiuste stresses that: 'The chivalric code encouraged men to seek honour eagerly on the battlefield, to seize every opportunity to demonstrate their prowess.'[116] Yet it is not purely the battlefield where honour can be won, as Malory demonstrates. Throughout *Le Morte* it is very rare that a 'battle' occurs, in fact the largest battle culminates the narrative and signifies the destruction of everything the narrative has built. Accordingly Malory's exaggeration that honour is best won on the tournament ground signifies that Malory does not encourage war, possibly because he, as it could be imagined like the rest of the country, were tired of war and wanted stability and peace. Therefore Malory places his emphasis instead towards the tournament culture Edward IV was returning to during peacetime.[117] As Santiuste deduces 'Perhaps, like Malory's King Arthur, Edward concluded that he had already spilt enough blood'.[118]

Richard Barber states that after the mid-thirteenth-century the ideals of chivalry became inextricably bound with knighthood, with manuals for knights starting to belong to ethics of chivalrous behaviour.[119] Ultimately like *Le Morte* these codes would present a more merciful code for behaving. *Le Morte* stresses this various times, for example when Arthur shows mercy to Accolon who confesses his treason that he was presented with a sword to kill Arthur

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[115] Ovens, M. (2015). Masculine Identity and the Rustics of Romance in Chrétien's Erec and Yvain. *Viator. 47* (1), 45-66, p. 48.

[116] Santiuste, D. (2010). *Edward IV and the Wars of the Roses*. Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/lib/hud/reader.action?docID=948209, p. 146.

[117] For further detail see the chapter 'The Evolution of Malory'.

[118] Santiuste, *Edward IV and the Wars*, p. 145.

[119] Barber, R. (1970). *The Knight & Chivalry*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, p. 36.

with, but Arthur allows Accolon to live.[120] Arthur although the embodiment of the most noble,

is far from the only person to present mercy, the greatest mercy is shown by Uwaine who

finds his mother Morgan about to kill his father and prevents her deed; upon her begging his

forgiveness he grants it without a second thought assured that she would not do it again.[121]

Malory emphasises this quality as a way to encourage the mercy in his audience towards

those who commit crimes against them, after all if Morgan who attempts such an atrocious

deed can be forgiven then anyone can. Loyalty could also play a role in this, just as Arthur's

saving of Accolon. Therefore it could be argued that mercy and loyalty are also inextricably

bound just as bravery and honour. Uwaine saves Morgan as he shows loyalty as a son, just as

Arthur and Accolon have a mutual loyalty to each other. As Kate Mertes emphasises: 'The

chivalric ideal was a knight who fought to protect dependants, served the over-lord

faithfully…Fifteenth-century nobles had the same aim'.[122] Moreover kings had a duty to

protect everyone and therefore they owed the people loyalty just as much as they were owed

it themselves, and theoretically they could not expect loyalty without first granting it. This is

why loyalty played an important role in the mottos of aristocrats, with even Richard III using

this.[123] Loyalty, as Rosemary Horrox emphasises was valued very highly in the Middle Ages, 'It

was one of the primary chivalric virtues; recited like a mantra', unsurprising then that it should

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[120] Malory. CHAPTER XI. How Accolon confessed the treason of Morgan le Fay, King Arthur's sister, and how she would have done slay him. Volume I. For more details of this see the witchcraft section of the chapter 'Women in Malory's *Le Morte*'.

[121] Malory. CHAPTER XIII. How Morgan would have slain Sir Uriens her husband, and how Sir Uwaine her son saved him. Volume I. For more details of this see the witchcraft section of the chapter 'Women in Malory's *Le Morte*'.

[122] Mertes, K. (2008). Aristocracy. In R. Horrox (Ed.) *Fifteenth-century attitudes: Perceptions of society in late medieval England* (pp. 42-60). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 54.

[123] English Monarchs. (2005). *Plantagenet of York: Richard III 1483-85*. Retrieved from http://www.englishmonarchs.co.uk/plantagenet_14.htm. For more detail see the chapter 'The Evolution of Malory'.

appear within Malory's narrative as a behavioural code.[124] What makes Horrox's article more interesting is that she notes:

The fifteenth-century liking for chivalric romances could be seen as evidence of a longing for a lost golden age of uncomplicated loyalties; although Malory reminded his readers that the Round Table itself was in the end not immune from internal conflict and tormenting personal decisions.[125]

Horrox's statement completely represents Malory and *Le Morte* as Malory not only longed for past loyalties but past ideals, crusader ideals evolving around religion in particular. All of these Malory injected in existing chivalric material to form his own synthesis which he hoped would guide people towards a way of righteously living, in the hope that they could improve on the life he himself had lived.

Conclusion

Of the themes mentioned in this chapter the most substantial two to appear within *Le Morte* are those of religion and brotherhood, both forming a coherent message to men in particular about the way they should live. Although other themes also play a role within *Le Morte*, religion is the most important. But each theme reflects a key trait which Malory, and later Caxton, hoped their audience would replicate in order to live a better life. Thus emphasising the themes not only important to a fifteenth-century audience, but the themes which authors deemed important to stress. In Malory's case these themes reflected the opposite to his character, therefore suggest an encouragement to his audience to learn from his mistakes

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[124] Horrox, R. (2008). Service. In R. Horrox (Ed.) *Fifteenth-century attitudes: Perceptions of society in late medieval England* (pp. 61-78). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 71.
[125] Ibid, pp. 72-73.

and behave better. Through using key characters such as Launcelot and Arthur, Malory is clearly showing the important behaviours. Through using characters such as Beaumains, Malory is showing that virtually anyone can prove their honour and become a knight (as long as they are Christian). This emphasis upon the superiority of the Christian faith demonstrates the key religion of the fifteenth-century, also providing a subtle suggestion that a return to crusader ideology against non-Christians is desirable to Malory.

Although Malory's work in this case is arguably directed toward male knights, he also provided themes which were not only appealing, but educational in a similar way to his increasingly female audience. This will be considered in the next chapter.

Women in Malory's *Le Morte*

Introduction

Although *Le Morte* primarily presents a behavioural code for men, it must not be forgotten that Malory's audience was becoming increasingly female; therefore it is not only men for whom it is aimed, but women also. The roles which women characters play represent fifteenth-century views about the way women should behave, but also views towards topics such as witchcraft and women's responsibilities within marriage. This will be considered within this chapter, taking examples of Morgan Le Fay, Arthur's evil half-sister (and witch), Percivale's sister and Guenever (Arthur's queen). Through these characters, and other minor women Malory conveys his own agenda of teaching through their actions, encouraging the reader to read the text the way he would.[126] Of course this does not mean that they would take from the text the messages Malory intended, but might create their own interpretations, as Roberta Davidson emphasises: the characters within *Le Morte*, particularly women are 'models for the act of reading *Morte Darthur*…they invite the scrutiny of Malory's own reader, engaged in an activity not unlike theirs.'[127] Therefore the women characters provoke more of an engagement with Malory rather than simply reading his narrative as a behavioural code.

Taylor argues that particularly in twenty-first-century chivalric narratives, romance is often favoured over other themes, with women playing an important role within this, playing damsels in distress before falling in love with their rescuer.[128] Indeed, the women characters within *Le Morte* are far more than damsels in distress. It is important to note that although

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[126] Davidson, R. (2006). Reading Like a Woman in Malory's Morte Darthur. *Arthuriana, 16* (1), 21-33. doi: https://doi.org/10.1353/art.2006.0043, pp. 1-29.
[127] Ibid, p. 21.
[128] Taylor, *Ideals of Knighthood*, p. 2.

there are occasions where damsels in distress occur, the term 'damsel' is a generic classification for women whose status was either unknown, or was to remain hidden from the audience until the point of reveal. Therefore they are not simply damsels in distress, but rounded characters designed to provoke thoughts of contemporary women to its audience. This will be considered through the use of three main themes within *Le* Morte reflecting elements either desired of women, or those used as a warning about them. These are: witchcraft, marriage and adultery and piety and religion. These themes will be analysed to decipher Malory's message, but also for how a fifteenth-century audience could relate to them. This will be considered through the use of comparisons to fifteenth-century women such as Margaret of Anjou (Henry VI's wife), Elizabeth Woodville (Edward IV's wife) and her mother Jacquetta, Margaret Beaufort (Henry VII's mother) and more notorious noble women of the period Eleanor Cobham and the French queen Isabeau of Bavaria. This chapter aims to prove that Malory's writings were more than simply fantasy, they were relatable and carried Malory's own agenda. Furthermore these themes and associations would resonate to Caxton's audience upon printing, emphasising why Caxton and subsequent publishers published *Le Morte* several times. As Vinaver emphasises: 'the survival of literature is determined by the importance of its message, the intrinsic interest of the matter, and its relation to human experience.'[129] Therefore the links to real women were important and need emphasising here.

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[129] Vinaver, E. (Ed.) (1971). *Malory Works* (2nd ed.). London: Oxford University Press, p. viii.

Marriage and Adultery

A common theme encasing both the Wars and *Le Morte* is the concept of models for not only individual behaviour, but behaviour within marriage. Jeremy Goldberg states that in the Middle Ages 'For most wives marriage would have meant having children'.[130] It is important therefore to consider one of the main women of *Le Morte* within this context, Queen Guenever. Guenever will be compared to Margaret of Anjou from the fifteenth-century and another medieval queen from the late fourteenth early fifteenth-century, French queen Isabeau of Bavaria. Who Malory would possibly have thought of when composing his narrative. Here *Le Morte* will be considered regarding the concepts of marriage, and accusations of adultery which both importantly have child-bearing at their core.

Joanna Laynesmith emphasises that Guenever is unusual for literary medieval queens, mainly as her adultery and childlessness appears in a variety of contexts.[131] Also noting that tales of adulterous queens rarely refer to real events, instead revealing ideas and popular perception; with particular reference to sexual sin and punishment from God.[132] At the start of the narrative Malory places a subtle warning towards Guenever before Arthur's marriage to her with Merlin warning 'the king covertly that Guenever was not wholesome for him to take to wife, for he warned him that Launcelot should love her, and she him again'.[133] Regardless of Merlin's warning Arthur marries Guenever and in later chapters Merlin's

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[130] Goldberg, P.J.P. (Ed.) (1995). *Women in England c. 1275-1525*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 15.

[131] Laynesmith, J.L. (2004). *The Last Medieval Queens*. Retrieved from https://www-dawsonera-com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/readonline/9780191530036, p. 25.

[132] Laynesmith, J. (2013). Telling Tales of Adulterous Queens in Medieval England: From Olympias of Macedonia to Elizabeth Woodville. In L. Mitchell & C. Melville (Eds.) *Every Inch a King: Comparative Studies on Kings and Kingship in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (pp. 195-214). Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/lib/hud/reader.action?docID=1081612, p. 212.

[133] Malory. CHAPTER I. How King Arthur took a wife, and wedded Guenever, daughter to Leodegrance, King of the Land of Cameliard, with whom he had the Round Table. Volume I.

prophecy transpires with Guenever's adultery with Launcelot. Before this adultery is considered, first Guenever and Arthur's marriage should be. Elizabeth Edwards argues that narrative adulterous queens are barren.[134] In Guenever's case this appears to be accurate, she and Arthur do not have children in *Le Morte*, but neither does she have children with Launcelot. It could be argued that no children was better than illegitimate children, however Arthur as 'the ultimate king' without children complicates his situation. The implication of Arthur and Guenever's childlessness is the vulnerability of Arthur's kingdom, without an heir his kingdom could and indeed does fall, it is only with the election of a new king Constantine that Camelot is virtually restored.[135] Arthur's lack of heir exposed him to the usurpation of Mordred, who upon Arthur's absence proclaims himself king; attempting to force Guenever into marriage, which fails after she locks herself in the Tower of London.[136] With an heir this would not have been possible for Mordred, who on forging letters declaring Arthur's death in battle, would have at most been guide to Arthur's son, or arguably son-in-law had Guenever bore a daughter.[137]

Guenever's sanctuary and Mordred's usurpation of the throne resembles to a late fifteenth-century audience Richard III's usurpation of the throne and Elizabeth Woodville's retreat into sanctuary shortly after her husband Edward IV's death in 1483.[138] However, the greatest comparison to Guenever within the context of motherhood is Margaret of Anjou, who

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[134] Edwards, E. (1996). The Place of Women in the Morte Darthur. In E. Archibald & A. S. G. Edwards (Eds.) *A Companion to Malory* (pp. 37-54). Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, p. 48.

[135] Malory. CHAPTER XIII. How Sir Ector found Sir Launcelot his brother dead, and how Constantine reigned next after Arthur; and of the end of this book. Volume II.

[136] Malory. CHAPTER I. How Sir Mordred presumed and took on him to be King of England, and would have married the queen, his father's wife. Volume II.

[137] Ibid.

[138] Hicks, *Elizabeth*.

married Henry VI in April 1445.[139] As Helen Maurer points out: 'It was unfortunate for the dynasty, and a personal misfortune for Margaret, that she did not bear a child until eight-and-a-half years after her arrival in England'.[140] This placed not only strain onto a dynasty which arguably did not need any more, but also allowed for rumours to spread about both monarchs' fertility. Furthermore when Margaret did finally conceive, raised questions about the father of the child and therefore Margaret's faithfulness. Throughout *Le Morte* there are numerous adulterous women who produce sons, therefore the Yorkist case claiming Margaret's adultery is not undermined by the birth of Prince Edward. If anything the case is strengthened by Malory's implication that the birth of sons does not mean that a woman is innocent of adultery. Laynesmith to an extent agrees with Edwards arguing that innocent but 'slandered queens bore legitimate sons'.[141] This could be representative of Margaret of Anjou who bore a son yet was slandered by her political enemies through accusations Prince Edward was 'a bastard gotten in adultery'.[142] The concept that slandered innocent queens bore sons is missing from *Le Morte*, however the concept that adulterous queens could produce sons, but only if deceived by magic, is present.[143] Although it is worth noting that out of the three obvious examples in *Le Morte* of sons conceived through false magic or otherwise, only one of these situations was the women deceived.

