Arthurian Literature XXIII

Edited by KEITH BUSBY
and ROGER DALRYMPLE

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CONTENTS

GENERAL EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Vol. XXIII of *Arthurian Literature* contains a wide-ranging selection of articles dealing with texts from the classical and 'post-classical' periods of French romance through Malory's Arthuriad to Thomas Love Peacock. Andrew Lynch's amply-documented study of cowardice and Arthurian narrative reveals a subtle and shifting treatment of the theme in works from the twelfth through the fifteenth century. No-one knows the history and sources of Malory's *Morte Darthur* better than Peter Field, whose careful examination of the forty knights in Caxton and the Winchester manuscript demonstrates both the potential and limitations of textual criticism. The extraordinary character of Sir Dinadan in Malory is revealed through Joyce Coleman's persuasive analysis of the language acts in which he takes part. D. Thomas Hanks Jr compares the various states of Malory's text from the Winchester manuscript through Wynkyn de Worde, arguing that modern editions can both facilitate and hinder our appreciation of the author's style. The relationship between popular romance and the ballad is considered by Raluca Radulescu, who argues that a detailed comparison of the two would help reveal their significance for their primary audiences. Margaret Robson shows exactly how pervasive the Arthurian tradition was in a political sense, demonstrating its meaning for the rebellion of Owain Glyn Dŵr, and drawing parallels with some of the later English Gawain romances. *The Awntyrs Off Arthure* is also the subject of Martin Connolly's contribution, in which he reveals that the sequence of spiritual promise and worldly postponement is one of the basic narrative structures of the poem. Norris J. Lacy approaches *L'Atre périlleux* through its author's complex and varied exploration of notions of identity, while Fanni Bogdanow re-opens the dossier of the Handsome Coward with particular reference to the Post-Vulgate *Queste del Saint Graal*. Tony Grand looks at the *Perlesvaus*, still one of the great unexplored prose romances, reviewing the thorny presentation issue in the light of Jean de Nesle's biography. Finally, Robert Gossedge's article on Thomas Love Peacock's *The Misfortunes of Elphin* shows how this pre-Tennysonian work serves as a sympathetic showpiece for the author's knowledge of Welsh tradition.

Keith Busby
Madison, Wisconsin

I

BEYOND SHAME: CHIVALRIC COWARDICE AND ARTHURIAN NARRATIVE[1]

Andrew Lynch

In medieval chivalric narratives, where the central *matière* is usually armed combat, the issue of actual or potential cowardice often arises. Although it has been suggested, mainly with reference to Froissart's *Chronicles*, that fear is 'the one thing chivalric literature virtually never mentions directly',[2] it is quite frequently found in *chansons de geste* and romances, where there is less need to safeguard the reputation of actual people, and a generally greater narrative freedom exists. I wish to suggest in this essay that the articulation of cowardice, and hence of courage, in some well-known Arthurian works is more complex, more pragmatically inflected, and more morally developed than the traditional discourse of masculine shame and honour can properly account for. The tendency of chivalric literature to regard courage as a purely spontaneous function of the noble knightly body is countered by the revelation, when one looks further, of incompatible variety in the various systems that seem to underpin its narrative representation. For apart from involvement with discourses of knightly honour, masculinity and the body, courage in chivalric literature often has affinities with the virtues tradition of classical and Christian philosophers from the Greeks to Aquinas, and with practical military commentaries from Vegetius to the present day. The varied aspects of courage in these authorities provide suggestive contexts for literary interpretation. In this select study, after first looking at *chanson de geste* examples, I refer briefly to Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval* and its Third Continuation, and to *Perlesvaus*, then in more detail to the later English texts *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*.

It is not surprising that modern reference to chivalric cowardice occurs mainly in studies of medieval ruling-class masculinity.[3] In the discourse of medieval military honour, a conviction of cowardice is an unanswerable last

1 Thanks to Anne M. Scott and Victoria Burrows for helpful comments on the draft of this essay.

2 A. Taylor, 'Chivalric Conversation and the Denial of Male Fear', in *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the Medieval* West, ed. Jacqueline Murray (New York, 1999), pp. 169–88 (p. 174).

word because it is such a gross betrayal of the combined expectations of rank and gender, so incompatible with the demands of knighthood and manhood. In French, Anglo-Norman and English heroic tradition, 'courage and enthusiasm for military action' are mandatory for all, however much men might be allowed to differ in other ways.[4] Oliver is wiser than Roland, yet as Simon Gaunt says, 'in action the two are indistinguishable'.[5] Accordingly, knights who run from battle, like Tiébaut, Esturmi and their followers in the well-known opening episode of the *Chanson de Guillaume*, are shamed and condemned,[6] forfeiting their claim to noble lineage and feudal command: ' "Ultre lechiere, or pris a mortel hunte!" ' (' "Coward twice over, now you have received a mortal shame!" ') (II, 423). Even in the much less militarist tradition of clerical writing, a knight fleeing from battle became the key later medieval illustration of the vice of cowardice.[7] Beyond its basic applicability in battle, 'courage' also functioned as a general metaphor for medieval masculine competence, for 'being a man' reassuringly like other real men and unlike women.[8] The originally aristocratic and military ideal 'spills over into other classes and social arenas . . . regardless of whether the arena is a battleground or a struggle for land, political power, recognition, wealth, women, labor, or knowledge'.[9] 'Coward' and 'cowardice', similarly, could indicate other varieties of incompetence, such as stupidity or sloth.[10] 'Coward', from *couart*, apparently related to French 'coe' or 'cue' for 'tail', has been linked both to 'turning tail' (fleeing in battle), and the submissive animal posture with tail between the legs, still used in heraldry. The latter sense was further suggestive in English, where 'tail' could mean the sexual organs,[11] and lack of 'courage' could mean impotence, a failure of 'sexual desire'.[12] This medieval

3 See R. M. Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2003), pp. 39–40, citing A. Taylor, 'Chivalric Conversation', to claim that 'literary and historical works stated that fear had no place in war'; M. Bennett, 'Military masculinity in England and Northern France', in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, ed. D. M. Hadley (London, 1999), pp. 71–88; A. Laskaya, *Chaucer's Approach to Gender in the Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge, 1995).

4 Bennett, 'Military masculinity', p. 76. See C. B. Bouchard, *'Strong of Body, Brave and Noble': Chivalry and Society in Medieval France* (Ithaca, 1998), p. 109: 'In the twelfth century, all nobles would have agreed that their warrior training and skill were important to their status. They gloried in their courage, loyalty, and raw strength. Whatever its other attributes, late twelfth- and thirteenth-century chivalry was a conglomerate of ideas and ideals that glorified and ennobled warfare.'

5 S. Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 35, citing and translating *La Chanson de Roland*, 1094–6: 'Ambedui unt merveillus vasselage; / Puis quë il sunt as chevals et as armes, / Ja pur murir n'eschiverunt bataille' ('. . . [B]oth are amazingly brave: since they are mounted and armed they will never give up the battle through fear of death'). All other translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

6 J. Wathelet-Willem, *Recherches sur la Chanson de Guillame*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1975), II, ll. 338–429.

7 See C. R. Sherman, *Imaging Aristotle: Verbal and Visual Representation in Fourteenth-Century France* (Berkeley, 1995), Ch. 7, Fig. 16.

8 Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, pp. 62–85.

9 Laskaya, *Chaucer's Approach to Gender*, pp. 15–16.

10 See *MED* couard (n.) 2; couardise (n.) 2.a.

11 *MED* tail (n.) c.

12 *MED* corage (n.) 2.b.

complex of attitudes to courage has had a long life, as twentieth-century studies of soldiers indicate:

> A code as universal as 'being a man' is very likely to have been deeply internalized. So the fear of failure in the role, as by showing cowardice in battle, could bring not only fear of social censure on this point as such, but also more central and strongly-established fears related to sex-typing.[13]

With such long-lasting elements of masculinity at stake, battle courage may seem at first an issue with no uncertainties about it for medieval chivalric writers. Nothing could seem simpler, for instance, than the binary opposition of courage and cowardice in the *Chanson de Guillaume*: 'Si cum li ors s'esmiere de l'argent, / Si s'en eslistrent tote la bone gent. / Tuit li couart vont od Tedbald fuiant, / Od Viviën remestrent li vaillant' ('As gold separates itself from silver, / so all the good men set themselves apart. / All the cowards go fleeing with Tiébaut; / the men of worth stay with Vivien') (II, 328–31). And yet, if one looks more closely at the poem's structure and discourse, its emphatic demonstration of Vivien's courage, with his repeated vows not to flee and prayers for divine aid, suggests a singularity of virtue rather than something that can simply be taken for granted in the brave. Vivien's last stand against the Saracens is constructed to show a kind of courage superior to all others, in a fighter who will *never* leave a sworn battle while breath is in him, whatever happens. He is the special figure chosen to demonstrate this text-book quality; the narrative and discursive formation of the battle scene, climaxing in the hero's death, implicitly establishes a carefully graded hierarchy of the courageous. All who choose to stay with Vivien are worthy, but in the course of the slaughter these are eventually divided into three groups: the remnant of Vivien's comrades who at last think of escape but return when they see they have left it too late; Girard who stays loyally then bravely leaves to find aid, on Vivien's orders; Vivien himself who stays fighting to the end, with twenty wounds, the very last to fall. A similar hierarchical pattern occurs in the second battle, where first Girard dies, then Guichard, leaving the supreme hero Guillaume as the lone survivor, yet still unshamed by flight: 'N'en fuït mie Guillelmes, ainz s'en vait' ('He does not flee at all; rather, he leaves') (II, 1225).