Arthur's birth appears to be the exception with Igraine the only adulterous women who conceives a son through false magic, in which Merlin caused Uther to look like her husband

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[139] Dunn, D.E.S. (2004). Margaret (1430–1482). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved from http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18049.

[140] Maurer, H.E. (2003). *Margaret of Anjou: Queenship and Power in Late Medieval England*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, p. 39.

[141] Laynesmith, *Telling Tales*, p. 210.

[142] Anon. (c.1461-1483). From an English Chronicle. In Davies, J. S. (Ed.) (1856). *An English Chronicle of the Reigns of Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V and Henry VI*. Retrieved from http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cme/ACV5981.0001.001/1:2.4.37?rgn=div3;view=fulltext.

[143] Laynesmith, *Telling Tales*, p. 210.

the Duke of Tintagil.[144] It is interesting therefore that Arthur's birth by deception would be recreated by Arthur himself to an extent, although it can be argued that Mordred's birth was a result of shear naivety on Arthur's behalf to Margawse's identity as his sister.[145] It is more important that Margawse too seems oblivious to Arthur's identity, odd considering he is supposedly the greatest king that lived. Launcelot is the victim of the greatest deceit, as he is tricked into sleeping with Elaine who knew full well that that same night she would conceive Galahad.[146] But it is worth considering that the son born to Launcelot is considered to 'be the most man of worship of the world'.[147] Galahad would also, most interestingly, be the knight to achieve the Sangreal and one of the few who would see it, excelling even Launcelot himself.[148] It is also worth considering that Launcelot was bewitched in a very feminine way through the use of enchanted wine, as opposed to Igraine who was bewitched by a masked identity. Guenever's barrenness shows increasing importance when compared to other women within *Le Morte*, it highlights that there is a reason behind Guenever's childlessness. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues that Guenever's importance lies not with her mothering abilities but with the rivalry she creates through love. Through her work on Girard she concluded that a character is important and interesting through providing the link between the two people who love her, this culminates in an intense rivalry created between the person who loves the woman (in this case Launcelot) and the one who has her (Arthur).[149] Therefore

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[144] Malory. CHAPTER II. How Uther Pendragon made war on the duke of Cornwall, and how by the mean of Merlin he lay by the duchess and gat Arthur. Volume I.

[145] Malory. CHAPTER XIX. How King Arthur rode to Carlion, and of his dream, and how he saw the questing beast. Volume I.

[146] Malory. CHAPTER II. How Sir Launcelot came to Pelles, and of the Sangreal, and of Elaine, King Pelles' daughter. Volume II.

[147] Malory. CHAPTER I. How Merlin was assotted and doted on one of the ladies of the lake, and how he was shut in a rock under a stone and there died. Volume I.

[148] Malory. CHAPTER IV. How Sir Bors came to Dame Elaine and saw Galahad, and how he was fed with the Sangreal. Volume II.

[149] Kosofsky Sedgwick, E. (2015). *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/lib/hud/reader.action?docID=4012157&ppg=4, p. 21.

Guenever's childlessness could be seen as an outward manifestation of her lack of morality, she is married to the ultimate king Arthur but she still commits adultery with his best friend Launcelot, a topic which will now be considered.

Edwards argues that Guenever's character is:

imperious, impulsive, and sometimes witty…Her power is that absolute power of the beloved in the courtly love tradition, which is revealed as merely the power to reject; the exercise of that power labels her as capricious, cruel and arbitrary in the view of her husband and other knights.[150]

This description is important for considering Guenever's adultery, as she darts between loving Launcelot to aggressively dismissing him, although at times the result of his own actions. Guenever and Launcelot's adultery is seen as destructive and has been interpreted as the start of the fall of Camelot, after all Arthur was away fighting Launcelot when Mordred attempted to usurp.[151] Throughout *Le Morte* what is important is not necessarily Guenever's adultery, but how her character is seen. Guenever is unpredictable but most importantly hypercritical. The most noticeable occasion is Guenever's confrontation with the bewitched Launcelot who is taken by Brisen to lie with Elaine under the illusion that Elaine is Guenever.[152] Guenever on her ladies not finding Launcelot in his room searches for him, only to discover his location, and hearing Guenever cough loudly Launcelot awakes to realise the deceit, to be rebuked by Guenever who was 'out of her mind…for anger and pain…'.[153] After being called a traitor Launcelot swoons, to jump out of a window upon awaking and retreat into the woods

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[150] Edwards, *The Place of Women*, p. 50.
[151] Malory. CHAPTER XIX. How King Arthur and Sir Gawaine made a great host ready to go over sea to make war on Sir Launcelot. Volume II.
[152] Malory. CHAPTER VIII. How Dame Brisen by enchantment brought Sir Launcelot to Dame Elaine's bed, and how Queen Guenever rebuked him. Volume II.
[153] Ibid.

for over two years.[154] Guenever's hypocritical nature appears through her rebuking. Unaware of the enchantment Launcelot was under her rebukes suggests appropriate female behaviour with faithfulness being important, but Guenever is the largest hypocrite. She is not only married, but married to the king and is unfaithful to Arthur with one of his most loved and trusted knights. Therefore it is only right that a member of court rebuked her in return. In the following chapter Guenever is blamed by Elaine for Launcelot's departure, only for Elaine to be advised by Guenever to avoid the court and not 'uncover' Launcelot until after his death.[155] After Arthur commands one hundred of his men to escort Elaine through the forest she tells everything to Bors, who eventually leaves to search for Launcelot only to ride to a weeping Guenever whom he is disgusted by, telling her to stop her crying and be thankful none of Launcelot's kin could see her as Launcelot's disappearance was her fault.[156] This chapter is particularly important for transmitting Malory's message about adultery, after all Guenever's betrayal of Arthur later pulls the whole of Camelot apart. Yet as Edwards denotes when Launcelot and Guenever are at odds with each other, it is Guenever not Launcelot who is friendless, furthermore this isolation of the individual from a community became 'for Malory, the new condition of femininity.'[157] This concept of isolating the individual from their 'community' is noticeable within the Middle Ages as well as Malory's narrative, arguably an intention of all adultery claims. Isabeau of Bavaria for example during the fourteenth-century suffered adultery accusations which accused her of an affair with her brother-in-law Louis of Orleans.[158] But as Tracy Adams points out, the lack of evidence for the affair did not stop the

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[154] Ibid.
[155] Malory. CHAPTER IX. How Dame Elaine was commanded by Queen Guenever to avoid the court, and how Sir Launcelot became mad. Volume II.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Edwards, *The Place of Women*, p. 54.
[158] Adams, T. (2010). *The Life and Afterlife of Isabeau of Bavaria*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 40.

popularity of the accusation which continued throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, rather like Margaret of Anjou whose reputation can still be seen amongst dismissive historiographical works.[159]

Like Guenever's character it is not the truth of the actions themselves which matter to Malory's audience, it is the associations they can make. In *Le Morte* Guenever's adultery is used as an attack on Arthur and his manhood, if he was the perfect man she would not commit adultery with the seemingly more perfect Launcelot. Stefan Meysman argues: 'it seems that attacking the markers of an opponent's manhood and social position was considered a rewarding (part of) strategy.'[160] The same can be said about Margaret of Anjou who Katherine Lewis argues 'was the primary butt of this gendered vilification [but] the real target was the king himself.'[161] She justifies this stating:

It was safer and easier to establish the queen as scapegoat for her husband's failings, bearing the brunt of diatribes that ostensibly focused on her shocking or disgraceful behaviour but which actually highlighted her husband's flaws in gendered terms.[162]

This can be applied to Guenever and Arthur. What must be emphasised is the end of Guenever's story. Guenever through grief of Arthur and the noble knights' death:

stole away, and five ladies with her, and so she went to Almesbury; and there she let make herself a nun, and ware white clothes and black, and great penance she took, as ever did sinful

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[159] Ibid, pp. 38-72.
[160] Meysman, S. (2016). Degrading the Male Body: Manhood and Conflict in the High-medieval Low Countries. *Gender & History. 28* (2), 367-386, p. 367.
[161] Lewis, K.J. (2013). *Kingship and Masculinity in Late Medieval England*. Oxon: Routledge, p. 233.
[162] Ibid p. 233.

lady in this land, and never creature could make her merry; but lived in fasting, prayers, and alms-deeds, that all manner of people marvelled how virtuously she was changed.[163]

Malory places emphasises here 'great penance she took, as ever did sinful lady in this land…' Thus although Guenever appears to be turning to God in her grief, the audience cannot forget it was her sins which led to this point, providing Malory's warning that sinners should repent before death. What is more upon finding Guenever at Almesbury, Launcelot is commanded by Guenever for the love they shared to 'never see me more in the visage…' commanding him on behalf of God to return 'to thy realm and there take thee a wife, and live with her with joy and bliss; and I pray thee heartily, pray for me to our Lord that I may amend my misliving.'[164] Through this Malory emphasises that adultery not only caused the fall of Camelot but of Guenever herself, providing her with a new narrative of redemption, with the emphasis however that Guenever's actions were not correct behaviour, hence his emphasis upon repentance. Queenly adultery, or at least the accusation of it, is the largest connection to the 'real women' of the Wars of the Roses; as Laynesmith points out all of the kings who lost their throne in the Middle Ages were 'associated with tales of queenly adultery.'[165] Therefore Malory is representing through Guenever a popular stereotypical representation of women of the Wars, particularly Margaret of Anjou. Although it is not proven that Margaret did commit adultery, this was not important for the fifteenth-century, what is more important is that it was a believable accusation.

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[163] Malory. CHAPTER VII. Of the opinion of some men of the death of King Arthur; and how Queen Guenever made her a nun in Almesbury. Volume II.

[164] Malory. CHAPTER IX. How Sir Launcelot departed to seek the Queen Guenever, and how he found her at Almesbury. Volume II.

[165] Laynesmith, *Telling Tales*, p. 195.

Malory is using Guenever as a message to repent sins, particularly those of adultery, emphasising that particularly in a society where religion was salient, sins have to be repented, although Malory never condones adultery. Furthermore Malory emphasises that no one of any status can avoid repenting, nor that anyone is above sin. Ultimately the concept of marriage expectations link to the concept of the church, after all presumably it is through religious teachings to which people learn that marriage is for children, and punishment through sin outside of marriage comes from God. Therefore religion in the period is unavoidable, after all as discussed in the preceding chapter religion is the largest theme within *Le Morte*; therefore it is only right to consider this next through Malory's female characters.

Piety and Religion

As discussed in the preceding chapter, religion is *Le Morte*'s largest theme and not exclusively to the male characters. Religion plays an important role in connecting Malory's synthesis with the fifteenth-century 'society where religious values are ultimately important'.[166] For women, this would typically involve pious acts, not fighting within crusades to show loyalty to God, but individual acts expressing devotion. Here this will be analysed in reference to Percivale's sister and Guenever, and compared to Margaret Beaufort, mother to Henry VII. The aim of this is to express that *Le Morte* not only reflects the key fifteenth-century themes, but aims to mirror as closely as possible the lives of real people.

Jennifer Ward states that 'Religious and charitable activities were regarded in the Middle Ages as fitting activates for women.'[167] This is because these activities could be easily fitted

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[166] Burton Russell, J. (1972). *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*. London: Cornell University Press, p. 2.
[167] Ward, J.C. (2014). *English Noblewomen in the Later Middle Ages*. Retrieved from https://www-dawsonera-com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/readonline/9781315845869, p. 143.

into women's expected daily duties. Religious activities were also expected of men and during times of war they were expected to incorporate this into warfare. This could explain why Arthur's knights so often participated in mass before major tournaments, as Ward argues regardless of gender, religion could be practiced through church-linked activities, for example attending mass, charity or pilgrimage; or through taking up the religious life.[168] Further explaining the creation of characters such as Percivale's sister who is never referred to by name, only in reference to her brother. This could be because Percivale is one of Arthur's best knights and through referencing his sister in this way Malory is presenting from the off-set her goodness of character. More likely it reflects medieval attitudes towards women. Although women played a vital role in medieval society, the reference to them is usually given in the context of their families.[169] Usually their husbands or fathers, but in this case her brother, whom the audience would understand greatest. Percivale's sister represents a mixture of virtue and martyrdom, highlighting Laynesmith's argument that the female sex makes, in particular queens, apt tools 'for God's work.'[170] Although Laynesmith is referring to childbearing, the same can be said of the creation of Percivale's sister, as Christine De Pizan rightly emphasises: 'riches cannot enhance an ambitious person as much as virtues do, for virtues are nobler, because they endure forever and are the treasures of the soul; which is everlasting'.[171] These two concepts are inextricably linked, to be of good virtue ultimately makes someone more apt to do God's work; in the case of Percivale's sister to sacrifice herself

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[168] Ward, J. (2012). *Women of the English nobility and gentry 1066-1500*. Retrieved from http://rc4ht3qs8p.search.serialssolutions.com/?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx_enc=info%3Aofi%2Fenc%3AUTF-8&rfr_id=info%3Asid%2Fsummon.serialssolutions.com&rft_val_fmt=info%3Aofi%2Ffmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Abook&rft.genre=book&rft.title=Women+of+the+English+nobility+and+gentry%2C+1066-1500&rft.date=1995-01-01&rft.isbn=9780719041143&rft.externalDBID=n%2Fa&rft.externalDocID=mdp.39076001635510¶mdict=en-US, p. 191.

[169] Ward, *English Noblewomen*, pp. 3-4.

[170] Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens*, p. 105.

[171] De Pizan, C. (1985). *The Treasure of the City of Ladies*. (S., Lawson, Trans.). London: Penguin Books. (Original work published c.1405), p. 5.

similarly to Christ for another. It is also important to consider chastity at this point, as unchastity implies no virtue.[172] These factors are included by Malory in a single chapter, expressing a key message about Percivale's sister: that in effect she is the female Christ.

Percivale's sister upon arriving with the knights at a castle is surrounded by knights from within who will only let them go if their custom is met.[173] This custom evolved from the sickness of their lady for whom they could not find a cure except 'a dish full of blood of a maid and a clean virgin in will and in work, and a king's daughter'.[174] Percivale's sister not only fits this profile, but willing gives herself as sacrifice for another, despite the protests of the other knights, on the justification that it was better for one person to die than two. Davidson correctly emphasises that Percivale's sister not only understands the wider context of the knights' journey, but in enacting a Chirst-like sacrifice Malory makes her an authority, portraying herself not as a victim.[175] Through making her an authority Malory is expressing that women like those discussed in this chapter, played an important role in the Middle Ages, particularly during the Wars, and most importantly makes Malory's characters more associable to his and Caxton's audiences. Percivale sister's Christ-like image could arguably compare her most to representations of Margaret Beaufort, especially given that Margaret herself almost died giving birth to her only child Henry VII at the age of thirteen, causing lasting damage to the extreme that she never conceived again.[176]

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[172] Laynesmith, *Telling Tales*, p. 211.
[173] Malory. CHAPTER X. How they were desired of a strange custom, the which they would not obey; wherefore they fought and slew many knights. Volume II.
[174] Malory. CHAPTER XI. How Sir Percivale's sister bled a dish full of blood for to heal a lady, wherefore she died; and how that the body was put in a ship. Volume II.
[175] Davidson, *Reading Like a Woman*, p. 28.
[176] Jones, M.K. & Underwood, M.G. (1992). *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort Countess of Richmond and Derby*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 40.

Margaret Beaufort is generally regarded by historians of the Wars as one of the most pious women of the period. Margaret was not only seen to be very pious but was regarded a powerful figure of her age, having a clear notion of the duties she was expected to have.[177] As a wife and mother it could be argued that this is solely where Margaret's duties laid, and although the separation from her son did not tarnish the strong bond she and Henry shared, it is argued here that Margaret's duties did not remain solely with those traditionally expected as a wife or mother. Margaret, like many characters within *Le Morte* disrupts how women could be seen in the fifteenth-century, ultimately proving that she could have influence, even within marriage. Margaret was her father's only child, the sole heiress to his fortune, not only making her a desirable match but catapulting her into marriage before she was twelve.[178] The fortune Margaret owned enabled her to make influential marriages throughout her later life; ultimately catapulting her into a position where she could raise a son to eventually sit on the English throne. Margaret held a position which allowed her not only to marry Edmund Tudor (Henry VI's half-brother) and consequently bare her son (the future Henry VII), but aided her to make her beneficial marriages to Henry Stafford and Thomas Stanley, which not only kept her safe through their loyalty pardoning her wrongdoings against Edward IV and Richard III, but aided her to keep her son safe to the point where he won the throne.[179] James Schultz argues that love represents transitions of power from men to women with women often the first to fall in love however, if the opposite occurs this shift in power is more dramatic.[180] This

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[177] Ibid, pp. 171-177.

[178] Ibid, p. 36. For more information about Margaret's first marriage see Jones, M.K. & Underwood, M.G. (2004). Beaufort, Margaret, countess of Richmond and Derby (1443–1509). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved from http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1863.

[179] Gill, L. (1999). *Richard III and Buckingham's Rebellion*. Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing Limited, pp. 81 and 136. For further examples see Naylor Okerlund, A. (2009). *Elizabeth of York*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, p. 93. And Jones & Underwood, *The King's Mother*, p. 58.

[180] Schultz, J.A. (2006). *Courtly Love, the Love of Courtliness, and the History of Sexuality*. London: The University of Chicago Press, p. 136.

could be used to describe the marriages of Margaret Beaufort. Although it has been argued that her marriage to Stafford was an affectionate one in which they loved each other, it could be argued that it was her husbands who loved Margaret more than she loved them, especially given her wealth.[181] Furthermore, in 1485 Margaret:

was declared a "femme sole" by Parliament…(an unprecedented privilege for a married aristocratic woman), and in 1499 she took a vow of chastity, even though her husband Lord Stanley was still alive…[182]

The fact that Margaret was a strong independent woman shows that although her husbands provided her with the protection she needed, she still lived an effectively individual life, showing that she had her own agendas for marriage, to do whatever she could to protect her son. However, her vow of chastity is worth considering and can be seen as the pivotal expression of her piety. De Pizan at the start of the century writes about the main features providing the base for any religious order: 'Obedience…Humility…Sobriety…Patience… Solicitude…Concord and Benevolence.'[183] Amongst these she also mentions chastity. Margaret's vow of chastity can be seen as a desire to fulfil these desired religious qualities. The fact that Percivale's sister was also chaste, even more so that Margaret, shows a clear concept of fulfilling the role of God's servant, also potentially for Margaret a desire to be seen as a female Christ. Margaret was not only seen to have 'saints knees' through kneeling 'for long periods reciting the prayers known as the Crown of Our Lady' but also presenting a lasting image of herself as nun-like within portraits.[184] Sarah Gristwood has argued that we should

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[181] Jones & Underwood, *Beaufort, Margaret*.
[182] Bartlett, A.C. (2006). Translation, Self-Representation, and Statecraft: Lady Margaret Beaufort and Caxton's Blanchardyn and Eglantine (1489). *Essays in Medieval Studies, 22* (1), 53-66. doi: 10.1353/ems.2006.0001, p. 57.
[183] De Pizan, *City of Ladies*, p. 121.
[184] Jones & Underwood, *The King's Mother*, p. 192.

not be deceived by Margaret's nun-like appearance in portraits as it shows that she had not abandoned the pleasure of expensive dressing, as 'Black fabric was expensive, because to produce a true color required a large quantity of dye.'[185] What is most important about this appearance is that it would resonate with Caxton's audience reading *Le Morte* as a reminder of Guenever's appearance at Almesbury, mentioned previously. Both these people wear black demonstrating that although noble women could live a religious life, they would never live as modest a life as those from a more humble background and would always have some reference to their status. This does not however down-play Margaret's piety, if anything it supports Ward's claim that religion regardless of gender could be practiced in a variety of activities be it through attending mass, charity or pilgrimage or taking up religious life.[186] Both Margaret and Guenever express a commonality amongst fifteenth-century widows (or women in general in Margaret's case) who chose a religious life, even Edward IV's queen Elizabeth in her final years 'withdrew to Bermondsey Abbey' to live such a life.[187]

Malory's inclusion of the variation between life as a nun and Percivale sister's life as a martyr expresses his message that a pious life could be lived in various ways, and that becoming a nun was not the only way for fifteenth-century women to atone for their sins. Malory's message when compared to Margaret Beaufort shows that regular simple pious acts could serve God just as effectively as a completely religious life. Percivale's sister emphasises the ideal qualities that a woman should have if she is to be perfect, yet she is unrealistic. Therefore including references which could be compared to more realistic examples of piety,

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[185] Gristwood, S. (2013). *Blood Sisters: The Women Behind the Wars of the Roses*. Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/lib/hud/reader.action?docID=3029009, p. 320.

[186] Ward, *Women of the English nobility*, p. 191.

[187] Hicks, *Elizabeth*.

such as Margaret Beaufort, through characters like Guenever shows a more achievable pious life which could be replicated.

Witchcraft

Within *Le Morte* witchcraft serves the purpose of essentially manifesting the fear of heresy, but more importantly for symbolising 'The sense of menace in female sexuality'.[188] 'There were over a hundred significant witch trials in the period [fifteenth-century] as compared with a lesser number over the preceding two full centuries.' [189] This statement by Jeffrey Burton Russell emphasises witchcraft was not only an important theme, but would be easily recognisable to audiences reading Malory and Caxton's publications. This will be considered using examples from the fifteenth-century of Eleanor Cobham and Elizabeth and Jacquetta Woodville, who were all accused of varying forms of witchcraft. Laynesmith argues that there were two notions of women: 'as weak, passive, nurturing, and conciliatory contrasted with fear of them as temptresses with a potential for creating chaos and tongues that could do the devil's work.'[190] This is the case with all these women who are represented as inciting harm or bringing general chaos to the royal courts. Barbara Rosen argues that:

More women than men were called witches because witchcraft deals predominantly with the concerns of women and their world was a much more closed and mysterious society to men in the fifteenth century than it is now.[191]

This argument makes sense when looking at the subsequent examples, they were all women accused by men of acts of which they were all innocent, for the most part. More importantly

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[188] Edwards, *The Place of Women*, p. 40.
[189] Burton Russell, *Witchcraft*, p. 244.
[190] Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens*, p. 2.
[191] Rosen, B. (1969). *Witchcraft*. London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd, p. 8.

however all these women were influential within the Wars to some degree; therefore damaging their reputation to damage their husband or family's was more important than their guilt, a point which will be expressed throughout. Comparing this to *Le Morte* does raise an interesting contrast, as Edwards expresses: 'magic is in the outside world of adventure [not the castles and courts]'.[192] Throughout *Le Morte* this conflicts with the Round Table's decrees of helping damsels who inhabit this 'outside world' and the anxiety about women as sources of threatening magic. Although the most memorable witchcraft trials of the fifteenth-century are either within or linked directly to the royal courts, witchcraft also served a purpose in the 'real outside world', for example as a warning against heresy and a guide towards true religion. Therefore it is important that this is also considered. Nevertheless, witchcraft, like all the themes discussed so far can be linked to associations which can be made throughout the fifteenth-century; therefore not only making *Le Morte* more engaging for an audience, but makes it popular enough for it be published more than once from 1485.

Amy Licence argues that accusations of sorcery are usually 'Coupled with treason, disloyalty, ambition and often sexual irregularity, [and] it blighted the lives of [women like]…Eleanor Cobham'.[193] It is Eleanor Cobham who would arguably have been prevalent in Malory's mind when composing *Le Morte*, after all her trial was not only infamous but reflective to a degree the use of witchcraft within his narrative. Horrox argues that 'civil war could bring opportunities as well as catastrophes' and this is important when considering all the women in this section.[194] Whereas the Woodvilles' opportunities came when Elizabeth met and eventually married Edward IV, Eleanor's came by contrast from Henry VI's lack of a son and

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[192] Edwards, *The Place of Women*, p. 38.

[193] Licence, A. (2016). *Red Roses: Blanche of Gaunt to Margaret Beaufort*. Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/lib/hud/reader.action?docID=4781503, p. 198.

[194] Horrox, R. (2008). Introduction. In R. Horrox (Ed.) *Fifteenth-century attitudes: Perceptions of society in late medieval England* (pp. 1-12). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 6.

heir. Eleanor was wife to Humphrey Duke of Gloucester, Henry's 'nearest relative and heir presumptive' and her success would derive from not only Henry's lack of children but his death; unfortunately for Eleanor she was vastly unpopular and she suffered many witchcraft allegations during her life.[195] Before considering the importance of Eleanor's unpopularity, the accusations against her must be considered. Around 1422 Eleanor became an attendant of Jacqueline d'Hainault who married Humphrey Duke of Gloucester in 1423.[196] When Humphrey unsuccessfully attempted to assert his wife's claims in Hainault he returned to England taking Eleanor as his mistress.[197] But it was not until 1428 (eight years before Jacqueline's death) when Eleanor could official marry Humphrey after the dissolution of Humphrey's marriage to Jacqueline, after Jacqueline's previous marriage to John of Brabant was deemed valid by Pope Martin V.[198] James Sharpe states that Eleanor and Humphrey's marriage was unpopular not only because of the way Eleanor abandoned Jacqueline's service; effectively stealing her husband, but she 'had allegedly used magic to make him fall in love with her' and the subsequent series of events which would follow.[199] This type of accusation was not uncommon as will be discussed in relation to Elizabeth Woodville's marriage to Edward IV, and required a very feminine use of magic. Yet this was not the only or most damaging accusation Eleanor faced.

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[195] Griffiths, R.A. (1991). *King and Country: England and Wales in the Fifteenth Century*. Retrieved from https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=RmTdAj6MbI4C&oi=fnd&pg=PP5&dq=king+and+country:+England+and+wales+in+the+fifteenth+century&ots=4XfMcp79Wm&sig=rFhuKXqU74TmSQcgxpI0DUKqkT8#v=onepage&q=eleanor%20cobham&f=false, pp. 233-235.

[196] Harriss, G.L. (2004). Eleanor, duchess of Gloucester (*c.*1400–1452). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved from http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5742.

[197] Ibid.

[198] Ibid. See also Harriss, G.L. (2011). Humphrey, duke of Gloucester (1390–1447). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved from http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14155 and Atkins, M. (2006). Jacqueline, suo jure countess of Hainault, suo jure countess of Holland, and suo jure countess of Zeeland (1401–1436). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved from http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/58930.

[199] Sharpe, J. (1997). *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in England 1550 - 1750*. London: Penguin Books, p. 24.