Two differing narrative treatments of battle-fear are offered here. Tiébaut's thorough cowardice is comically externalized and grossly embodied: he only promises to fight because he is drunk, then quails when he sees the enemy, and later soils his saddle-cloth in terror. That version of flight in battle contrasts markedly with the interior, psychological treatment of the moment in which Vivien's last living companions want to leave. Their decision is permitted a reasonable motivation – the odds of 500,000 to twenty do seem unpromising. Vivien understands and voices their view: they are remem-

[13] S. L. Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier: Combat and its Aftermath*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1949). II, 131–2, cited in H. M. Lynd, *On Shame and the Search for Identity* (New York, 1958), pp. 52–3.

bering their vines and meadows, castles, cities and wives – all that they must sacrifice in order to keep their vow to God and their now dead comrades (II, 571–89). He fails to convince them to stay, but no one speaks of cowardice. It is tacitly accepted that not all 'la bone gent' can be as brave as Vivien, that the wish to flee can occur even to the elite, and that flight in battle may be attempted by those not completely base. The narrative's relative tolerance of these men's lapse is the more surprising in that Vivien, unlike Roland, cannot really be accused of *desmesure* or *oultrecuidance*: when the first news of the Saracens arrives, he urges Tiébaut to wait for Guillaume's help; it is only when the opposing forces are in full view of each other that he rejects further delay as ignoble. He is fully in the right, but it is acknowledged that others cannot match the ideal he represents. While paying tribute to him as supremely courageous, the poem also tacitly acknowledges that there is a scale of battle-fear, ranging from shameful cowardice to a forgivable temporary loss of nerve against overwhelming opposition. So while the text wants to suggest through Vivien and 'li vaillant' generally that the virtue of courage is directly embodied in the good baron as surely as certain properties are always found in gold, it also offers in practice a more qualified, situational understanding.

A *chanson de geste* example is appropriate to my analysis because 'cowardice' is a term that strongly links Continental French, Anglo-French and Middle English writing. As William Rothwell points out, the whole 'coward'-group of words is 'likely to have been in widespread general use in England over a century before the earliest record of its presence in Middle English', around 1275.[14] The first literary use of a 'cowardice'-word in England, in the Anglo-French *Ipomedon*, looks quite uncompromising – 'Dehez eit touz jours cowardie' ('May cowardice always be accursed').[15] Nothing could seem simpler, yet the first literary use of a 'coward'-word in England, in *The Anglo-Norman Alexander*, seems a tacit betrayal that it is not so simple. When the magician Nectanabus, in the form of a dragon, terrorizes Philip's hall, 'Li conte e ly baron de paor vont fuiant, / Li hardiz bacheler od les coarz muçant' ('The counts and the barons go fleeing in fear, / the brave knights hiding with the cowards').[16] Everyone curses cowardice, certainly, but in this emergency all the men run away; the distinction between cowards and brave men holds conceptually, but is temporarily erased in deed. That is, although 'brave' in the abstract remains as a fixed element in an ideological system, its specific occurrence is inflected by the contingencies of the narrative. In terms Catherine Batt has used about the masculinity of Malory's Lancelot, courage is here both ' "essential" and performative, which

14 W. Rothwell, 'The Anglo-French Element in the Vulgar Register of Late Middle English', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 97 (1996), 423–36 (p. 428).
15 *Ipomedon*, ed. A. J. Holden (Paris, 1979), l. 549: 'May cowardice always be accursed.'
16 *The Anglo-Norman Alexander*, ed. B. Foster, ANTS 29 (London, 1976), ll. 347–8.

destabilizes rather than confirms the constitution of . . . identity'.[17] There is a discrepancy between the text's conceptual and situational understanding of bravery, and it does not 'show' us quite what it 'tells'. It seems to require its readers not to notice the discrepancy in any active, long-term sense – these barons will go on being 'li hardiz' – by making reasonable allowances: the brave may not be uniformly brave in all circumstances – in the face of demonic magic, for instance. More tacitly still, there is a narrative agenda that simply requires a less than perfect bravery, both to show how fierce the magic is and as a foil to singular heroism, in this case that of the queen. Courage is known by its opposite, and like other medieval virtues can hardly be represented without it, yet it is also measured on a more finely calibrated scale. Aristotle's double description of the virtue of courage, which places it as a subjective mean between rashness and cowardice, yet admits that it is much more like rashness than cowardice[18] – the brave man can be rash, the coward never – perhaps only encouraged an existing literary tendency to treat cowardice as both the abject opposite to bravery and the extreme of a fearful behaviour that even the brave might occasionally exhibit, though in a lesser degree.

The philosophical understanding of courage has often been strongly related to the practical necessity for soldiers to keep doing their duties despite fear. In the view of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, courage is primarily an issue of practice. Aristotle says that cowardice does not result from intellectual failure, an ignorance of what is right to do (as Socrates sees it in Plato's *Laches*), but from weakness, an incapacity to master fear,[19] even when we know 'the law bids us . . . not to desert our post nor take to flight nor throw away our arms' (V. 1).[20] The good soldier must *be* courageous, not just know what courage is. Courageous and cowardly acts are individual choices to hold firm or to fly; a succession of these acts creates a habituation that comes to constitute the second nature of the brave or cowardly person (II. 2) – generally so, at least, because 'there are things terrible even beyond human strength' (II. 7). Courage invokes rational principles, but it does not arise from them (VI. 13). Although, as the virtuous mean between rashness and cowardice, it has a reflective aspect, requiring 'a delicate balance between fear and confidence',[21] it is always more like rashness than cowardice (II. 8). Finally, it has been noted that Aristotle is tolerant of individual or occasional instances of cowardice, bred from involuntary actions taken under extraordinary fear.[22]

17 C. Batt, *Malory's Morte Darthur. Remaking Arthurian Tradition* (New York, 2002), p. 83.
18 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, tr. W. D. Ross (London, 1925), II, 8.
19 See E. Smoes, *Le Courage chez les Grecs d'Homère à Aristote* (Brussels, 1995), p. 27.
20 For a discussion, see T. Nisters, *Aristotle on Courage* (Frankfurt, 2000), p. 27.
21 Smoes, *Le Courage*, pp. 257–8.
22 See Smoes, *Le Courage*, p. 249: 'c'est parce qu'il est conscient du caractère presque involontaire et contraint de la peur; il admet une diminution de responsibilité' ('it is because he is aware of the almost involuntary and constrained nature of fear; he admits a lessening of responsibility').

He distinguishes these from true habitual cowardice, where a person's whole intention has been perverted to shamelessness (III. 12).[23]

Aristotle's doctrine represents what has been called a general change in ancient Greek conceptions of courage from the individualist, honour-based and innate virtue of the Homeric *aristos* (one might compare Roland and Vivien) to the rationalist, technical virtue of the citizen-soldier who forms part of the hoplite phalanx.[24] Aristotle maintains a close connection between the idea of courage and the real demands of warfare, including the idea of habituation in military discipline that was later emphasized by the late-Classical Roman Vegetius, the major theorist of war for medieval readers.[25] Vegetius stresses the need for 'decent birth' and 'a sense of shame' in recruits,[26] but mainly relies on 'instruction in the rules, so to speak, of war, toughening in daily exercises, prior acquaintance in field-practice with all possible eventualities in war and battle, and strict punishment of cowardice' (3). 'Few men are naturally born brave; hard work and good training makes many so' (117). Not all can be brave – there is no benefit in training a coward (8) – but practical courage and cowardice are strongly contingent in Vegetius, dependent on experience, particular circumstances and the present state of army morale.

There are also, of course, more teleological and intellectualized aspects of courage in Plato and in Aristotle himself, not to mention in the Christianized interpretations of courage in Ambrose and Aquinas on which I shall comment later. When medieval Arthurian literature treats cowardice, these goal-oriented and rational aspects often seem in tension with the culture of knightly shame. My first example comes from Chrétien's *Perceval*. Gauvain initially refuses to take part in the tournament at Tintaguel because he is on the way to defend himself against a treason charge, and fears that injury in the tournament would make him break his oath to do that. It is a perfectly sound reason in terms of classical or Christian goal-oriented courage, but Gauvain's non-participation draws imputations of cowardice from female spectators. He is mischievously mistaken for a man sworn to peace, a merchant, a money-changer trying to avoid tolls by disguise as a knight. Chrétien tells us that Gauvain's choice is right ('mes il pensa, et a reison / qu'an apele de traison') ('But he thought, and he is right, / that he is charged with treason'),[27] and this is later confirmed by his host and by the lord of the place. But still, to save the honour of the Girl with the Little Sleeves, he is brought to fight in the tourney against Meliant de Liz – a patent narrative contrivance to allow

23 See Smoes, *Le Courage*, p. 241.
24 See Smoes, *Le Courage*, pp. 70–1.
25 See C. Allmand, 'The *De re militari* of Vegetius in the Middle Ages and Renaissance', in *Writing War: Medieval Literary Responses to Warfare*, ed. C. Saunders, F. Le Saux and N. Thomas (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 15–27.
26 Vegetius, *Epitome of Military Discipline*, tr. N. P. Milner (Liverpool, 1996), p. 8.
27 *Le Conte du Graal (Perceval)*, ed. F. Lecoy, CFMA, 2 vols. (Paris, 1981), I, ll. 5063–4: 'But he thought, and he is right / that he is charged with treason.'