Sharpe states that:

the style for the fifteenth century, when political tensions were frequently accompanied by allegations that magic and necromancy were being used against the monarch or the royal family.[200]

This perfectly reflects the type of charge Eleanor found herself against. Orchestrated by a number of people it was designed to not only ruin Eleanor's reputation, but that of her husband who has been argued was feared greatly by Henry VI.[201] In 1441 Eleanor was arrested and tried for treason against Henry through consulting 'astrologers to cast the king's horoscope and to predict her personal fortunes.'[202] Not unusual for the fifteenth-century as many prominent nobles within the courts used this technique, and mathematical astrology had become more socially and academically respectable.[203] However, Eleanor's horoscopes were seen as far less innocent, she was seen as inciting, if not securing Henry's death through witchcraft.[204] She was tried 'on eighteen charges of treasonable necromancy' before a panel of bishops.[205] Rosen emphasises perfectly the magnitude of this trial: 'In England…we shall see that the examinations of accused witches were first taken by justices of the peace, almost never by figures of religious authority'.[206] To be examined by bishops shows the importance of Eleanor's trial and the strong desire to see her punished, whether or not she is guilty. It appears that Eleanor was only guilty of foolishness rather than sinister intensions, yet she

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[200] Ibid, p. 24.

[201] Ibid, p. 24. See also Wolffe, B.P. (1972). The personal rule of Henry VI. In S. B. Chrimes, C.D. Ross, & R.A. Griffiths (Eds.) *Fifteenth-century England 1399-1509: Studies in politics and society* (pp. 29-48). Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 40.

[202] Harriss, *Eleanor*.

[203] Ibid.

[204] Wolffe, *Personal rule*, p. 40.

[205] Harriss, *Eleanor*.

[206] Rosen, *Witchcraft*, p. 15.

created a scandal through admitting to five of the charges.[207] When further examined in October Eleanor admitted that she procured potions from 'the Witch of Eye' Margery Jourdemayne 'in order to conceive and bear Duke Humphrey's child.'[208] Humphrey was Henry VI's heir, therefore should Henry die Humphrey would have become king. Eleanor's childless therefore has wider ramifications, she needed to conceive preferably a male child in case Henry died, so that Humphrey himself had an heir and was not left in the same position as Henry. This harks back to the concept of marriage and motherhood, with Eleanor so desperate to fulfil this role that she risked her life to use 'magic' to succeed. Yet this was not the accusation to which she was first brought to trial, it was simply a means of proving her guilt and demonstrating her capability of witchcraft, which was far more important than her actual guilt.

This serves as a reminder for Morgan Le Fay within *Le Morte* who although was innately evil, was also presumed guilty of many things of which she was not necessary wholly guilty. The greatest example of this Accolon's attempted treason against Arthur. Accolon confesses that a copy of Excalibur created by Morgan had been in his keeping for nearly a year with the intention 'that I should slay King Arthur, her brother. For ye shall understand King Arthur is the man in the world that she most hateth'.[209] In this chapter Arthur presumes that Accolon only committed his treason because his 'sister…by her false crafts made thee to agree and consent to her false lusts'.[210] Malory suggests it was not magic in the traditional sense but

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[207] Harriss, *Eleanor*.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Malory. CHAPTER XI. How Accolon confessed the treason of Morgan le Fay, King Arthur's sister, and how she would have done slay him. Volume I. For the creation of the copy of Excalibur see Malory. CHAPTER XI. Of the interment of twelve kings, and of the prophecy of Merlin, and how Balin should give the dolorous stroke. Volume I.
[210] Malory. CHAPTER XI. How Accolon confessed the treason of Morgan le Fay, King Arthur's sister, and how she would have done slay him. Volume I.

love and a promise to Morgan which makes Accolon behave that way. After all Accolon is told by Morgan that she loved him 'out of measure' and that if he killed Arthur, Morgan would kill her husband King Uriens so that she and Accolon could be king and queen.[211] This reinforces the concept that witchcraft accusations in the fifteenth-century did not have to be true, but it was their believability which made them important. It has been argued that 'Practitioners of magic were not treated harshly…The few who were punished were given relatively light forms of public penance.'[212] This is certainly true for Eleanor Cobham whose accomplices suffered far worse punishments than her; Margery burnt as a witch and another being hanged, drawn and quartered.[213] Eleanor herself suffered forced divorce, perpetual imprisonment and a walk to three London churches barefoot carrying a taper.[214] This punishment was therefore not designed to condemn the use of witchcraft but to damage Eleanor's reputation, as well as that of her husband by their political enemies; therefore serving as a reminder for *Le Morte*'s audiences. However Eleanor was far from the only noblewoman to suffer from this type of political destruction.

   Edward IV's queen Elizabeth Woodville also suffered an attempted destruction of her reputation, both during Edward's kingship and in the subsequent years. During her queenship Elizabeth's mother Jacquetta was brought to trial by one of Lord Warwick's esquires Thomas Wake, accused of witchcraft 'to enchant Edward…into marriage' by fashioning lead images representing Warwick, Edward and Elizabeth and bound them together.[215] John Leland argues that Elizabeth and Jacquetta 'had certain characteristics which might have made them likely

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[211] Ibid.

[212] Jones, K. & Zell, M. (2005). 'The Divels Speciall Instruments': Women and Witchcraft before the 'Great Witch-Hunt'. *Social History, 30* (1), 45-63. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/4287161, p. 51.

[213] Harriss, *Eleanor*.

[214] Ibid.

[215] Diaz Pascual, L. (2004). Luxembourg, Jaquetta de, duchess of Bedford and Countess Rivers (*c.*1416–1472). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved from http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/101258.

targets' for witchcraft charges, especially Elizabeth who was deemed to be too lowborn for the position she had acquired.[216] It could be argued that both Elizabeth and Jacquetta were descended from the water goddess Melusine, therefore the impetus for accusing the Woodville family was already there, and the charges were arguably more believable because of this. However Laynesmith has argued that this is likely not the case as surviving documents from the period do not specifically made this link, therefore it is unlikely it would be at the forefront of their political opponents' thoughts when accusing them.[217] Consequently the most important aspect of Jacquetta's trial is that her accusations were plausible rather than true, as Leland argues, stating that if witchcraft was a 'standard medieval smear' it was due to being 'a credible charge.'[218] Furthermore these accusations were used by Edward's enemies to not only discredit him, but prove the illegitimacy of his children through an improper marriage, headed by Warwick who at this stage had turned along with Edward's brother George to side with Henry VI. Although Jacquetta was acquitted with the restoration of Edward to the throne, this trial would remain with *Le Morte*'s audience as it is a topic raised numerous times, with the same agenda of proving the illegitimacy of Edward's children, most famously by Richard III.[219] A reminder of this trial for Caxton's audience derives in the tale of Morgan and four queens' use of magic to imprison Launcelot. Morgan casts a spell upon Launcelot which causes him to sleep, he is then led to a castle where they hold him prisoner until he chooses which one of the queens he wants for his paramour.[220] Although different

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[216] Leland, J. (2004). Witchcraft and the Woodvilles: A Standard Medieval Smear?. In D. L. Biggs, S. D. Michalove, & A. Compton Reeves (Eds.) *Reputation and Representation in Fifteenth Century Europe* (pp. 267-288). Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/lib/hud/reader.action?docID=3003994, pp. 278-279.

[217] Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens*, pp. 39-40.

[218] Leland, *Witchcraft and the Woodvilles*, p. 287.

[219] Hicks, M. (2010). *The Wars of the Roses*. Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hud/reader.action?docID=3420937, p. 194.

[220] Malory. CHAPTER III. How four queens found Launcelot sleeping, and how by enchantment he was taken and led into a castle. Volume I.

from witchcraft for marriage, it presents the concept of having a choice: for Launcelot it was between the queens, for Edward it was between Warwick and Elizabeth. Through the binding of Warwick and Elizabeth with Edward in lead figures, Edward is stuck between the marriage alliance between himself and the Princess Bona of France (which Warwick wants) and his love and marriage to Elizabeth, not only a widow but worse a Lancastrian widow. Jacquetta's trial symbolises the ability to use magic as an excuse for attempted punishment of enemies, but as Keith Thomas perfectly recognises 'It is important to recognize that many accusations were dishonest.'[221] This relates greatest to the accusations made against the dowager queen Elizabeth by Richard III.

During his reign (1483-1485) Richard reinvigorated Jacquetta's witchcraft allegations to convince the court and country he was the only legitimate heir to Edward's throne, as Edward's children were the result of enchantment and Edward was already married to another.[222] Elizabeth and the Woodville family 'were presented as the principal enemies of the new regime' therefore it is unsurprising that Richard chose to target them in an attempt to destroy their reputations and hopefully increase his.[223] Spurred on by Elizabeth's withdrawal into sanctuary at Westminster Abbey with her family, most noticeably her second son Richard in May 1483; her refusal for Richard to be released into Gloucester's care created a great deal of embarrassment and more importantly anger in the future king.[224] Furthermore Richard's reassurance of their safety upon leaving sanctuary was refused by an understandably cautious Elizabeth.[225] This would fuel Richard's need for something to

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[221] Thomas, K. (1970). The Relevance of Social Anthropology to the Historical Study of English Witchcraft. In M. Douglas (Ed.) *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (pp. 47-79). London: Tavistock Publications, p. 55.
[222] Horrox, R. (2013). Richard III (1452–1485). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved from http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23500.
[223] Hicks, *Elizabeth*.
[224] Horrox, R. (1991). *Richard III: A study in service*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 111.
[225] Ibid, p. 112.

discredit the former queen to the point where there was no need to hide, because Richard would have a larger majority of supporters, theoretically. In a letter written by Richard, he pleaded for military help against Elizabeth, claiming that she and her associates 'have…entended and daly doith intend to murder and utterly distroy us'.[226] Richard supposedly took this further, in a later clearly prejudiced writing by Thomas More (written in the Tudor period) Richard blames his withered arm on witchcraft created by Elizabeth; presenting his arm to his audience as 'evidence'.[227] Leland rightfully emphasises that:

Many of the sources at the time, and many historians since, have either completely ignored the matter of witchcraft or decided that the charge was a clumsy invention of Richard III's to justify crushing the remaining opposition to his coming usurpation.[228]

What this expresses is the desperation some within the courts go to in order to damn someone's reputation, and for Richard it crosses the line between feminine witchcraft designed to create love or have children, into something far more sinister and masculine, designed to destroy and injure. Arguably this is why it is not believed. Even in the fantasy of *Le Morte* Morgan does not succeed in using Accolon to physically harm Arthur, if anything she simply creates more chaos than already existed in an attempt to destroy Arthur's rule, rather than the king himself.

Richard's accusation stresses not only the popularity of witchcraft within the fifteenth-century, but that accusations did not necessarily have to be true if they could benefit an agenda, such as destroying a reputation. Although a failure on Richard III's part, the

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[226] Richard III. (1991). Duke of Gloucester Asks for Military Help 15 June 1483. In L. C. Attreed (Ed.) *York House Books 1461-1490. Volume Two* (pp. 713-714). Stroud, Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton for Richard III & Yorkist History Trust, p. 714.

[227] Kennedy, M. & Foxhall, L. (2015). *The Bones of a King*. Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hud/reader.action?docID=1980339, p. 130.

[228] Leland, *Witchcraft and the Woodvilles*, p. 267.

accusations made against Eleanor Cobham were more effective. Emphasising that women and witchcraft could be linked closely in an attempt to stress the danger women could pose and the vigilance and caution men should take. Something Malory also uses within *Le Morte*, emphasising the important role women play within his narrative also.

Conclusion

Through Malory's women characters he was not only presenting a behavioural guide to his female audience, in a similar way to his guidance to his male audience, but also providing warnings. Through the use of three key themes Malory is warning that if women live life the wrong way they could be in danger of God's punishment; therefore they must repent any sins they have before they died. This however, does not excuse sinful actions and therefore it was important that they lived their lives in an appropriate manner consistently. Through the use of Guenever Malory is showing that although child-bearing was generally expected of married women, not everyone has children for various reasons. Although it was vital for royal women to produce healthy male heirs (also expressed through emphasising Guenever's childlessness), Malory is emphasising the importance of serving God throughout life whether or not the woman is childless. Women should learn from the lessons taught by Guenever to be faithful to their husbands as if not great destruction would occur, even if Camelot was simply a metaphor for the destruction of their soul if they did not confess their sins. Aside from this behaviour guide, the witchcraft theme serves as a stark reminder of the dangers of women. Therefore the female characters are also relatable for men and serve as a warning to be vigilant.

Most importantly these characters and themes can be easily compared to real women and events of the Middle Ages, making publications after 1485 in particular, more popular and engaging to an audience. This helps to explain why *Le Morte* remained popular and was published several times, but furthermore why Arthurian themes continued to be used, particularly by kings into the Early Modern period. This will be considered in the next chapter.

The Evolution of Malory

Introduction

As the previous chapters highlighted, Malory's narrative was reproduced various times with his themes drawing associations within various generational groups. The first publishing of *Le Morte* was made by the prominent and popular publisher William Caxton in 1485 and since then has been reproduced numerous times and in numerous genres.[229] It is this 'evolution of Malory' which will be considered within this chapter. As Beverly Taylor and Elizabeth Brewer emphasise, it was Malory who was important to the survival of Arthurian legends as he designed his narrative to be read aloud and from this variations and interpretations constantly developed.[230] The ultimate survival of the narrative was testament to Malory's re-workings of previous chivalric narratives into one definitive collection, but with his own voice appearing through lessons within the text. It is Vinaver who emphasises this best: 'Unlike his French predecessors Malory was not a mere observer…[he] used his material as a commentary on the glory of English chivalry…'[231]

Here *Le Morte*'s 'evolution' will be considered through the use of chivalric narratives within the education of noble children, alongside a consideration to the roles women play within this. Most importantly the link between the chivalric culture of the Tudor period in particular, will be considered and linked to *Le Morte* to show how Malory's narrative influenced kings, Henry VII in particular. Emma Levitt in her PhD thesis about tournament culture and masculinity argues that most historians writing about the medieval period have often

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[229] Field, *Malory*. See also Whetter, *Manuscript and Meaning*, pp. 2-3.
[230] Taylor, B. & Brewer, E. (1983). *The Return of King Arthur: British and American Arthurian Literature since 1800*. Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, pp. 1-2.
[231] Vinaver, E. (1970). *Malory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 8.

overlooked the volume of participation of the elites within chivalric cultures, particularly chivalric activities such as jousts, therefore conclude that there was a decline in chivalry towards the end of the medieval period (c.1485).[232] Levitt continues to state that in fact there was not a chivalric decline at all, through the popularity of tournaments and other military activities chivalry survived, providing men with 'a very practical function throughout the later Middle Ages and into the Early Modern period.'[233] The same could be said for Malory's narrative within the fifteenth-century. It could be argued that by 1485 Caxton's publication of *Le Morte* could be deemed irrelevant as the Wars were generally considered to be over. However, like Levitt it is argued here that *Le Morte*'s popularity was not dependent on warfare and that in fact *Le Morte* aided the survival of chivalric ideals through the behaviours it taught and its reminiscent nature of past ideals. Resulting from the practice of not only passing texts down through generations but the use of Arthurian texts within well observed spectacles, such as jousts and tournaments. It is also important to remember that chivalric texts were not only read and enjoyed by those fighting in wars but by all sections of society, including nuns and monks, therefore war seems irrelevant to chivalric literature's appeal.[234]

Literature and Education

Le Morte survived not because Malory's narrative survived, but because William Caxton printed it, after all what became known as the Winchester Manuscript (believed to be Malory's original) was not discovered until 1934.[235] It survived because as Mazo Karras

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[232] Levitt, E.V. (2016). *The Construction of High Status Masculinity Through the Tournament and Martial Activity in the Later Middle Ages* (PhD Thesis, University of Huddersfield), p. 68.
[233] Ibid, pp. 71-73.
[234] Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men*, p. 20.
[235] British Library, *Le Morte Darthur*.

emphasises 'The literature of chivalry was widely read.'[236] Despite being 'an idealized conception of knighthood' *Le Morte* like previous chivalric narratives survived and increased in popularity through its combination of guidance and stories of knights, but also its use of magic and fantasy which attracted a wide spread audience.[237] Here it will be considered how the levels of education effected the spread of *Le Morte* and how therefore it came to be used by nobles, kings in particular to effect societal behaviour.

Le Morte although arguably designed to be read aloud, was only accessible to those of a lower status during the Middle Ages, through those of a higher status reading the piece to them. After all, Malory's audience must have been able to read and therefore must have been of at least middling-status, with indeed Caxton in his preface directing the narrative 'unto all noble princes, lords and ladies, gentlemen or gentlewomen'.[238] This direct linking of Caxton to a specific audience emphasises not only the types of people who were likely to buy Caxton's publications (and hopefully become his patrons), but most importantly provides a clue to the reasons behind Caxton's publication and significantly why Malory wrote *Le Morte*. As discussed in the previous chapters Malory aimed for his work to be used as a behavioural guide for men and women alike. Yet it can be argued that *Le Morte* was also designed to be used to educate the young to behave respectively to prepare them for their lives around the court. Caxton's aiming of the narrative towards those of at least middling-status would therefore be because he knew that they would take the piece and recommend it for their children's education. Here the focus shall remain upon the noble sections of society, in particular upon the monarchy.

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[236] Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men*, p. 26.
[237] Lupack, A. & Lupack, B.T. (2016). The 2016 Loomis Lecture: Moral Chivalry and the Arthurian Revival. *Project Muse, 26* (4), 3-32. doi: https://doi.org/10.1353/art.2016.0048, p. 3.
[238] Caxton. PREFACE. Volume I.

Karen Bezella-Bond argues that *Le Morte* partook of and contributed to an increasing Arthurian revival within fifteenth-century England, denoted with a longing for the past, which attracted readers not only from the aristocracy and lower gentry but the newer rising merchant classes who tried to live these romances as well as reading them, through re-enacting the Arthurian courts.[239] Yet it was Edward IV who grasped this concept most strongly during his rule, not only through the revival of a tournament culture, but also through what Hannes Kleineke refers to as 'the visual dimension of kingship.'[240] Something which his son-in-law Henry VII and grandson Henry VIII would simulate during their own reigns. It is with kings which the most effective spread of Arthurian legend occurs, if the king can be seen to be favouring texts, then the fashion for these texts would spread within the court.

Edward IV, alongside his brother Richard III, would stress the importance and favouring of chivalric texts through their promotion of chivalric ideals, not solely through tournaments, but their mottos during their reigns. Both these mottos suggest the king's suitability to knightly duties, yet Richard's was more 'bookish' suggesting he was a more active reader of chivalric texts than Edward whose focus was on government.[241] Richard III's motto, *Loyaulte me lie* (Loyalty binds me) plays upon one of the key chivalric characteristics which Malory plays upon within *Le Morte*, the theme of loyalty.[242] Ultimately this shows the influence of chivalric texts in an age were war was common place in monarchical life, the playing of the chivalric ideal not only encourages a reminder of the past and its 'perfect' ideals, but also

[239] Bezella-Bond, K. (2004). Blood and Roses: Maytime and Revival in the *Morte Darthur*. In D. L. Biggs, S. D. Michalove, & A. Compton Reeves (Eds.) *Reputation and Representation in Fifteenth Century Europe* (pp. 187-210). Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/lib/hud/reader.action?docID=3003994, pp. 188-210.
[240] Kleineke, H. (2009). *Edward IV*. Oxon: Routledge, p. 192.
[241] Sutton, A.F. & Visser-Fuchs, L. (2001). 'Chevalerie . . . in som partie is worthi forto be comendid, and in some part to ben amendid': Chivalry and the Yorkist Kings. In C. Richmond & E. Scarff (Eds.) *St George's Chapel, Windsor, In the Late Middle Ages* (pp. 107-133). Windsor: The Dean and Canons of Windsor, p. 122.
[242] English Monarchs, *Richard III*.

plays upon the concept of loyalty of the monarch to the people. Although there were doubts raised as to whether Richard could be trusted, particularly as discussed previously by the former queen Elizabeth, his motto suggests that he can be trusted, after all chivalric manuals of the time encouraged kings as well as knights to 'defend the weak and humble' whilst establishing continual peace and protecting lands.[243]

Although Edward's motto *Modus et ordo* (Method and order) reflected an organisational approach rather than an explicit link to chivalry, his motto too plays upon this idea of defending his people through organising his realm so that peace could remain (which for the most part it did).[244] It has been emphasised that the ownership of books does not mean that they were read, the inclusion of chivalric themes within the kingships of Edward and indeed Richard show that even if they did not personally read the books in their libraries, they were aware of the themes within the pieces; hence emphasises the popularity of Arthurian texts which continued throughout the fifteenth-century and beyond.[245] In particular during Edward's reign it seems that he rarely acquired a book for the pleasure of reading, instead showing a key interest for learning.[246] Indeed in the fifteenth-century it was not uncommon for books to be given and dedicated to the king in order to aid an expansion of their interests.[247] It is possible therefore that Caxton's edition of *Le Morte* found its way to Richard III just before his death, or even Malory's own edition spread to the monarch by at least word of mouth, even before Edward IV's death. It was not only noblemen who were given dedications within texts, noblewomen too found themselves dedicated within them. This

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[243] Sutton & Visser-Fuchs, *Chivalry and the Yorkist Kings*, p. 115.
[244] Johnson, B. *King Edward IV*. Retrieved from http://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/King-Edward-IV/.
[245] Sutton & Visser-Fuchs, *Chivalry and the Yorkist Kings*, p. 109.
[246] Ibid, p. 109.
[247] Kleineke, *Edward IV,* p. 32.

emphasises that women not only played a role within Malory's narrative, but within the outward expression of Arthurian legend which would occur, a topic considered later.

Aside from the audience who read Arthurian literature for pleasure or deliberate association with chivalry, chivalric texts would play an important role in the education of children and adults. Education was regarded in late medieval England as a route to advancement and therefore different from its modern definition.[248] Even in the context of child education, they were being taught skills which would help them gain a prominent position or marriage (preferably within the court). It was therefore important that heroes, within chivalric texts in particular, mirrored reality to some degree.[249] Nicholas Orme argues that medieval educationalists wrote primarily for the benefit of aristocratic males.[250] It could be argued that this was the reason Malory composed his narrative, hoping children would be taught about ideals which existed before the beginning of the Wars, and therefore they would teach others and create a better, more peaceful society, or one which went to war for appropriate reasons (God's quest rather than to depose a king). Most likely however, it was Caxton who was the educationist in this context, with Carole Weinberg stating that it was probable that Caxton intended the printing of *Le Morte* as part of Edward IV's sons' education program.[251] This is not only important in stressing the influence of Malory's narrative but in stressing the importance of chivalry in the national context. It has further been argued that Anthony Woodville gave Caxton Malory's original text to be printed around 1481, and that he along

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[248] Bennett, M.J. (2008). Education and Advancement. In R. Horrox (Ed.) *Fifteenth-century attitudes: Perceptions of society in late medieval England* (pp. 79-96). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 90.
[249] Orme, N. (1984). *From Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of the English Kings and Aristocracy 1066-1530*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, p. 211.
[250] Ibid, p. 183.
[251] Weinberg, S.C. (2005). Caxton, Anthony Woodville, and the Prologue to the *Morte Darthur*. *Studies in Philology, 102* (1), 45-65. Retrieved from: http://www.jstor.org.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/stable/pdf/4174808.pdf, p. 61.

with his sister Elizabeth were patrons of Caxton's.[252] This further emphasises the importance of Malory's narrative as it was clearly read before being given to Caxton to print; therefore it was of importance to the royal family, helping to explain why this narrative with Caxton's help spread throughout England.

Not only was Caxton influential in the spread of material within England, the printing press also aided this spread, not only quickening the laborious task of copying manuscripts by hand, but by the end of the fifteenth-century this method had significantly impacted on England's manuscript culture.[253] This also arguably impacted upon the education of young nobles, with the rise of education within the century. Running throughout both the education of young nobles and the aiding of spreading literature is the role of women, something which will now be considered.

The Roles of Women

The roles of women within the survival of Arthurian legends can be separated into three main categories: education, patronage and their roles within tournaments. These all appear to claim that women play a significant role. However in reality women only played an outward showing of having an influence, when in fact it is men who have the ultimate influence, unsurprising in a fifteenth-century context. Nevertheless, it is still important to consider the supposed roles of women within this context.

The role of women within education was mainly within the context of providing materials which could be used to educate her children, being a mother was one of her main roles within marriage, aside from pleasing and serving her husband. However, this does not mean that

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[252] Ibid, pp. 49-55.
[253] Murray Jones, P. (2008). Information and Science. In R. Horrox (Ed.) *Fifteenth-century attitudes: Perceptions of society in late medieval England* (pp. 97-111). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 110-111.

noblewomen were themselves responsible for the education of their children, as it was their father's responsibility to seek suitable governors to teach them, even though their mother had some influence in what their children were taught (mainly linked to religious material).[254] However, as Anne Bartlett rightfully emphasises men and women's roles essentially overlapped with women forming their own bonds to help their agendas, usually through preserving their children's education.[255] This is particularly important in a politically unstable climate such as the Wars, in which men were often away fighting or had been killed in previous conflicts. Therefore women in many respects had to take charge of their children's education in order to benefit their children in the future. This was no more important than for noblewomen, in particular queens such as Elizabeth Woodville until the untimely deaths of her sons, but most importantly Margaret of Anjou whose husband was incapable of managing himself, not to mention their son.

June Hall McCash suggests that noblewomen patronised works for a number of reasons, but the greatest of these is to provide educational tools for their children, taking an active role in requesting books designed to educate them.[256] Most importantly however women did this as a way to preserve their customs and heritage and to pass this to their children, in the hope that the patronage of certain works too would be passed through the family.[257] This is particularly important for Arthurian legend and its evolution throughout the fifteenth-century and beyond. Margaret of Anjou is the best example for this. In 1445, Margaret was gifted a book which became known as the Shrewsbury Book by John Talbot, 1st Earl of Shrewsbury as

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[254] De Pizan, *City of Ladies*, pp. 41-42.
[255] Bartlett, *Translation, Self-Representation, and Statecraft*, pp. 53-63.
[256] Hall McCash, J. (1996). The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women: An Overview. In J. Hall McCash (Ed.) *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women* (pp. 1-49). Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, pp. 14-32.
[257] Ibid, pp. 14-33.

a wedding and coronation gift.[258] The Shrewsbury Book is believed to have contained many

works including chivalric narratives and possibly intended to be kept as an educational tool

for any sons Margaret would have.[259] Although arguments have been made that it was given

also for Margaret herself to craft her image into one of a 'proper' English queen, or even for

her own enjoyment.[260] This shows not only the increasing popularity chivalric narratives were

finding in a new womanly audience, but also their popularity within education, particularly

with noble-born children and above. The influence of women in regards to educating children

however was arguably only a front. Noblewomen owning chivalric texts, like with men, does

not mean that they were read, nor does it mean that they passed these texts onto their

children, although it is likely given the links between chivalry and reality which chivalric

authors attempted to emulate. Noblewomen also played an arguably limited role in their

children's education. Although they had a say in what their children were taught at the

beginning, for the most part children were educated not by their mothers, and for the most

part it was their fathers who decided upon their educational needs, particularly for sons.

This is indeed reflected within the opening chapters of *Le Morte* itself with Arthur's birth.