combat after all. The imputation of cowardice, of unknightly behaviour, requires a proof in action, even though that contradicts Gauvain's much better reason for staying out of the fight. What Gauvain and readers both know to be the case is apparently not enough. Perhaps that distinguishes him as inferior to Chrétien's Lancelot, who bears up for longer and more stoically in his romance under the insults he receives as Knight of the Cart. But even Lancelot is given full clearance through many knightly deeds in the end. The link between the idea of courage and its demonstration in military action seems hard to break in such a text, no matter how courage is metaphorically adapted or directed to higher goals. The link is much strengthened when an accusation of cowardice is made, and failure in a knight to show keenness for military pursuits, such as the young hero is guilty of in *Ipomedon*, will incur such an accusation, even if he commits no positive cowardly act: 'Kar autrement estuit mustrer / La pruësse que por parler' ('For prowess must be shown otherwise than in words') (1191–2). As the English version of *Ipomedon* puts it: 'In erthe ys non so worthy a knyght / But yf his dede be shewyde in syght / Men will no good sopose.'[28]

Clearly, the imputation of cowardice compels a response in more than words or self-knowledge because it is always, implicitly or explicitly, part of a discourse of gender. As has been pointed out in the aftermath of 11 September 2001, to call one's opponent a coward paradoxically sets up a war; it asks him to 'fight like a man'[29] and implies that one's own side must avoid a feminizing cowardice by delivering a manly military response, so making 'other forms of resolution unthinkable'.[30] Accordingly, accusations of cowardice and effeminacy are frequent in medieval narrative when pro-war counsellors want to discredit those with other ideas. The shame of being called a coward is usually intolerable, no matter what one's reputation. In Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, Lancelot's kin insist that he must answer Gawain's taunts of cowardice with action: ' "For ye fare as a man that were aferde, and for all your fayre speche hit woll nat avayle you." '[31] A knight who could withstand such pressure by not fighting would require a personal grip on interior motive and ultimate goals that in Malory is to be found only in the Grail Quest.

Ad Putter has shown the anti-pacifist slant of the discourse of effeminacy in the figure of the 'Handsome Coward' in the thirteenth-century *Perlesvaus* and the Third Continuation of *Perceval*.[32] In both cases a hero redeems the coward by bringing him into battle, where he excels, changing his name to 'Li Hardie Chevaliers' or the 'Biax Hardi'. The Coward Knight is a strange

28 *Ipomedon*, ed. R. Purdie, EETS OS 316 (Oxford, 2001), ll. 1138–40.

29 R. D. Egan, 'Cowardice', in *Collateral Language. A User's Guide to America's New War*, ed. J. Collins and R. Glover (New York, 2002), pp. 53–63 (p. 54).

30 Egan, 'Cowardice', p. 53.

31 *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. E. Vinaver, 3 vols., 3rd edn, rev. P. J. C. Field (Oxford, 1990), III, 1190.

32 A. Putter, 'Arthurian Literature and the Rhetoric of "Effeminacy" ', in *Arthurian Romance and Gender*, ed. F. Wolfzettel (Amsterdam, 1995), pp. 34–49.

figure, deliberately riding backwards on the saddle, preposterously accoutred, and with his lance reversed, yet still bearing arms for fear of attack. He might seem to be Aristotle's shameless habitual coward, whose whole intent is perverted, yet he lacks the characteristic bravado and dissimulation of cowards in chivalric literature (such as we have seen in the drunken braggart Tiébaut). Unlike other chivalric cowards, he *says* he is a coward, and warns others not to rely on him. Yet in continuing to bear arms, however oddly, he maintains the means of self-renewal. His method of riding might even suggest an interior judgement of shame on himself, since his voluntary perversion of posture and armour resembles the public shames inflicted on defeated knights in some other romances and on 'transgressors of gender hierarchies' in medieval drama and popular ritual.[33] He reveals later, when converted to bravery, that he had resented shame all along.[34]

No good counsel or talking cure can help the Coward Knight or Handsome Coward. He can only be changed by fighting itself. In the Third Continuation he is attacked by a bandit knight while leaning against a tree, trying not to get involved. In the *Perlesvaus* he is involuntarily made Perceval's nominee in a combat. In both cases, he changes upon seeing his own blood spilt, and seems to discover for the first time what knighthood is all about. For all his anxiety beforehand, he has apparently not known how the experience of bloodshed will affect him: 'Quant li Couarz Chevaliers vit sun sanc, si fu molt correciez. "Par mun chief, fet [il], vos m'avez blecié, mes vos le comperroiz. Je ne quidoie mie que vos me vousisoiz ocirre" ' ('When the Coward Knight saw his blood, he was very angry. "By my head", he said, "you have wounded me, but you will pay for it. I never thought at all that you would want to kill me" ' (I, 5595–7). We can hardly psychologize so obviously emblematic a figure, yet one of the points *Perlesvaus* seems to make about him is that courage is an unpredictable quality, 'hyd within a mannes person [i.e., 'body']', as Malory's Balin says (I, 63), and discoverable only in action. Men cannot know in advance how the bodily experience of battle and bloodshed will affect them. Proverbial wisdom ascribes false bravery in anticipation of war to inexperience or to 'Dutch courage', as with Tiébaut. The Coward Knight turns out to have had a 'false cowardice' until the unforeseen reaction of anger on seeing his blood spilt supplies the necessary physiological effect for good fighting. Great anger is the routine stimulus of effective retaliatory action in chivalric literature. It would not serve for Aristotle's true courage (III. 8, 3), but *Perlesvaus* requires no higher motivation. Its basic concern is that the knight should act as handsomely as he appears and so avoid shame in future.

33 R. L. A. Clark and C. Sponsler, 'Queer Play: The Cultural Work of Crossdressing in Medieval Drama', *New Literary History* 28 (1997), 319–44. See also R. Melinkoff, 'Riding Backwards: Theme of Humiliation and Symbol of Evil', *Viator* 4 (1973), 153–76.

34 *Perlesvaus*, ed. W. A. Nitze and T. A. Jenkins, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1932–7), I, ll. 5607–8: 'car maint chevalier m'en ont tenu en vilté et ledoié' ('for because of it many knights have held me in the lowest esteem and insulted me').

As the change of name shows, by 'performing' courage bodily he can transform the public narrative of his 'essential' self.

The later fourteenth-century English romance Sir *Gawain and the Green Knight* clearly has stronger links than *Perlesvaus* with classical and Christian views on courage, and concomitantly sterner standards of interior motive and ultimate goal. These features have been well explored by Silverstein, Newhauser and Putter among others.[35] The treatment of courage in *Gawain* is initially complicated because while the poem frequently refers to the importance and prestige of battle-prowess, it noticeably avoids descriptions of the hero's combat: 'Hit were to tore for to telle of the tenþe dole';[36] 'þat I ne tyȝt at þis tyme in tale to remene' (2843). Furthermore, there are numerous negative implications about 'werre and wrake and wonder' (16) and 'baret' (21; 752), the usual romance arenas for displays of courage, so that the discourse of chivalric bravery, though strongly present, becomes separated from situations of actual warfare and must be attached to other matters. The point is emphasized by Arthur's failure to understand that the Green Knight's challenge is not to do with ordinary fighting; he has to be told that twice, with considerable scorn (279–84). Yet when the weird beheading challenge keeps the court silent, the accusation of cowardice is immediately made: 'For al dares for drede wiþoute dynt schewede!' (315). It might be thought rather an unfair and manipulative accusation, since the Green Knight has just refused an ordinary combat and indicated he would not be striking a first blow anyway. A strange situation has arisen for the court, in which the normal demands for courage and sanctions against cowardice seem to apply – Arthur is deeply shamed (316–20) – but not the normal means of proof and redress. Just how the traditional concepts of courage will attach themselves to the story's development cannot readily be foreseen. The poem offers a complex, shifting and temporally extended series of events that strongly bears out Aquinas's view that the moral character of 'an agent's intentions, dispositions and emotional states' 'becomes clear (either to the agent or an outsider) only if they can be studied in a variety of different manifestations extending over a long period of time'.[37] Courage and cowardice in this version are very much narrative elements.[38]

Over its year-long, symbolically life-long, course, *Gawain* sometimes looks like a checklist of various categories of courage, canvassing all the

35 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. T. Silverstein (Chicago, 1984); T. Silverstein, 'Sir Gawain in a Dilemma, or Keeping Faith with Marcus Tullius Cicero', *Modern Philology* 75 (1977/78), 1–17; R. Newhauser, 'The Meaning of Gawain's Greed', *Studies in Philology* 87 (1990), 410–26; A. Putter, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and French Arthurian Romance* (Oxford, 1995), Ch. 4.

36 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon, rev. N. Davis (Oxford, 1967), l. 719.

37 L. H. Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas. Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage* (Albany, 1990), pp. 133–4.

38 See A. Macintyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd edn (London, 1985), p. 178: 'The medieval world is the one in which . . . the connection between the distinctively narrative element in human life and the character of the vices comes to the forefront in human terms.'

possibilities. Arthur, for example, does not exhibit true courage in his dealings with the Green Knight, because he acts *out of* natural daring ('as kene bi kynde'), high spirits and anger, not just *with* them, which for both Aristotle and Aquinas is a lesser 'semblance' of courage,[39] and also because he exhibits over-confidence through ignorance, being insufficiently aware of the necessity to receive a return stroke (570–4), that is, of the direct prospect of death, which both Aristotle and Aquinas treat as the real test of courage.[40] Gawain's careful rehearsal of his agreement with the Green Knight shows a clearer understanding. The Green Knight, sent by Morgan to inspire fear, has deliberately invited an irrational response based on passion – 'Be so bolde in his blod, brayn in his hede' (285) – and the blood that springs to Arthur's face shows he has obtained it. All those present are said to become 'wroth as wynde' (319–20). Gawain's first speech shows no sign of passion, but we are not reassured explicitly that he was one of those initially silent out of courtesy, not fear (246–7), and there are further suggestions that he might still give up out of fear – 'Now þenk wel, Sir Gawan' (487–90) – that he might have been emboldened by 'mayn drynk' (497), and that the quest might have no better motive than 'angardez pryde' (681). We must wait to find out.