Before Arthur is even conceived Merlin creates a deal with King Uther (Arthur's father) that

once Arthur is born he will be delivered to Merlin 'for to nourish there as I will have it; for it

shall be your worship, and the child's avail, as mickle as the child is worth.'[261] Arthur upon his

birth is then as agreed delivered to Merlin who places Arthur's care into the hands of the

knight Sir Ector, a man Merlin assures Uther is not only 'a passing true man and a faithful [but

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[258] British Library. *Margaret of Anjou in the Talbot Shrewsbury book*. Retrieved from
https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/margaret-of-anjou-in-the-talbot-shrewsbury-book.
[259] Nuttall, J. (2016). Margaret of Anjou as Patron of English Verse?: The Liber Proverbiorum and the Romans of
Partenay. *The Review of English Studies, 67* (281), 636-659. doi: 10.1093/res/hgw065, p. 642.
[260] Ibid, p. 642.
[261] Malory. CHAPTER II. How Uther Pendragon made war on the duke of Cornwall, and how by the mean of
Merlin he lay by the duchess and gat Arthur. Volume I.

also]…a lord of fair livelihood in many parts in England and Wales' who loves Uther, therefore would be the best man to raise his child.[262] Although Arthur was placed into Ector and his wife's care to benefit both Uther and Arthur, protecting Arthur from those who would desire his death before he could become king, the discussions which take place are made by Merlin and Uther, with Igraine (Arthur's mother) appearing to have no involvement within it. Arthur's raising and ultimately his education was decided by Uther under Merlin's advice, with Arthur ordered to be taken from his mother as soon as he was born.[263] Although an extreme example this demonstrates that the raising of children was decided by men, especially if a child is of noble, particularly royal, birth. Therefore women only played a very limited role in education and the raising of their children, yet they were arguably still important. Far more important was a woman's appearance of having an impact, no more so than through their patronage of chivalric works, Margaret of Anjou was a patron of English verse in the mid-fifteenth-century but she was far from the only noblewoman to do so.[264]

The role of women patronising books and manuscripts arguably links to the theme of education, not of others necessarily but themselves. Book ownership and particularly patronage of texts was seen as a way of uncovering a woman's education.[265] Yet for the most part it can be argued that the books women collected and indeed patronised were mostly religious texts, Margaret Beaufort the key example of this, although hardly surprising given her devout reputation.[266] The patronage of works greatly reflects upon the books women

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[262] Malory. CHAPTER III. Of the birth of King Arthur and of his nurture. Volume I.
[263] Ibid.
[264] Nuttall, *Margaret of Anjou as Patron*, p. 636.
[265] Michalove, S. (2004). Women as Book Collectors and Disseminators of Culture in Late Medieval England and Burgundy. In D. L. Biggs, S. D. Michalove, & A. Compton Reeves (Eds.) *Reputation and Representation in Fifteenth Century Europe* (pp. 57-79). Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/lib/hud/reader.action?docID=3003994, pp. 57-58.
[266] Ibid, p. 59. For Margaret Beaufort see Powell, S. (1998). Lady Margaret Beaufort and her Books. *The Library, s6-XX* (3), 197-240. doi: 10.1093/library/s6-XX.3.197, pp. 199-200.

were exposed to, for Margaret Beaufort her library is known to have contained a number of books of hours and other religious pieces, and Susan Powell emphasises that Margaret's entire 'involvement with the book trade may be seen as the active life in God's service.'[267] What is most interesting about Margaret Beaufort's patronage in particular is that early on she linked herself with William Caxton, therefore Margaret's patronage of Caxton can also be seen as a patronage of *Le Morte* and other chivalric works which he produced, yet her printers too were keen to print texts to which she had interests.[268] Although many of the works Margaret patronised were religious works, she also patronised and bought books from various printers, presumably of varying genres.[269] After Caxton's death Margaret patronised others deemed to be his successors as influential printers of the period, such as Richard Pynson, but most importantly Wynkyn de Worde who she appeared to have favoured the most and who on a number of occasions specifically named her as his patron in works such as Walter Hylton's *Scala perfectionis* in 1494.[270]

Similarly Margaret of Anjou can be seen to patronise a variety of texts to what has been argued as a 'way of displaying her influence in the English court'.[271] As King René of Anjou's daughter, Margaret was fortunate to have 'access to one of the largest private book collections in Europe' and it has been suggested by Diana Dunn that Margaret's 'literary tastes and ideas were open to the influence of that chivalric culture so beloved of her father. [And that] The Shrewsbury Book was a fitting wedding present for Margaret and there is every

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[267] Powell, *Lady Margaret Beaufort*, p. 199.
[268] Ibid, pp. 212-239. See also Hellinga, L. (2010). *William Caxton and early printing in England*. London: The British Library, p. 105.
[269] Hellinga, *Early printing in England*, p. 105 and pp. 156-168.
[270] Ibid, p. 105 and pp. 143-168.
[271] Michalove, *Women as Book Collectors*, p. 58.

likelihood that she would have read it with pleasure and appreciated its contents.'[272] Like

Margaret Beaufort it is arguable that publishers like Caxton would have been keen to print

texts which appealed to the queen's taste, and therefore possible that even before *Le Morte*

Margaret played a role in patronising chivalric narratives.

The Yorkists also saw their share of patronage towards publishers, as mentioned previously

Anthony Woodville was a major patron of Caxton's as it is believed Elizabeth Woodville also

was. Significantly Elizabeth, although would arguably have learned from her Burgundian

relatives about chivalric narratives, arguably also learned and took example from her husband

Edward IV. Upon his death Edward willed several books to Elizabeth, most notably amongst

them 'the *Morte d'Arthur*.'[273] This is of great importance when considering patronage,

particularly of women. Edward died in 1483, and Caxton first published *Le Morte* in 1485. How

then could it be that this text was bequeathed to Elizabeth in 1483 by any other means other

than possession of Malory's original manuscript? Weinberg debates whether Anthony

Woodville gave Malory's manuscript to Caxton around 1481 as it was in his printing shop at

this date.[274] Lotte Hellinga further supports this claim arguing that:

there are good arguments for assuming that it was through his [Anthony Woodville's]

mediation that Caxton could make use of the manuscript of Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur*

that was the basis for his edition of 1485...[275]

If this is the case it is likely that although Anthony could have passed the manuscript to Caxton,

it was in fact Edward's own copy which he intended to give to his wife, either as an original

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[272] Dunn, D. (2001). Margaret of Anjou, Chivalry and the Order of the Garter. In C. Richmond & E. Scarff (Eds.) *St George's Chapel, Windsor, In the Late Middle Ages* (pp. 39-56). Windsor: The Dean and Canons of Windsor, p. 41.
[273] Michalove, *Women as Book Collectors*, p. 65.
[274] Weinberg, *Caxton, Anthony Woodville, and the Prologue*, pp. 54-55.
[275] Hellinga, E*arly printing in England*, p. 68.

or the first copy Caxton produced. With the late publishing by Caxton, presumably because he had taken the time to edit it, Elizabeth can only have been bequeathed Malory's original manuscript. Edward's bequeathing of a chivalric narrative is significant to Elizabeth's patronage as she was more likely to patronise materials along similar themes, if only to keep Edward's memory alive through the texts he owned. However Elizabeth and the Woodville family remained keen patrons, particularly of Caxton's.

Caxton's patronage by the Woodvilles stresses his importance as a printer, but also *Le Morte*'s importance as a piece which Caxton was willing to take the time to not only produce, but edit. Further emphasis of the narrative's importance is shown through the re-publications made of *Le Morte* after Caxton's death, particularly its re-printing by Wynkyn de Worde. De Worde was famous for his illustrations using woodcuts and from 1495 he lavishly illustrated the pieces he produced, most significantly beginning with a re-printing of Caxton's edition of *Le Morte*.[276] What makes this so significant is that not only would this inspire others to also re-print the piece within future centuries, but de Worde as Hellinga puts it 'did not reprint many of Caxton's works. [In fact] Evidently he did not share Caxton's love of prose romances.'[277] Therefore *Le Morte*'s teachings were so relatable and educational to an audience that even de Worde was persuaded that this was a piece not only worth re-printing (therefore aiding its survival), but most importantly so salient it should be highly decorated to appeal to even more nobles who could afford to buy and read such beautiful texts. However, there is some debate as to the relationship of de Worde and *Le Morte*, most influentially by Tsuyoshi Mukai. In his article *De Worde's 1498 Morte Darthur and Caxton's Copy-Text*, Mukai emphasises that although it had been presumed that de Worde's print of

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[276] Ibid, p. 140.
[277] Ibid, p. 140.

Le Morte was a copy of Caxton's edition, there is evidence to suggest that actually 'de Worde's Malory was edited from multiple sources–Caxton's printed text as a primary source and a manuscript text as a consultation copy.'[278] Mukai goes on to prove that the evidence does support his argument therefore, de Worde's publication of *Le Morte* was not simply a copy of Caxton's text but similarly edited before producing, using Caxton's work as a base and another manuscript, presumably the Winchester Manuscript to check against Caxton's edition.[279] This does not however devalue the impact of de Worde's re-print, if anything this increases it as it retraced *Le Morte* closer in some ways to Malory's original, increasing presumably more of Malory's original message and tone for an audience to replicate rather than Caxton's (although naturally de Worde's own voice and interpretation would have been present). This further shows the importance of Malory's original narrative for printers and the importance of keeping the text within circulation for their audiences.

Regardless of the money women spent on patronage this still does not show the sole importance of women within patronage, rather that they were a second to kings in terms of dedicating texts or within patronising, as women were second best for most factors compared to men. This can also be seen unsurprisingly within tournament cultures. Women in the fifteenth-century played an apparently important role within tournaments (the term 'tournament' here used loosely to incorporate jousts and mêlées). However, this is only an appearance, in reality they are trophy-like objects to encourage knightly deeds and to hand out prizes. As Juliet Barker points out:

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[278] Mukai, T. (2000). De Worde's 1498 Morte Darthur and Caxton's Copy-Text. *The Review of English Studies, 51* (201), 24-40. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/517660, p. 24.
[279] Ibid, pp. 24-40.

The medieval tourneyer or jouster was not simply putting in a useful bit of martial exercise – he was fighting as the champion of his mistress (real or imaginary) and seeking to win her approbation and that of his companions in arms.[280]

What is important here is that those competing were not just seeking the approval of the women there but the men. The greatest example of this within *Le Morte* is during a tournament at Lonazep between Arthur and the King of Scots. Here two of the greatest knights within the narrative, Tristram and Palomides hold a discussion at the start of the chapter about which side they will fight upon, with Palomides concluding that they should fight on the King of Scots side as Arthur's 'party will be Sir Launcelot and many good knights of his blood with him. And the more men of worship that they be, the more worship we shall win.'[281] Tristram and Palomides during the tournament aimed ultimately to gain the most worship, rather than aiming to impress La Beale Isoud (Tristram's true love), who watched the tournament with her face covered so she was not recognised from a bay window.[282] As discussed in a previous chapter the concept of brotherhood is a highly important theme. It was this use of women as trophies to prove a knight was better than other men which was commonplace within tournaments, especially if the women were 'meek and chaste' and men would fight to pursue and defend these ladies (who especially within the early Tudor period were mocked to represent damsels in need of rescuing from other men, a common feature throughout *Le Morte* also).[283]

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[280] Barker, J.R.V. (1986). *The Tournament in England 1100-1400*. Retrieved from https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=O0-D57pOb4sC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+tournament+in+england+1100-1400&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=the%20tournament%20in%20england%201100-1400&f=false, p. 1.
[281] Malory. CHAPTER LXVIII. How Sir Tristram and his fellowship jousted, and of the noble feats that they did in that tourneying. Volume II.
[282] Ibid.
[283] Gunn, S. (1991). Tournaments and Early Tudor Chivalry. *History Today*. 41 (15), 15-21, p. 19.

Aristocratic women were frequently seen as enthusiastically watching and even sponsoring tournaments, and women of lower statuses also seemingly found a way to join in, but the emphasis upon the aristocratic women having a role is evidence of the images in which the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period were trying to emulate.[284] What is clear is that women were made to represent Guenever within tournaments, particularly the queens, and therefore draw a parallel to the king as Arthur. Whitaker argues that throughout *Le Morte* Guenever like Arthur plays a ceremonial part, but she also plays an important role in inspiring the prowess of the knights as well as imposing 'penances for discourteous behaviour'.[285] This is correct but in terms of encouraging prowess at tournaments Guenever is remarkably absent, there is only one tournament where Guenever has an important role to play, one in which Arthur is absent and Guenever, the Haut Prince and Launcelot take to the scaffold as judges; afterwards taking time to commend the winner.[286] Although this shows that Guenever has an important role to play it is worth emphasising that she is not without the company of men in her judgement, therefore her womanly role would have been more significant had she have been the only judge. Similarly there are other occasions where women play a seemingly significant role, such as La Beale Isoud who is suggested by Dinadan to himself that Palomides had her to thank for his victory 'for had she been away…Palomides had not gotten the prize this day.'[287] Despite being queen La Beale did not play the single prominent role, remaining in the background and not awarding prizes.

[284] Crouch, D. (2005). *Tournament*. Retrieved from https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=VO6esgdVQJsC&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=crouch+tournaments&ots=2mYYVGDuB_&sig=Vs9ruLSEeBa9kNK0krqvpsHxOcg#v=onepage&q=crouch%20tournaments&f=false, p. 1.
[285] Whitaker, *Arthur's Kingdom*, pp. 43-44.
[286] Malory. CHAPTER XLIV. Of the third day, and how Sir Palomides jousted with Sir Lamorak, and other things. Volume II.
[287] Malory. CHAPTER LXX. How Sir Tristram changed his harness and it was all red, and how he demeaned him, and how Sir Palomides slew Launcelot's horse. Volume II.

What is clear throughout *Le Morte* is the enthusiasm which women show towards tournaments, with Guenever falling ill on one occasion and grilling two knights in the hermitage as to what she had missed: 'it is misfortuned me of my sickness while that tournament endured. And as I suppose I shall never see in all my life such an assembly of knights and ladies as ye have done.'[288] Guenever here shows the importance of the tournament culture to everyone in times of peace, emphasising a 'greater time' with 'scaffolds and holes that lords and ladies might behold and to give the prize.'[289] Once again Malory's narrative reflects the fifteenth-century world in which he lived and makes an important link to womanly roles. A key example of this in the period is the Bastard of Burgundy joust between Anthony Woodville and Anthony, son of Philip II, Duke of Burgundy. In this tournament it appears to be Elizabeth Woodville's ladies who set Woodville the challenge on 17 April 1465.[290] In this Anthony, speaking to his sister upon bended knee, is surrounded by Elizabeth's ladies who tied a token of 'Riche Coler of golde' around his right thigh and attached to this an enamelled 'Floure of Souvenaunce'.[291] Upon arising to thank the ladies for their honour he discovers in his hat (which had fallen to the floor) a sealed ball tied with gold thread, officially stating the challenge.[292] What is important here is that the women's roles are once again ceremonial, they would not compete in the event and indeed Mazo Karras has argued that after this point the tournament became 'a masculine event, and they [the women] were merely part of the background.'[293] This is correct in that for the rest

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[288] Malory. CHAPTER LXXXI. How Sir Bleoberis and Sir Ector reported to Queen Guenever of the beauty of La Beale Isoud. Volume II.

[289] Malory. CHAPTER VI. How Sir Launcelot was received of King Bagdemagus' daughter, and how he made his complaint to her father. Volume I.

[290] Bentley, S. (1831). Tournament between Lord Scales and the Bastard of Burgundy. In S. Bentley (Ed.) *Excerpta historica: or, Illustrations of English history* (pp. 170-212). London: S. Bentley. Retrieved from https://archive.org/details/excerptahistoric00bentuoft, p. 180.

[291] Ibid, p. 178.

[292] Ibid, pp. 178-179.

[293] Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men*, p. 56.

of the document no woman is mentioned except for Elizabeth and this is only to emphasise that she is Anthony's sister. This ultimately shows that like Guenever, women are used in this context for ceremonial purposes, and are not as important as the men in these situations.

Throughout these examples women are shown to have played a role in the fifteenth-century through patronage, education and tournaments but their roles are ultimately ceremonial and inferior to men, although this is not surprising for the time. What they do show however is that women were still involved and have been recorded as playing a role in life in supporting their men, like the women in *Le Morte*. Thus showing the influence of the fifteenth-century on Malory, and therefore his influence on society with subsequent publications. It is this which will be considered next.

Tournaments and the role of Arthurian legend in kingship

Jonathan Hughes argues that 'Arthurian myths…played an important part in the political and cultural history of the late Middle Ages.'[294] This is particularly true when considering Edward IV and his use of kingship, arguably a major factor in the survival of Arthurian legend, being 'the first English king to found a royal library' particularly dedicated to 'English works on alchemy, chivalry, history, Roman philosophy and Arthurian romance.'[295] Edward also allowed his country's national identity to be transformed in the wake of war into a seemingly based Arthurian identity, associated with a lost greatness and staging various tournaments as an emphasis of this.[296] However Edward was not the only king to create this image during the fifteenth-century and beyond. It is this which will be considered here, for these three areas

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[294] Hughes, J. (2002). *Arthurian Myths and Alchemy: The Kingship of Edward IV*. Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing Limited, p. 2.
[295] Ibid, p. 1.
[296] Ibid, p. 20.

will be considered: tournament culture, the use of masculinity in kingship and the continuation of this culture in the Tudor period. This emulation of Arthurian and chivalric narratives ultimately explains why Malory created *Le Morte* and why it was so popular Caxton decided to publish it. Furthermore this emphasises that it was not solely during periods of war that a wish for a revival of the past was experienced or played upon, it continued during peacetime and became a substantial role within the monarchy. With even Elizabeth I continuing the traditions of tournaments and jousts; using them as a way for courtiers to gain her favour (not unlike her father Henry VIII), although Elizabeth will not be considered in detail.[297] What this does show is that chivalry and Arthurian legend remained influential to a wide variety of people, therefore their codes were important for authors to create based upon their own opinions.

Tournaments were 'a remarkable medieval obsession'; one which continued into the Early Modern period with the Tudors, this was not only common within England but throughout Europe (as was emphasised by the Bastard of Burgundy joust) and men travelled in order to compete with others.[298] As highlighted by Joseph Strutt: 'Among the pastimes introduced by the Norman nobility, none engaged the general attention more than the tournaments and the jousts.'[299] This is something Malory himself stressed throughout *Le Morte*. Whenever large tournaments took place and calls for knights were made, large quantities of knights flocked to the designated place in support of, or under the name of, a specific king or region. The best examples of these are seen at the tournaments of the Castle Perilous and Castle

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[297] Williams, P. (1997). Court and polity under Elizabeth I. In J. Guy (Ed.) *The Tudor Monarchy* (pp. 356-379). London: Arnold, p. 358.

[298] Crouch, *Tournament*, pp. 1-2.

[299] Strutt, J. (1903). *The sports and pastimes of the people of England. From the earliest period, including the rural and domestic recreations, May games, mummeries, pageants, processions and pompous spectacles*. Retrieved from https://archive.org/details/sportspastimesof00struuoft, p. xviii.

Lonazep. Malory's descriptions of these two tournaments vary, but both express the large scale of the occasions, with the Castle Perilous constituting knights from Arthur's Round Table (therefore the various dominions under Arthur's crown) as well as those from Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Gore and as specified by Malory 'all the Out Isles, and in Brittany and in many countries'.[300] Castle Lonazep's tournament on the other hand provides more detail of the numbers of knights which gather for such tournaments, stating that upon arriving Arthur's knights saw 'four hundred tents and pavilions, and marvellous great ordinance.'[301] Therefore Malory's work expressed the kinds of tournaments which he himself would be used to seeing.

Tournaments were not only spectacles which could reflect the prowess of those competing, but could be used by the monarch as a way of not only looking to the past, but emphasising that they were the true ruler as they embodied knightly qualities, and were therefore placed on the throne by God as his divine ruler. As Barker argues the glorification of knightly ideology makes tournaments important during the Middle Ages but it is important to remember that it was far more than a game and 'in the right hands, as the kings of England were quick to realize, it could become an invaluable propaganda machine.'[302] No more so than during and in the immediate period after the Wars when strong kingship was needed to reassure the people of their safety, and there was no better way to do so than the recreation of a legend familiar to most if not all of their subjects, no matter what their status: that of King Arthur the greatest king and one of the Nine Worthies. Tournaments were used at most important occasions where it was necessary to promote a sense of ceremony, such as coronations and

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[300] Malory. CHAPTER XXVI. How King Arthur sent for the Lady Lionesse, and how she let cry a tourney at her castle, whereas came many knights. And CHAPTER XXVII. How King Arthur went to the tournament with his knights, and how the lady received him worshipfully, and how the knights encountered. Volume I.
[301] Malory. CHAPTER LVIII. How they approached the Castle Lonazep, and of other devices of the death of Sir Lamorak. Volume II.
[302] Barker, *Tournament in England*, p. 1.

royal marriages.[303] This plays to the notion that the monarchy in the Middle Ages were advertising their rights to rule, involving the people in something which they enjoyed and could play a role, keeping their favour and gaining support from others. This sense of ceremony through tournaments is also reflected throughout *Le* Morte. Even if tournaments are not held at celebrations such as Arthur's annual feast at Pentecost, they are generally talked about as part of the sharing of adventures by Arthur's knights. Yet there are occasions where tournaments are specifically held as part of a celebration period, such the wedding of King Mark to La Beale Isoud, although Malory did not on this occasion describe the tournament in great detail.[304]

It is the former display of Arthurian legend (jousts in particular) which would arguably inspire Malory to compose *Le Morte*, as it would be something he was as familiar with as his audience, but Malory could adapt it to include his own messages about behaviour. Robert Hellenga argues that Malory's tournaments:

do not reflect the customs and practices of his own day but of the period in tournament history between the pitched battles of the twelfth century and the pageants of the fifteenth.[305]

Although this is vital in that Malory was no doubt looking towards a past ideal to mirror within his work to provide recollections for his audience (in the same way Caxton does upon printing). What Hellenga fails to note is that Malory's work was not only written but produced within the fifteenth-century and therefore he is reflecting the customs and practices of his

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[303] Strutt, S*ports and pastimes*, p. xxii.
[304] Malory. CHAPTER XXIX. Of the wedding of King Mark to La Beale Isoud, and of Bragwaine her maid, and of Palamides. Volume I.
[305] Hellenga, R.R. (1974). The Tournaments in Malory's Morte DArthur. *Forum for Modern Language Studies. 10* (1), 67-78, p. 78.

own day, after all before serving time in jail he would no doubt have played a role within the tournaments happening within court; therefore could reflect this within the various tournaments described throughout *Le Morte* in great detail. It is these past ideas, along with newer ideals which were appearing throughout emerging chivalric literature in which kings attempted to mimic, which not only proved their rights but also proved their masculinity, a topic which will now be covered.

Levitt stresses that 'as a cultural phenomenon, the tournament reached its height under the kingship of Edward IV and it dominated the courts of Henry VII and Henry VIII.'[306] But more than this she argues that Edward IV in particular, used tournaments to exert masculine identity through restoring a revival of key chivalric characteristics expressed in earlier centuries, and some which were effectively destroyed by the weakness of Henry VI.[307] This is not disagreeable although it can be further argued that it was not solely masculinity which Edward hoped to restore after the disaster of Henry's reign, but the entire concept of chivalry, particularly the traits previously mentioned within the chapter on Malory's chivalric definition. Even the concept of religion to an extent needed restoring as Henry, although deemed to be extremely pious, had arguably lost the faith of his people. Therefore until Edward could restore faith in the monarch and bring peace, arguably the people's faith in God could be questioned. It cannot be denied however that tournaments were an expression of masculinity and a major aspect of this was the relationship of men to other men, or more specifically the masculinity and strength of one man in relation to another.[308] In order for a boy to become a man it was important that they competed and proved themselves through

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[306] Levitt, *Construction of High Status Masculinity*, p. 14.
[307] Ibid, pp. 14-229.
[308] Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men*, p. 11.

tournaments in order to prove themselves superior, with women often used in this.[309] Nevertheless as discussed previously it was not women that were important but the men whom they were dominating, further emphasising that women throughout the period, especially in tournament culture, were a porn for men's agendas, particularly kings.[310]

   In tournaments a knight would not triumph over a king unless the king intended it to be so, and therefore kings are the alpha-males. If a knight dominates all others to 'win the lady' and then the king dominates him through the use of the woman as a trophy, the king is proving that he is the greatest man, not that the women is an important prize. As Sydney Anglo admits: 'it is true that the monarch and the Court could be seen in full splendour at tournaments' particularly during the reign of Henry VIII and occasionally during other Tudor reigns.[311] This 'fashion' created by Edward and passed onto his son-in-law and his grandchildren not only shows the importance of Edward's reign but most importantly that of chivalric narrative in shaping the monarch's reign, particularly narratives such as *Le Morte* which were so frequently distributed throughout all sections of society. Narratives such as this emphasised the greatness of the monarch, even if that monarch did not compete often, when they did they dominated the field against even the worst odds. King Arthur for example dominated the field both individually and in charge of his armies. Even against three other kings and their armies in his first war, with his horse slew beneath him Arthur, after being re-horsed by his men, defeated his opponents forcing them to draw back.[312] Individually Arthur against one of his own men Accolon excels, bringing the treacherous knight to trial on account

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[309] Ibid, pp. 10-11.
[310] Ibid, p. 11.
[311] Anglo, S. (1997). Image-making: The means and the limitations. In J. Guy (Ed.) *The Tudor Monarchy* (pp. 16-42). London: Arnold, p. 26.
[312] Malory. CHAPTER IX. Of the first war that King Arthur had, and how he won the field. Volume I.

of treason.[313] In this dual Arthur is close to death, with Accolon fighting with a sword believed to be Excalibur (the greatest sword there was, but in reality a copy made by Morgan Le Fay) and seemingly undefeatable, and with Arthur fearing death with 'every stroke that Accolon struck he drew blood'.[314] Yet even when Arthur is closest to his death, lying on the ground with 'Excalibur' and Accolon stood over him, Arthur manages to defeat Accolon and acquire his full confession of treason.[315] It is therefore unsurprising that this was the example which monarchs reading *Le Morte* and chivalric narratives wanted to emulate to show their superiority as a true ruler.