The Gawain we see is not fearless or insensible. The ' "Gawain . . . þat is so goud halden / þat neuer arȝed for no here by hylle ne be vale" ' (2270–1) is a creature of idealizing reputation and literary hyperbole, whom the narrative gradually reveals as a misleading and dangerous example. In any case, armies are not the causes of fear in this tale, and the Green Knight's teasing expectations of complete fearlessness contrast with much romance literature, where the spectacle of the knight bravely conquering fear is a frequent one. Fear shows off exceptional courage and resolution in action: Malory's Arthur is in 'greate feare to dye' in his unfair fight against Accolon, 'but allwayes he helde up his shelde and loste no grounde nother batyd no chere' (I, 147). Lancelot, facing thirty knights at the Chapel Perilous, 'dredde hym sore, and so put his shylde before hym and toke his swerd in his honde redy unto battayle' (I, 280). In *Gawain*, the hero's conduct throughout the poem displays Aquinas's idea of virtue – continually experiencing passion, whether one's own or others, and then controlling it[41] – rather than courage as a totally settled 'second nature'. This control occurs through Gawain's acceptance of 'destinés' (562–5) with the help of divine grace mediated by the Virgin (644–50). We see his self-control reassert itself repeatedly in the last fitt, given prominence by its placement in the 'wheel' of almost successive stanzas (2134–8; 2156–9; 2208–11). The fear of the Green Knight that might make Gawain 'grete' or 'grone', and of the Green Chapel (where he reaches

39 Aquinas, *Summa Theologicae*, 61 vols. (London, 1964–81), XLII, pp. 29–33, 2a2ae. 123.10, with reference to Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, III, 8.

40 Lee H. Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas*, p. 132: 'Every courageous act . . . has as its deepest root a readiness to die.' See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, III, 6: 'Properly, then, he will be called brave who is fearless in face of a noble death.'

41 See A. Ross OP, 'Introduction', in Aquinas, *Summa Theologicae*, XLII, p. xxiii.

near-hysteria), and his flinching at the first stroke of the axe look like forgivable moments of Aristotelian 'incontinence' followed by a return of the habit of courage. Gawain is often afraid, but what counts is how he ultimately responds to the fear.

Yet Gawain does accept and hide the girdle, an act that he later calls both cowardly and covetous. In conjunction with Aristotle, the pragmatic wisdom of Vegetius and Aquinas's thoughts on fear supply suggestive contexts for understanding how this lapse might come about. Discussing battle morale, Vegetius says: 'Men who know without a doubt that they are going to die will gladly die in good company. For this reason Scipio's axiom has won praise, when he said that a way should be built for the enemy to flee by' (107). Aquinas says something similar, that ' . . . [f]ear requires at least a glimpse of hope of escape'.[42] This is the psychology that the lady employs on Gawain, when she has previously noted that he is resigned to his end: 'þa I were burde bryȝtest, þe burde in mynde hade. /þe lasse luf in his lode for lur þat he sot / boute hone, / þe dunte þat schulde hym deue, / And nedez hit most be done' (1284–7). After trying other temptations, she finally intervenes to disrupt Gawain's acceptance of death by offering him an escape route – 'Myȝt he have slypped to be vnslayn, þe sleȝt were noble' (1858). Her sudden battle tactic – one of many combat themes in her dealings with Gawain – by exploiting the natural desire to save his life, all the greater in the owner of such a good life,[43] leads him to flee from danger into untruth. By contrast, when he 'hope[s] . . . of no rescue', he can stand fast as a rock to receive a death understood as 'destiné' (2284–2308). Gawain's rejection of the temptation to flee, when offered more directly by his guide, expresses courage in the conventional chivalric terms. His understanding of the situation is as clear as if flight from an ordinary sworn battle were proposed: ' "I were a knyȝt kowarde, I myght not be excused" ' (2131). When called to choose consciously between more obvious knightly forms of staying and fleeing, shame helps him overcome the promptings of fear. But the supposedly magic girdle that might stop him being obscurely '. . . [h]adet wyth an aluisch mon' (681) takes his understanding further from Aristotle's 'most noble' context of death in war;[44] it appeals more powerfully, because more obliquely, to the love of life that it is impossible for a human to lose utterly, and that it can be easily hidden reduces the fear of shame from others.

Gawain's adventure demonstrates what is most truly shameful, in various ways. The Green Knight fails in the attempt to shame him for 'cowardise' (2273) through a temporary, involuntary lapse of courage – the flinching – but

42 Aquinas, *Summa Theologicae*, XXI, p. 51, 1a2ae. 42.6.

43 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, III, 9: 'And the more he is possessed of virtue in its entirety and the happier he is, the more he will be pained at the thought of death; for life is best worth living for such a man, and he is knowingly losing the greatest goods, and this is painful.'

44 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, III, 6: 'Properly, then, he will be called brave who is fearless in face of a noble death, and of all emergencies that involve death; and the emergencies of war are in the highest degree of this kind.'

succeeds perfectly in shaming him as a coward with the girdle, which he took voluntarily, hid from disclosure and is still wearing: ‘ “Corsed worth cowardyse and couetyse boþe! / In yow is vylany and vyse þat virtue disstryeȝ” ’ (2379–80). The girdle is a ‘token of untrawþe’ (2509), a sign that he loves his life (2369) more than his promise, and he is in that sense equivalent to the coward who runs disloyally from a sworn battle. Its disclosure signifies a demolition of the aristocratic claim to be totally brave by nature, and a bold revision of the Aristotelian view of courage as a settled habit, a ‘second nature’ occasionally vulnerable to moments of weakness. The girdle tells us instead that love of life is the natural habit, an instinct for self-preservation wherever possible that each act of bravery must struggle to overcome. Gawain realizes his fault in two significantly distinct stages: First he casts the girdle from him, as in sudden shame for an individual cowardly act against his knightly nature: ‘ “For care of þy knokke cowardyse me taȝt / To acorde me with couetyse, *my kynde to forsake*, / þat is larges and lewté þat longeȝ to knyȝteȝ” ’ (2369–88). Then he accepts it back from the Green Knight as an acknowledgement not only of this particular ‘faute’ (2487) but of the innate human predisposition to weakness that permitted it: ‘ “þe faut and þe fayntyse of þe flesche crabbed, / How tender hit is to entyse teches of fylþe” ’ (2435–46). He has now taken to heart the idea that he is not brave by ‘kynde’ as a knight, but by grace, as the poem has explained long before (640–50). Masculine shame is revealed as an insufficient protector of courage in his case, and the centring of courage in the knight’s fallible body is now understood as the source of its frailty. He will wear the girdle to distinguish his deep nature from the exterior Gawain of reputation (‘renoun’ 2434) whose image is grounded on ‘pride’ in ‘prowes of armes’ (2437–8). When others see him as the bravest of knights, he will humble himself by identification with the accursed coward.

It is harder to see why Gawain links his self-accusation of cowardice with covetousness, since it is clear he has not accepted the girdle for its rich appearance (2367), and if ordinary covetousness applied he would have taken the much more valuable ring (1817–20). Theodore Silverstein cites Cicero’s combination of *metus* and *avaritia* as inhibitors of truth and justice.[45] Richard Newhauser has pointed to Augustine’s metaphor of *avaritia vitae* (‘the avarice of desire for life’), a reading that fits well with Bertilak’s analysis that Gawain did it ‘for ȝe lufed your lyf’ (2368). Its richness for Gawain at the moment of taking is indeed metaphorical: ‘Hit were a juel for the jopardé þat hym iugged were’ (1856). Perhaps Gawain also has in mind a more general understanding of cowardice and covetousness as linked vices because they each corrupt the right end of knightly service: if cowardice makes a knight afraid to uphold the right, covetousness makes him bold to act against it. Just as knights traditionally accuse clerks of cowardice, clerks traditionally accuse

45 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. T. Silverstein, pp. 12–13.

knights of a covetousness that vitiates their prowess.[46] All the authorities agree that covetousness can never inspire true courage, at best rash daring, the other extremity from cowardice in the Aristotelian system. Aristotle doubts the endurance of mercenary soldiers (III. 8, 2); he and Aquinas link true courage to benign civic or spiritual ends; Ambrose, in his *Offices*, says that 'courage of spirit has no interest whatever in money, and it runs from greed as a deadly disease that weakens the fibre of virtue. For the truth is, there is nothing which runs so contrary to courage as to be overcome by a desire for gain.'[47] Gawain's refusal of the ring and, initially, the girdle shows a similar awareness of mercenary reward as a distraction from his higher goal: 'And he nay þat he nolde neghe in no wyse / Nauþer golde ne garysoun, er God hym grace sende / To acheue to þe chaunce þat he hade chosen þere' (1836–8). And yet he gives in at the very end. Ambrose illustrates his doctrine with a military exemplum, found in Tacitus and Polybius, of soldiers who have all but won a battle, but are overrun and defeated at the last minute when they pause to take plunder (I, 231). Gawain, although confessedly guilty of both covetousness and cowardice, experiences these failings in the more forgivable reverse order, so offends less. Neither does he properly fit John Wyclif's description of a covetousness that is a 'cowardise of richesse': 'For many men þat have richessis dare neiþer seie a soþ, ne defende a soþ seid, for drede of losing þis richesse. And so men loven richesse more þan þei loven treuþe of þer God.'[48] This is the worst kind of cowardice, says Wyclif, because it is less natural to fear for 'goodis of fortune' than for 'goodis of kynde' – one's own body (I, 372). But Gawain did not love riches more than truth for their own sake. He loved his bodily life – Wyclif's 'goodis of kinde', Aristotle's 'greatest goods' (III. 9) – more than truth. It was bodily fear of the axe that made him covetous, to over–value, take and keep the girdle he should have either refused or given up. His fear became cowardice only when it caused him to abandon the right, and so become both ungenerous and disloyal in conduct.

Gawain's association of his fault with disloyalty and ungenerousness helps to explain why chivalric cowardice is often not just a physical weakness, but the mark of a generally malign character with an agenda of hostility to the good. The examples of Mark and Meleagant in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* provide interesting material for reflection. These strikingly disloyal and covetous cowards stand out because Malory's normal representation of knightly fear is reticent and managed with considerable tact. Most instances of the 'fear'-group in the *Morte* occur in conversation, and nearly all of those are either statements that the speaker will *not* be afraid, or statements of the kind of fear Aristotle says a brave man should have – of shame, harm to

46 E.g., *Thomas Hoccleve. The Regiment of Princes*, ed. C. R. Blyth (Kalamazoo, 1999), ll. 5216–22.
47 Ambrose, *De Officiis*, ed. and trans. I. J. Davidson, 2 vols. (Oxford, 2001), I, 231.
48 J. Wyclif, *Select English Works*, ed. T. Arnold, 2 vols. (Oxford 1879), I, 372.

others, promise-breaking, and treachery.[49] Knights do not *say* to each other that they have physical fear from a natural cause, because courage and knighthood go together, so the suggestion that fear influenced action would mean a class exile:[50] the words for 'coward' and 'cowherd' are used quite interchangeably in Malory. Most uses of 'coward'-words and of the 'recreant/recrayde'-group occur in speech: denials, pre-fight sledging (I, 213), friendly inciting of comrades (II, 741), or false accusations that are refuted by deeds. True cowardice in British knights is rarely instanced: Mark, Meleagant, Brewnys and a few others are mentioned. Of references in the *Morte*'s general narrative to actions taken out of fear, most do not refer to British knights: a giant; a woman; churls; herdsmen (II, 500); torturers; the Roman ambassadors (I, 185–6); unnamed soldiers running from a siege (I, 243). The 'false' coward King Mark is afraid, of course, but contrasted with him is Sir Blamour of the Maryse, who surrenders to Gawain at the last 'for feare of dethe' after fighting bravely and first saying that 'I take no force . . . whether I lyve othir dey' (I, 106–7). His yielding is required by the narrative to underline the necessity for Gawain to give mercy. No one expects him to match the standards of a Vivien or a Guillaume.

The repeated chivalric injunction to give 'mercy' to a defeated opponent indicates in itself that knights would rather live than die, and so are often prepared to say what Malory calls 'the lothe word' (I, 410). They must ask for, or at least accept, mercy if it is to be given, but those who ask too volubly – Mark, Meleagant, King Ryence – cut sorry figures. Those most worthy of mercy are those most reluctant to ask for it, like Blamour (I, 410) or Bellyaunce (I, 450–1). There are notable instances where the bravest knights would rather die than admit defeat, and much resolution not to be recreant, but in the end no one is blamed too much for yielding if they have first fought properly. Modern studies of soldiers in World War II suggest something similar, that those who made a reasonable effort to carry out their duties were not considered cowards, even if they exhibited fear. Only those who made no effort to master the fear and continue were treated as cowards. The measure was not ideal bravery, but a practical willingness to accept the communal burden of danger.[51] To be a coward meant to be without this willingness, to lack courage in its moral aspects of the generosity and loyalty 'necessary to sustain a household and a community' or a military expedition, or to be a good friend, which Alasdair Macintyre describes as a requisite of heroic societies.[52]

Malory develops the issue further in several places with proverbial comments linking cowardice and anti-social behaviour generally: ' "a good

49 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, III, 6: 'for to fear some things is even right and noble, and it is base not to fear them – e.g. disgrace; he who fears this is good and modest, and he who does not is shameless'.
50 See Macintyre, *After Virtue*, pp. 122–3.
51 S. J. Rachman, *Fear and Courage*, 2nd edn (New York, 1990), p. 298 and n. 14.
52 Macintyre, *After Virtue*, pp. 122–3, 166.

man ys never in daungere but whan he ys in the daungere of a cowhard" ' (III, 1126). Arthur makes a significant late speech:

> and he that ys of no worshyp and medelyth with cowardise never shall he shew jantilnes nor no maner of goodnes where he seeth a man in daungere, for than woll a cowarde never shew mercy. And all-wayes a good man woll do ever to another man as he wolde be done to hymselff. (III, 1114).

The coward, lacking fellowship with other knights, can never forgo an advantage or put himself sympathetically into the position of the defeated, and is therefore prone to harshness as well as to seeking advantage by 'treason'. So we see Meleagant, to whom Lancelot is unwilling to show mercy, enticed into continuing a trial by combat only by the offer of an extreme advantage (III, 139–40). The possible stigma for Lancelot in not offering mercy is comically displaced on to Meleagant through his coward's eagerness to accept the unequal arrangement: Lancelot offers to fight one-handed and with no armour on the head or left side. Yet when Mador de la Porte, who has also asked for mercy, is defeated in trial by combat, it seems appropriate for him to be spared because he has first fought bravely (II, 1057–8). 'Mercy' is part of the Arthurian code (I, 120), but also something begotten out of respect for bravery, as proven in a fight, because such bravery is a sign that the present opponent has the capacity to be a loyal friend.

King Mark is Malory's prime example of a complete coward, who deliberately falls off his horse 'as a sak' and throws his arms away to avoid combat with Lancelot (II, 593–4). He seems to be Aristotle's habitual and shameless coward, whose whole intention is perverted, but that alone would not explain why the text associates such cowardice with acts of extreme malice. We find the phrases 'falsely and cowardly', 'shamefully . . . and cowardly', 'traytourly and cowardly', 'unhappyly and cowardly' repeatedly used of him and others.[53] In that respect, Malory's idea of cowardice looks like what modern studies of military courage identify as a failure in altruism, where soldiers can never accept risk to themselves on others' account, though they will sometimes use considerable energy and even put themselves at greater risk so as to avoid *sharing* danger with others:

> . . . this type of cowardice is not a lapse of practical reasoning in the face of a sudden emotional distraction, as . . . [Plato's] view would depict cowardice, but rather it is uniform and consistent practical reasoning based on an unusually egoistic premise. . . . The failure here . . . is a deficiency of love, an inability to participate in the lives of others.[54]

53 *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, II, 637; III, 1129; II, 582; I, 300.

54 D. N. Walton, *Courage: A Philosophical Investigation* (Berkeley, 1986), p. 103, with reference to J. G. Gray, *The Warriors. Reflections on Men in Battle* (New York, 1967). He distinguishes such cowardice from the type simply due to 'excessive fear', for which see J. D. Wallace, *Virtues and Vices* (Ithaca, 1978).

This twentieth-century writer is thinking of the bond that should exist between fellow combatants, but we can also apply his idea to the bond that ideally exists between all Malory's 'good knights', not least when they are fighting against each other. A coward is a 'distroyer' of good knights in a greater sense than the merely physical one (II, 687), because he cannot love another knight's good. Not all the *Morte*'s traitors are cowards – Accolon and Mordred are brave fighters – but all the cowards are traitors. For Malory it is the principal characteristic of cowardice. The very active Brewnys Saunz Pité, who to modern eyes looks more like a dirty fighter and brigand than a particularly fearful man, is still called ' "the most traytour knyght *and the moste coward* and moste of vylany" ' (II, 685).[55] Lacking 'larges and lewté', and filled with envy, lust and avarice, such men cannot conduct themselves honourably through fighting any more than in other social relations, for example in the treatment of women. To a greater extent than in Aristotle, they cannot be worthy at all.

One might read that as simply a further level of chivalric essentialism, an ancillary moral commentary generated by the text's dominant militarism, unable to concede that a coward in battle could be 'good' in any way, and also offering a political motivation for the otherwise questionable actions of the heroes Tristram and Lancelot towards Mark and Meleagant. In Malory's French sources, we might remember, Artu's slackness in not helping Lancelot recover his lost lands from King Claudas similarly helps to excuse the liaison with Guenevere. Yet in effect, Malory's distinction of a malevolent cowardly few from all other knights consistently emphasizes cowardice as a suite of positive evils rather than a sheer deficiency in one quality. When the *Morte* deals with a hint of weak courage in a character of known good will, Sir Dynadan, the whole approach is different – tolerant, subtle and amused – because to Malory a man who is loyal to the good cannot be a coward, even if he obviously lacks Tristram's appetite for a fight. The discourse of masculine honour and shame is promulgated widely in the *Morte*, and polices the essential requirement of courage in the 'good knight', but the narrative treatment of cowardice takes the reader beyond simple gender shame into a more developed realm of morality, even if Malory lacks the special clarity of moral analysis we find in the *Gawain*-poet.

It suited aristocratic and gentry purposes to affirm that military courage was something in the blood, essential and incarnate in the knightly body. But the medieval determinants and associations of courage were too varied for that ideology to be realized perfectly throughout the contingencies of long romances. Literature, by its own nature, could not fulfil *Ipomedon*'s demand to show prowess 'otherwise than in words', and the words it used had affinities with religion, moral philosophy and military experience that qualified, complicated and redefined the meaning of prowess, or its lack, within

55 *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, II, 685. Brewnys, incognito, is convincingly describing himself.

varied narrative situations. Viewed ideally and essentially, chivalric cowardice always remains a simple gender shame that only battle deeds can disprove, but to do justice to its meaning in texts like *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Le Morte Darthur* demands a more careful look at the narrative performance.