Edward IV was not the only king to emulate this lost era of chivalry, Henry VII and later his son Henry VIII would also play upon these. It is the Tudor period which will be briefly considered here, more specifically the mirroring of Arthurian legend during the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII. John Guy argues that with the printing press still in its infancy magnificent royal spectacles including tournaments were more important than the written instruments in emphasising the monarchy's presence within the period.[316] Although correct, what is argued here is that pageants were more important for the spreading of the presence of chivalric material, particularly Arthurian legend, especially given that not everyone could read Caxton's printing, rather than being more important generally. Despite the reading of *Le Morte* aloud, it could not reach everyone therefore tournaments and spectacles by kings were the perfect way to reach these sections, after all news about the king would arguably travel further than a narrative. Particularly during Henry VII's reign when his spending accounts

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[313] Malory. CHAPTER IX. Of the battle between King Arthur and Accolon. Volume I.
[314] Ibid.
[315] Ibid, CHAPTER X. How King Arthur's sword that he fought with brake, and how he recovered of Accolon his own sword Excalibur, and overcame his enemy. And CHAPTER XI. How Accolon confessed the treason of Morgan le Fay, King Arthur's sister, and how she would have done slay him. Volume I.
[316] Guy, J. (1997). Introduction. In J. Guy (Ed.) *The Tudor Monarchy* (pp. 13-15). London: Arnold, p. 13.

supposedly reveal that he spent money on lavish occasions, most enthusiastically tournaments and paying for tiltyards to be upgraded.[317] Henry's enthusiasm for jousting is clear through the number of tournaments he held, thirteen in the last seven and a half years of his reign.[318] Although nothing compared to his son's, Henry importantly often played the same role as Arthur does in *Le Morte*, judging others and deeming who won the prizes.[319] Therefore it is easier to compare and link Henry VII to Malory's narrative than Henry VIII. This link is most notably seen with the emphasis upon Henry and Arthur's 'Welshness'; greatest through the birth of Henry VII's first-born son Arthur.[320] Arthur was born in Winchester in 1486 after his mother Elizabeth of York was sent by her husband to Winchester to prepare for his birth.[321] A blatant play on the notion within *Le Morte* that some men believe: 'Arthur is not dead, but had by the will of our Lord Jesu into another place; and men say that he shall come again'.[322]

It has been argued that 'early Tudor England did not produce a sudden renewal of Arthurianism' and although this could be considered true in that tournaments were already greatly renewed under Edward IV, the early Tudor period saw a more blatant linking between the king and *Le Morte*. Jack Scarisbrick argues that 'Henry [VIII] was unlucky that neither his father nor he himself had pushed Arthurianism vigorously in recent years'.[323] Although true for Henry VIII this cannot be said for Henry VII who emphatically used Arthurian influence as

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[317] Cunningham, S. (2007). *Henry VII*. Oxon: Routledge, p. 6.
[318] Gunn, Early Tudor Chivalry, p. 16.
[319] Ibid, p. 17. For examples of King Arthur doing this see Malory. CHAPTER XXX. How Sir Tristram behaved him the first day of the tournament, and there he had the prize. Volume I.
[320] Chrimes, S.B. (1972). The reign of Henry VII. In S. B. Chrimes, C. D. Ross, & R. A. Griffiths (Eds.) *Fifteenth-century England 1399-1509: Studies in politics and society* (pp. 67-86). Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 71-72.
[321] Horrox, R. (2004). Arthur, prince of Wales (1486–1502). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved from http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/705.
[322] Malory. CHAPTER VII. Of the opinion of some men of the death of King Arthur; and how Queen Guenever made her a nun in Almesbury. Volume II.
[323] Scarisbrick, J.J. (1997). *Henry VIII* (New ed.). London: Yale University Press, p. 273.

a key to his rule, pushing the boundaries set by Edward IV one step further. This not only allowed for *Le Morte* to spread but to advance in popularity, therefore creating greater room for *Le Morte* to be re-published several times and allowing it to survive. It could be argued that Henry VIII too allowed this to happen through his love of tournaments in which he himself 'took part in…with gusto, until a heavy fall from his horse…persuaded him it was time to retire.'[324] Therefore passing this culture on to the generations of monarchs to follow. Although Edward started off the renewal of a popularity of chivalric narratives, it is with the Tudor period where it took off most, not only due to Henry VII's evident love for it but also because Caxton's text would resonate more with audiences after Edward's death as they looked back to his and previous chivalric kings' reigns.

Conclusion

From the fifteenth-century it is evident that nobles favoured Arthurian works as a way of not only educating young nobles to ensure they learnt appropriate behaviours for anticipated court life, but for monarchs as a way of emphasising their greatest qualities whilst ruling. Although this would be more successful under certain kings as opposed to others, it emphasises the popularity of Arthurian works, *Le Morte* in particular; therefore aiding its rise in popularity and survival amongst noble classes who were publishing these pieces. Through the use of tournaments this popularity would continue to rise after the re-introduction of tournaments under Edward IV and continuing throughout the Tudor period. These drew large numbers of competitors not only across England but into Europe, allowing monarchs the opportunity to look towards the past, but most importantly provided the opportunity for

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[324] Gunn, Early Tudor Chivalry, p. 15.

competitors to emphasise and prove their masculinity and superiority over other men. Although women played a role in these expressions of chivalry, particularly the non-physical expressions such as the education of young nobles and the patronage of chivalric narratives, it cannot be said that women had an influence within the period, if anything they were there to promote and encourage the prowess of men as a symbol of apparent influence.

Conclusion

Malory's *Le Morte* is an Arthurian narrative which has experienced a greater popularity and arguably survived far longer than any of its rival chivalric narratives. Despite the original not being discovered until the early twentieth-century, Caxton's publication meant that it survived far longer and reached a larger audience than Malory could have anticipated whilst in his prison cell. Its survival has been shown to have had great influence not only during the fifteenth-century but beyond, used in various ways for various agendas. But what is clear to see is that it is *Le Morte*'s fantasy element which is of most importance, contributing towards its popularity, whilst encompassing the narrative's main themes. As a whole these themes whether they link to the female characters or the male, all provide behavioural codes and themes which Malory saw to be important during his lifetime, and themes he wanted to project onto his audience with the hope that they will read his text in the way it was intended and imitate the lives his characters lead (correcting the sinful parts). *Le Morte* is therefore not only a symbol of the types of narratives popular during the fifteenth-century, but more importantly a symbol of the time and characteristics Malory wanted to see return. This in turn is replicated upon the numerous re-publishings made by Caxton and his successors. Therefore *Le Morte* can almost be seen as an institution, a guide to twenty-first century audiences towards fifteenth-century attitudes regarding aspects such as religion and witchcraft. From this it can be used to examine the fifteenth-century and with hindsight create links to past events or people; aiding the ability to consider the associations which Caxton's audiences could have made. Malory himself would arguably have been inspired by certain events and people and could have intended for his audience to make connections to them, however it is

Caxton's publication which makes this more feasible, as most of the events mentioned within this thesis would have been unknown to Malory upon creating *Le Morte*.

Through the examination of the definition of chivalry it is clear to see that modern interpretations of chivalric traits differ slightly from those mentioned within *Le Morte*. These traits do however include some of the basic traits which Malory himself identifies with, such as brotherhood, loyalty and honour. This exemplifies how popular Malory's narrative is to still be able to see similar traits within today's definitions, and further how fluid chivalry as a concept is, open to change with variations appearing within different cultures and societies. Nevertheless it emphasises the themes of importance not only during the Wars, but the Middle Ages, themes such as religion in particular. For Malory to guide his audience to behave more religiously through his characters' religious behaviour suggests that there was not necessarily a dwindling of religious belief, but a dwindling in outward showings of religion and piety. Therefore it was important for people not only to atone for their sins, but live a life which included more simple religious acts such as praying and attending mass more often. More interestingly it is the messages which can be deduced through Malory's definition of chivalry which helps to understand his own opinion more than simply explaining how a person should live. Through his use of non-Christians Malory is emphasising two main concepts, both of which suggest that he wishes to return to a crusading era last experienced during the thirteenth-century. This is not to say that Malory is telling his audience to reconquer Jerusalem or to even necessarily go on pilgrimage (small regular pious acts are just as important), Malory instead is suggesting the dominance and superiority of the Christian faith. Through his use of characters such as Priamus who specifically ask to be baptised, Malory is suggesting that Christian characters are the most superior in terms of faith than others, although they are not necessarily the greatest warriors. The dominance of religion within the

narrative emphasises an importance which would also continue throughout Malory's women characters. For the most part however the women are used to emphasise the importance of small religious acts, but there are occasions which show that women can be apt tools for God's work. Aside from religion, brotherhood is greatly emphasised both literally and metaphorically. Unsurprising given that this is also a theme greatly associated with wars particularly the Wars of the Roses, where brothers-in-arms naturally occurred, but it was also a conflict in which families fought with, and sometimes against each other. Most importantly brotherhood is used to emphasise a sense of masculinity in which men relate themselves to other men be it through Hegemonic masculinity or Homosociality, expressing the love they feel for one another. This too plays into the idea of fighting and competing within tournaments, which would later be used by kings as a way of associating themselves with the legend. So to do Malory's other defining characteristics of bravery, mercy, honour and loyalty. The main use of these characteristics is to present characters wholly different from himself so that the audience can not only replicate the characters' behaviour, but also so that they can learn from Malory's mistakes and heed his advice on how to live.

This advice can also be found within Malory's women characters who embody characteristics designed to warn women about the correct way to behave to avoid God's wrath, but also to warn men about the possible threat women pose. The provoking of thoughts of past women and events would most clearly be found within Caxton's successive audiences, but the themes found relating to women in general would be familiar to Malory. These themes embody a sense of danger or deceit and therefore Malory clearly shows a subtle agenda. Through the use of Guenever's adultery with Launcelot Malory emphasises that no one is above sin and everyone should fear God, a reason why they both turn to God after the battle for Camelot. Malory is therefore not excusing sin but encourages all to repent,

as not everyone can be as perfect as Percivale's sister, who provides a contrast to the other women. Guenever however also includes an important message about marriage and children, having none herself. Through this Malory subtly links the concept of adultery with Margaret of Anjou who herself came under suspicion when she did not bear Henry a child until 1453. Malory often emphasises the concept of adultery and children, but uses it as a way of expressing that those who are innocent but accused of adulterous acts generally give birth to sons, this relates both to innocent men and women. Therefore Malory clearly places his agenda of his political allegiance, but plays on a notion which would invoke thoughts within his audience amongst similar lines. It is within this concept that Malory's narrative can greatest be linked towards real events and people, with the vulnerable political state of the fifteenth-century placing greater risk on the chances of being accused of terrible acts, particularly for noble women who themselves or their husbands hold some form of (or perceived) influence. This is the case within the accusations of witchcraft which have been discussed, which greatly link towards Malory's narrative. Furthermore it is this linkage to real events which would give Caxton and other publishers the greatest reason to publish and re-publish *Le Morte*, and would further see it increase in popularity. Morgan is seen to be evil whether or not she is guilty and whether or not she is performing her wifely duty outside of her crimes, the same can be said of the fifteenth-century. It is not the accuracy of accusations which matter within the period, or in fact within *Le Morte*, but the possibility of their accuracy and the damage which could be done through trials. Moreover women are seen to be very deceptive and thus Malory warns his male audience to be vigilant through this, trusting in God in order to keep their honour.

The themes which can be found through both the male and female characters within *Le Morte* and the links which can be made to not only past ideals but past events and people,

prove why *Le Morte* would be published several times and why it has continued to survive into the present day. It survived through written texts but most importantly through the revival of the tournament under Edward IV and through to the reign of Elizabeth I, with prominence under Henry VII and his son Henry VIII. The tournament form was one way Malory's narrative would reach a wider audience than his written texts, as not everyone would be literate but arguably they all could enjoy tournaments and learn from this revived tradition. However Caxton's merchant audience must too gain some credit for this widening audience. Therefore Malory's lessons would be far reaching, with Henry VII in particular emphatically playing upon Arthurian legend through emphasis of his Welsh roots, but most importantly the birth of his son in Winchester, naming him after the legendary king. Throughout all this however women have some role to play and although for the most part these roles were symbolic with women holding less power than men, they nevertheless show that women were to some extent needed, otherwise they would not be mentioned or used. The printing press was one of the greatest benefits to Malory, after all without it his work would not have been discovered until the unearthing of the Winchester Manuscript. Therefore his importance as an author and the themes he presents are clearly of significance to Caxton and his audiences, otherwise he would not have taken the time to publish and edit the work, nor would others who followed Caxton's lead.

Through this thesis it is hoped that it has been proven that Malory is of as much importance in today's society as during the Middle Ages, teaching modern audiences about themes deemed important to fifteenth-century audiences. *Le Morte* therefore has survived due to its printing, popularity and most importantly appeal to various audiences from various centuries; thus deserves to be considered in greater detail. Although much more can be said about the various themes spread throughout Malory's vast narrative, a few of these have been covered

in detail to present Malory's message and the ability to link *Le Morte* to real people and events, which encouraged Caxton to publish his piece and the popularity of it amongst kings. Without Malory it is arguably extremely possible that many of the adaptations we see within the media would not exist, after all his work was arguably more popular than Monmouth and other Arthurian legends which pre-date this. This is mainly due to Malory combination of fantasy and the claiming of its 'history' by Caxton, which may have inspired other fantasy writers to follow suit, providing us with the forms of entertainment we see today.

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CHAPTER III. Of the birth of King Arthur and of his nurture.

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CHAPTER IX. Of the first war that King Arthur had, and how he won the field.

CHAPTER XIX. How King Arthur rode to Carlion, and of his dream, and how he saw the questing beast.

CHAPTER XI. Of the interment of twelve kings, and of the prophecy of Merlin, and how Balin should give the dolorous stroke.

CHAPTER I. How King Arthur took a wife, and wedded Guenever, daughter to Leodegrance, King of the Land of Cameliard, with whom he had the Round Table.

CHAPTER I. How Merlin was assotted and doted on one of the ladies of the lake, and how he was shut in a rock under a stone and there died.

CHAPTER IX. Of the battle between King Arthur and Accolon.

CHAPTER X. How King Arthur's sword that he fought with brake, and how he recovered of Accolon his own sword Excalibur, and overcame his enemy.

CHAPTER XI. How Accolon confessed the treason of Morgan le Fay, King Arthur's sister, and how she would have done slay him.

CHAPTER XIII. How Morgan would have slain Sir Uriens her husband, and how Sir Uwaine her son saved him.

CHAPTER X. Of a battle done by Sir Gawaine against a Saracen, which after was yielden and became Christian.

CHAPTER III. How four queens found Launcelot sleeping, and how by enchantment he was taken and led into a castle.

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