II

MALORY'S FORTY KNIGHTS

P. J. C. Field

The Rebellion of the Kings episode in the first tale of Malory's *Morte Darthur* contains a contradiction. King Arthur and his allies King Ban and King Bors are fighting a battle in which their enemies retreat across a river and prepare to make a stand. The Winchester manuscript then says:

> So furthwith there dressed a fourty knyghtes, and seyde unto the thre kynges they wolde breke theire [i.e., Arthur's enemies'] batayle, and thes were theire namys: Lyonses, Phariaunce, Ulphuns, Brascias, Ector, Kayus, Lucas de Butler, Grysflet la Fyse de Deu, Marrys de la Roche, Gwynas de Bloy, Bryaunte de la Foreyste Saveage, Bellaus, Morians of the Castel Maydyns, Flaundreus of the Castel of Ladyes, Annecians that was Kynge Bors godson, a noble knyght, and Ladinas de la Rouse, Emerause, Caulas, Graciens le Castilion, Bloyse de la Case and Sir Colgrevaunce de Goore.[1]

The Caxton text is essentially identical.[2] The problem with this passage is that 'thes were theire namys' implies that all the forty knights are going to be named, but we are only given 21 names.

Nearly all editors of Malory simply reproduce their base text, Winchester or Caxton as the case may be.[3] Eugène Vinaver was the first editor to comment, and the only one to emend. He thought that a scribe must have misread the roman numeral *xxi* as *xl*,[4] and emended *W*'s *fourty* to *twenty-one*, a reading that I varied to *one-and-twenty* when I revised his great edition.

1 London, British Library, MS Add. 59678, fols. 14v–15r (modernized punctuation). Facsimile: *The Winchester Malory*, ed. N. R. Ker, EETS SS 4 (Oxford, 1976). The passage appears in Sir Thomas Malory, *The Works*, ed. E. Vinaver, 3 vols., 3rd edn, rev. P. J. C. Field (Oxford, 1990), at p. 36.3–12. I am obliged to the British Academy for financial support that made it possible to deliver a version of this essay at the Kalamazoo Medieval Congress in 2004, and I am grateful to my audience there for helpful comments.

2 *Morte Darthur*, ed. William Caxton (1485), Book I, chap. xvii.

3 So, for instance, Sir Edward Strachey (London, 1868), H. O. Sommer (London, 1889–91), F. J. Simmons (London, 1906), J. Cowen (Harmondsworth, 1969), J. Spisak (Berkeley, 1983), and S. Shepherd (New York, 2004). H. Cooper's abridged Oxford World's Classics edition (Oxford, 1998) omits the passage.

4 Malory, *Works*, p. 36 and apparatus criticus: for my 'must have', see Vinaver's principles of emendation at *Works*, pp. cvii–cviii and cxxi.

Unfortunately, although scribes can do all sorts of surprising things, no common scribal error or combination of common scribal errors would make a scribe substitute *forty* for *twenty-one* in any permutation of words and numerals, roman or arabic. The only other editor to comment was James Spisak, who, after comprehensively misunderstanding Vinaver's argument,[5] suggested that Malory might have taken the number and the names from different places and overlooked the inconsistency. Spisak's editorial work has not been well received,[6] but I shall argue that he was right and Vinaver was wrong.

Many textual cruces in Malory's work can be resolved by close comparison between the surviving texts and his major sources, so the natural place to start looking for a solution is in the major source for the Rebellion of the Kings episode, a thirteenth-century French version of the rebellion story whose status has been the subject of a good deal of scholarly dispute. It is often described as part of the French Post-Vulgate *Suite de Merlin*, but current scholarly opinion seems to hold that would be more accurate to call it a section added to the beginning of the Post-Vulgate *Suite* by a reviser who wanted to created a better transition from the preceding *Merlin* proper to the *Suite*, but had not properly assimilated either of them.[7] For that reason, Gilles Roussineau omitted the rebellion episode from his recent edition of the *Suite*. In the interests of brevity, however, I shall speak of it as if it were part of the *Suite*.

Only one manuscript of the *Suite* is known that contains the rebellion episode, Cambridge University Library MS Add. 7071 (henceforth *D*), although, as we shall see, there is reason to believe that other manuscripts once existed. There are also other surviving texts that do not contain rebellion episode, and a number of fragmentary texts that may or may not have contained it in their original state.[8] In the corresponding passage, *D*, like Malory, specifies a number of knights and gives a list of names containing fewer names than it says there are knights present. Both numbers, however, are different from their counterparts in the *Morte Darthur*: *D* gives 23 names, then says that 35 knights come forward to attack Arthur's enemies:

> Atant es vus le roi Arthur e li roi Ban e le roi Boorz e Lionce e Pharien e Ulfin e Kex e Hector son pere e Lucan e Girflet e Maret de la Roche e Guinas le Bloi e

5 Spisak thought Vinaver was saying that the misreading had taken place in *C*'s exemplar, whereas Vinaver's whole practice implies that an error common to both texts must be assumed to have taken place in the archetype: *Caxton's Malory*, ed. J. Spisak, 2 vols. (Berkeley, 1983), 638, note to p. 51.1.

6 T. Takamiya, 'Caxton's Malory Re-edited', *Poetica* 21–2 (1985), 48–70.

7 R. H. Wilson, 'The Rebellion of the Kings in Malory and in the Cambridge *Suite du Merlin*', *University of Texas Studies in English* 31 (1952), 13–26), opposed by F. Bogdanow, 'The Rebellion of the Kings in the Cambridge MS. of the *Suite du Merlin*', *UTSE* 34 (1955), 6–17, re-argued by Wilson, 'The Cambridge *Suite de Merlin* Re-examined,' *UTSE* 36 (1957), 41–51, opposed by Vinaver, *Works*, 1967, '73, and accepted by G. Roussineau (ed.), *Le Suite du roman de Merlin*, 2 vols. (Geneva, 1996), i, pp. xli–li.

8 See F. Bogdanow, 'The Vulgate Cycle and the Post-Vulgate *Roman du Graal*', *A Companion to the Lancelot-Grail Cycle*, ed. C. Dover (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 33–51.

> Driant de la Foreste Sauvage e Belians l'Amoreus du chastel es Puceles e Flaundrins du chastel as Dames, e apres vint Anciaumes, du chastel de Benoic seneschaus, e Blariz li filiol au roi Boorz a tote la grant enseigne, e Ladinas le Rous e Mares e Taullas e Graciens li chastelains de Trebe e li Blois de la Case e Calogrenanz de Gorre[9] e tant que trente cinc furent qui se mistrent devant trestuz les autres. (D f. 223d, modernized punctuation)

D's list of names, as Vinaver pointed out,[10] is based on one in the Vulgate *Suite de Merlin*,[11] the text from which the Post-Vulgate Rebellion of the Kings episode was taken. The Vulgate list, however, does not come from its account of the rebellion of the kings, but from one of Arthur's later wars, when he has defeated the rebellious kings and taken a band of knights to the court of King Leodegan, father of Arthur's future queen, Guenevere, to support Leodegan in a war against King Rion. This passage in the Vulgate *Suite* also specifies the number of knights present and gives a list of names, and here too the supposed number present is different from the number of names in the list. Moreover, neither Vulgate number is the same as its counterpart in Malory or in the Post-Vulgate *Suite*.

The three texts raise some difficult problems, but if they are considered in chronological order at least some of those problems can be solved.[12] Different texts of the Vulgate *Suite* give slightly different versions of the list, but we may begin with the text of the English Prose *Merlin*, a fifteenth-century translation of the French Vulgate so close to its original that it is possible to assign its text to a sub-family in the textual pedigree of the French romance.[13] The English text says with careful precision about Arthur's party:

> the story seith that with Arthur were forty, and hymself and Merlin made forty-two.[14]

A little later it speaks of 'the forty-two fellows' and promptly lists them, with numbers against each name. The list, however, contains 43 names:[15]

> 1. Kynge Ban of Benoyk, 2. Kynge Boors of Gannes, 3. Kynge Arthur, 4. Antor, 5. Ulfin, 6. Bretell, 7. Kay, 8. Lucas the Botiller, 9. Gifflet, 10. Maret de la Roche, 11. Drias de la Forest Savage, 12. Belias de Amerous of Maydons

9 Vinaver's *Goire* (*O*[3], Commentary, p. 1294, note to 35.35–36.24), misreads a 2–shaped *-r-* as *-i-*. R. Gilpin reads *Gorre*: 'The Rebellion Portion of the *Suite de Merlin* from the Cambridge Manuscript: An Edition', M.A. diss. (Manchester, 1951), p. 77.

10 Commentary, p. 1294.

11 See *The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances*, ed. H. O. Sommer, ii, 148. Wilson argued (1952, 24) that borrowing this passage from the war with Rions later in the Vulgate *Suite* shows the reviser of *Suite* had a predilection for adding to fighting in his narrative, and that he already had it in mind to shorten his account of the war with Rions, so he knew there would be no danger of repetition.

12 It may be more convenient to follow this argument from the version of the three lists printed in parallel in the Appendix below.

13 See A. Micha, 'Les manuscrits du *Merlin* en prose de Robert de Boron', *Romania* 79 (1958), 78–94, 145–74.

14 *Prose Merlin*, ed. J. Conlee (Kalamazoo, 1998), p. 137.

15 *Prose Merlin*, ed. Conlee, pp. 147–8.

Castell, 13. Flaundryns le Bret, 14. Ladynas de Benoyk, 15. Amoret le Brun, 16. Anticolas le Rous, 17. Blois del Casset, 18. Blioberis, 19. Canade, 20. Meliadus le Bloys, 21. Aladan the Crespes, 22. Placidas ly Gays, 23. Leonpadys of the Playn, 24. Jerohas Lenches, 25. Christopher de la Roche Byse, 26. Ayglin de Vaus, 27. Calogrevaunt, 28. Aguysale de Desirouse, 29. Agresiaux the nevew of the Wise Lady of the Forest without Returne, 30. Chalis the Orpheyn, 31. Grires de Lambal, 32. Kehedin de Belly, 33. Meranges de Porlenges, 34. Gosnayus Cadrus, 35. Clarias of Gaule, 36. the Lays Hardy, 37. Amadius the Proude, 38. Osenayn Cors Hardy, 39. Galescowde, 40. Gales, 41. Bleoris the sone of Kynge Boors, 42. Merlin, 43. Kynge Leodegan

This numerical discrepancy at least is easily explained. The last name in the list has been added in error: Leodegan is Arthur's host, not one of his retainers. At least one French scribe noticed the numerical discrepancy and tried to solve it. He cut a name and renumbered, so giving the requisite 42 knights, but unfortunately the name he cut was not Leodegan but an obscure name from the middle of the list, Grires de Lambal (no. 31).[16]

A good many of the other names in the Vulgate *Suite* are obscure too, particularly those towards the end. It looks as if the author had decided on the number of knights required to make up the military entourage of a great king, then set about supplying the appropriate number of plausible Arthurian names, but found it increasingly difficult.

When the reviser of the Post-Vulgate *Suite* was composing his new transitional episode he too must have felt that it was desirable to give a list of knights fighting for Arthur, and decided to base it on the list later in the Vulgate. His story was so different from the Vulgate one that he did not need the same number of knights, and he certainly did not need to keep all the Vulgate names. He decided to make a new list by combining some familiar names from the Vulgate list with others from his own story. All the identifiably Post-Vulgate names in the list in *D* appear in a description of Arthur's forces earlier in the Rebellion of the Kings episode (*D* fol. 218r–v). That accounts for eight of the names in *D*:[17] fifteen others appear in the Vulgate list.[18] Three other names from the Vulgate list can be shown to have in the Post-Vulgate list in its original form, but have been lost by scribal error. The presence of *Bretell* (Vulgate 6) in Malory as *Brascias* (Malory's regular equivalent), shows that Bretell must originally have appeared in the Post-Vulgate episode, presumably between Ulphin and Kex, as in the Vulgate; and *Ladinas le Rous* (Post-Vulgate 18) is clearly the result of an

16 *Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, ed. N. J. Lacy, 5 vols. (New York, 1993–6), 237b, translating *The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances*, ed. H. O. Sommer, 8 vols. (Washington, 1908–16), vol. 2, p. 148 , which is based on London, British Library, Add. MS 10292.

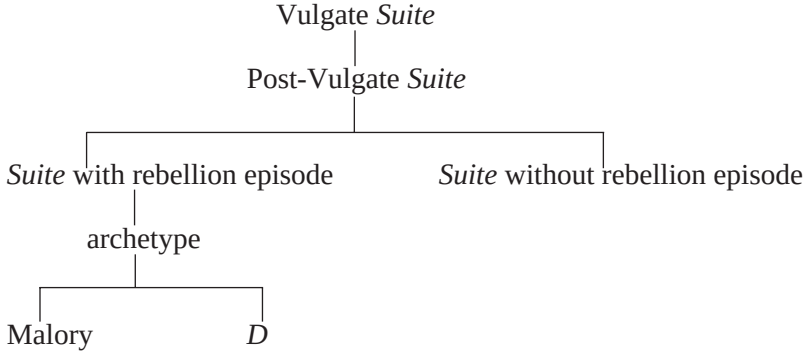
17 Lionces (PV 4), Pharien (5), Guinas le Bloi (12), Anciaumes (16), Blariz (17), Mares (19), Taulas (20), Grasciens (21).

18 Arthur (Vulg 3), Ban (1), Bors (2), Ulfin (6), Kex (7), Hector (4), Lucan (8), Girflet (9), Maret (10), Driant (11), Belians (12), Flaundrins (13), Ladinas (14–16), Blois de la Case (17), Calogrenanz de Gorre (27).

eye-skip from the Vulgate list's *Ladynas* (14) to *Anticolas le Rous* (16). Any edition of *D* should reverse those errors, which would give it a list of 26 names.

D, however, does not say there were 26 knights in the band that fought for Arthur: it says that there were 35. If that is correct, and there is no reason to doubt it, nine names have somehow been lost. It may be possible to identify them. The last two characters in the Post-Vulgate (PV 22–3) are clearly those who appear in the Vulgate as 17 and 27, and the number of names between 17 and 27 is nine. If Vulgate names 18–26 are inserted between *D*'s names 22 and 23, *D* has the 35 names it claims to have. If there were a clear palaeographical reason (say) for a scribe's eye skipping from the end of *Casset* to that of *Vaus*, or from the beginning of *Blioberis* to the beginning of *Calogrenant*, this hypothesis would be very strong. Unfortunately, no such reason is apparent. Nevertheless, since no other suggestion has been put forward to reconcile the discrepant numbers in the Post-Vulgate texts, I suggest that this suggestion should be accepted as a working hypothesis until such time as a better one appears. That, among other things, would mean that any edition of *D* should emend to include these nine names.

That hypothesis can be tested by seeing how it fits in with the simplest theory that explains all the evidence. One way of restating that theory is as the accompanying stemma:



The totality of the evidence can be explained if we assume that the reviser who added the Rebellion of the Kings episode to the Post-Vulgate *Suite* combined his two lists in the way described above, but when he got to the relatively well-known name of Calogrenant of Gorre decided that he had enough names, counted the names he had written, and wrote (correctly) that there were 35 knights. The later scribe who copied what became the archetype of *D* and Malory's manuscript accidentally reduced Ladinas, Amoret and Anticolas to a single person in the way described and omitted the nine names from just before the end of the list. That gave him 24 names, but because his omissions were unconscious, he reproduced his exemplar's assertion that there were 35 knights. Later still, the scribe of *D* accidentally omitted Bretell,

reducing the number of names to 23, but did not check the number either, so he also reproduced the assertion that there were 35 knights.

It is worth adding that the assumption that the French archetype omitted the nine names between Blois and Calogrenant is plausible not only because it is the most economical assumption for the absence of the nine names from both *D* and Malory, but also because it is particularly unlikely that Malory would have omitted the names of any Arthurian knights that his source gave him, even if that source had not given him a total number to achieve. There were few things Malory liked more than lists of knights, especially Arthur's knights. The climax of his seventh tale is the lovingly annotated list of the 110 knights who try to heal Sir Urry, but there are many other lists of knights scattered throughout his book, of participants in tournaments and elsewhere. He did apparently omit one small group of names from the list we are considering: he took the three kings who begin the list in *D* out of his list, but not out of his episode, turning them into the commanders whom the knights in the list serve and whom they want to impress. That may have been a touch of politico-military realism, of which there are other signs in Malory's tale.[19] That omission is a special case that does not undermine the general principle that Malory would have been most reluctant to omit the names of any Arthurian knights that he found in his source.

Consideration of the three Arthurian texts in order, then, suggests that Malory's source-manuscript gave him a list of 24 names (those in *D* plus Bretell), followed by an assertion that there were 35 knights in the group. He took out the first three names as described above, and made two other changes, apparently by accident, which for our present purposes cancel each other out: he increased the number of knights by one by splitting Belians l'Amoreus du chastel as Puceles (PV 14) into two characters, Bellaus and Morians of the Castel Maydyns, and reduced it by one by omitting both Annecians's descriptive appellation and the following name, Blariz (PV 16–17). That left him with 21 named knights. He did not, however, say that the assault group contained 21 knights, or 32 (i.e., 35 minus the three he knew he had taken out), or 35: he said there were 40. We seem to be no nearer to an answer to the question of why he should have given that particular number, when it was not in his source, and when it is unlikely to have been produced by the error-process Vinaver suggested.

An answer of a sort, however, may be discoverable, if we look again at the Vulgate *Suite*. During the past thirty years, it has become apparent that the Vulgate *Suite* should be included in the growing list of Malory's minor sources. His major sources have been well known for generations: almost the last substantial discovery was Robert H. Wilson's demonstration in 1932 that

[19] Cf. R. L. Kelly, 'Malory's "Tale of King Arthur" and the Political Geography of Fifteenth-Century England', *Reviewing 'Le Morte Darthur': Texts and Contexts, Characters and Themes*, ed. K. S. Whetter and R. L. Radulescu (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 79–93.

an episode in the third tale in the *Morte Darthur* was based on the *Perlesvaus*.[20] Since then, however, it has become increasingly clear that Malory knew many Arthurian romances apart from those he used as major sources, and that he frequently supplemented his major sources with proper names or small narrative details from those other romances.[21]

Malory's story of the Grail Quest, for instance, follows his major source, the Vulgate *Queste del Saint Graal*, very closely, at times even verbatim, and he expresses enthusiastic admiration for it in his closing words. Nevertheless, he supplements its narrative with details from two alternative Grail romances. The first of these was the special version of the Vulgate *Queste* made for the Prose *Tristan* by alternating episodes from the Vulgate *Queste* with newly invented episodes involving characters from the *Tristan*: the second was the Post-Vulgate Grail Quest, which uses characters from both the Vulgate and the *Tristan* Grail Quests. Malory drew on the *Tristan* Grail Quest for his assertion that Aggravayne and Morded kill Dynadan during the Grail Quest, an event of which there is of course no hint in the Vulgate *Queste*, since Dinadan and the romance he appears in were not invented until after the Vulgate cycle had been completed.[22] Similarly, Malory drew on the Post-Vulgate Grail Quest for his story of the baptism of Sir Palomydes, in the final section of his 'Tale of Sir Tristram'. There he set aside the final events of what he calls 'the second book' of the Prose *Tristan* (except for its very last words) and replaced them with an account of the baptism of Palomydes.[23] His new episode, of course, was not based on anything in the Vulgate cycle, because, as a *Tristan* character, the French Palamède does not appear anywhere in the Vulgate either. Nor is the new episode based on the Tristan-*Queste*, which Malory calls 'the third book of Sir Tristram', which has a very different account of the baptism of Palamède, which takes place at Camelot late in the Grail Quest at the request of Arthur and his court.[24] The episode that Malory used occurs in the Post-Vulgate *Queste*, where Galahaz (= Galahad), a very different figure from his Vulgate namesake, becomes extremely resentful towards Palamède for wounding one of his friends ('*cestui het il de trop mortel haine*'), meets him while questing, disarms him in single combat and compels him to receive baptism.[25]

20 R. H. Wilson, 'Malory and the *Perlesvaus*', *Modern Philology* 30 (1932), 13–22.

21 See, for instance, R. H. Wilson, 'Malory's Early Knowledge of Arthurian Romance', *University of Texas Studies in English* 29 (1950), 33–50; and P. J. C. Field, 'Malory's Sir Phelot and the Problems of Minor Sources', *Bibliographical Bulletin of the International Arthurian Society* 54 (2002), 345–61. For a recent comprehensive account of the minor sources, see R. Norris, 'Malory's Minor Sources', Ph.D. thesis, University of Wales Bangor, 2005.

22 *Works*, p. 615.6: cf. E. Löseth, *Le roman de Tristan en prose, le roman de Palamède, et la compilation de Rusticien de Pise, analyse critique d'apres les manuscrits de Paris*, Bibliothèque de l'école des hautes études, fasc. 82 (Paris, 1891), § 612.

23 *Works*, pp. 841.34–845.21–6.

24 Löseth, § 560, cf. §§ 389, 293a.

25 *La Version Post-Vulgate de la Queste del Saint Graal et de la Mort Artu*, ed. F. Bogdanow. 4 vols. in 5 (Paris, 1991–2001), § 550–67.

The similarities between this episode and Malory's extend well beyond the outline just given. The French episode opens by developing a strong contrast between Palamède's paganism and his father's Christianity: at the beginning of Malory's episode, one of his characters contrasts Palomides with his brother Saphir, who has become a Christian. Both the French Palamède and his English counterpart have taken vows that prevent them from receiving baptism, although the timing and circumstances of their vows are very different. Both defeat another Knight of the Round Table (Gauvain and Galleron respectively) in combat before the battle against their main opponents, although again in very different circumstances. Galahaz and Malory's Tristram both unhorse their adversaries at the first pass, then dismount and tie their horses to trees before continuing the battle on foot. When the battle is over, both romances say that the combatants have only a short distance to travel to the place when the baptism is performed, in both cases in a ceremony involving a bishop, although only Malory names the bishop's see. And finally, the very last event in the narrative of this final section of 'The Tale of Sir Tristram', Sir Palomides's departure to pursue the Questing Beast, has no counterpart in the Prose *Tristan* but corresponds to the final episode of this section of the Post-Vulgate *Queste*, in which Palamède finally hunts down and kills the Beste Glatissant.[26]

Just as Malory took his Grail-story from the Vulgate Cycle and supplemented it from the Post-Vulgate Cycle and elsewhere, so he seems to have taken his story of the early years of Arthur's reign from the Post-Vulgate Cycle and supplemented it from the Vulgate Cycle and elsewhere. It has already been shown that the Vulgate *Suite de Merlin* was among Malory's sources for other parts of his story: it seems to have influenced several passages in his Roman War story,[27] what he said about Launcelot's christening in his 'Tale of Sir Tristram',[28] his account of the origins of the Queen's Knights in the story of the abduction of Guenevere,[29] and perhaps other passages too.[30]

If Malory knew the Vulgate *Suite* well, the Post-Vulgate list could easily have brought the Vulgate list to his mind: most of the names in the one, after all, appear in the other. In the Vulgate *Suite*, the knights named in the list appear frequently as a group in the later part of the story and play an important part in the narrative as a group. They are frequently spoken of collectively, and in ways that involve the precise and consistent use of numbers across many pages, a feature that is the more memorable because it is very unusual in romance. The actual number specified is frequently 41, 42, or even 43, but

26 *Works*, p. 845.26, Bogdanow, §§ 581–5.

27 W. Matthews, 'Who Revised the Roman War Episode in Malory's *Morte Darthur*?', *Arthuriana* 5.2 (1995), 31–73.

28 *Works*, p. 796.28–34; cf. *The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances*, ed. Sommer, vol. 2, p. 465.

29 P. J. C. Field, 'Fifteenth-Century History in Malory's *Morte Darthur*', *Malory: Texts and Sources* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 47–71, at p. 63.

30 Compare, for instance, the Round Table oath in Malory (*Works*, p. 120.15–27) with that in the Vulgate *Suite* (Conlee, pp. 267–8).

readers could (and, as we shall see, did) think of the group as 40, whether by approximation or because the group includes some characters who ought to be discounted: Arthur because it might be thought that the leader of a group cannot simultaneously be a member of it, Merlin because he is not a knight, and Leodegan because as a royal ally of Arthur's his membership of the group, if it exists, must be temporary. Whatever the cause, the group comes to be spoken of increasingly often over the course of the Vulgate *Suite* as The Forty Knights.

We have already seen one example of discounting of marginal members of the group in the passage in the Middle English translation of the Vulgate *Suite* describing Arthur's first appearance at 'Tamelide' (Malory's Camylarde) to rescue Leodegan, when he arrives with forty companions and Merlin, which together 'made forty-two' (137.20).[31] Again at the beginning of the battle, the company 'were forty-one withoute Merlin that bar the baner' (141.116). Later in the same incident they are the 'forty-two felowes' (nine occasions: 142.131, 142.146, 142.154, 144.199, 145.234, 145.238, 146.250, 147.274, 147.281) or 'the forty-two sowdioures' (150.362); although occasionally they become the 'forty-one felowes' when Merlin is specifically excluded (146.271, 152.418–19), and on another occasion 'forty-three worthi knyghtes' because King Leodegan has joined them (148.306). Later in the story, however (e.g., at 214.235) the group is referred to in a more approximate way. The romance begins to speak of 'the Forty Felowes' (155.499, 197.245, 217.23), 'the Forty Sowdiours' (247.123), 'the Forty Knyghtes' (216.9, 246.105, 247.131), the forty knights 'that the storye hath rehersed' (190.58), or of the three kings 'and her forty felowes' (192.103) – despite the fact that the forty should include the three. That is 25 references in an edition of only part of the Vulgate *Suite*.

In the light of this, I suggest that Malory's number 40 is best explained as a reference to the group of Arthur's knight-companions who feature in the Vulgate *Suite*, as a recollection either of the actual number of companions Arthur is given in the Vulgate list, minus certain exclusions, or of the phrase that it uses so frequently towards the end of the story that the phrase takes on something of the status of a name.

If I am right, it follows that we should add one more to the growing number of occasions on which Malory apparently used the Vulgate *Suite de Merlin* as a minor source.

What, however, should editors of Malory do about the textual self-contradiction involved? I suggest that Spisak is right not only in his explanation of the origins of this reading, but in his decision on how to deal with it.

When an author makes a mistake against what are can be shown to be his intentions we may be justified in emending. A clear example of this kind of error is spelling mistakes that are impossible by the norms of the language

31 Parenthetic references are to Conlee's edition.

being used. With ancient authors, whose texts may only survive in manuscripts written centuries after the author died, it is easy to assume that mistakes like that are only made by scribes, but modern textual criticism reminds us that authors too make spelling mistakes, and the editorial process needs to deal with them. If we knew, for instance, that Malory rather than the Winchester scribe had written the repeated impossible *overthawrte* in the Winchester manuscript version of the Pelleas and Ettarde episode in the *Morte Darthur*, we ought still to emend that impossible form to a linguistically possible one, presumably to the Winchester scribes' normal *overthwarte*.[32]

The number forty in the two Malory texts, however, is not like that. We cannot emend it because we do not know what to emend it to. We cannot show that Malory intended – in any sense of that word – a specific number other than 40, whether 21 or 35 or another. Nor can we suggest, as we might with some of the apparent arithmetical errors elsewhere in the *Morte Darthur*, that he intended a non-specific number like 'the number that these names add up to' and that his efforts to get the arithmetic of his story right imply that he would have preferred that number to the inaccurate one he actually wrote down. In this case, the evidence of the Vulgate *Suite* suggests that Malory positively intended the number 40. It might be suggested that the text could be made consistent by supplying 19 suitable names that Malory could be said to have wanted, implicitly if not explicitly.[33] As we have seen, however, whereas with the Post-Vulgate list in *D*, we can restore three lost names with certainty, and nine others with a degree of probability, with Malory we cannot identify a single missing name with any confidence. So editors of Malory's book can do no more than explain Malory's contradiction to their readers, and those readers will have to live with the contradiction, leaving more drastic change to creative writers, who in every age have the prerogative of trying to retell the Arthurian story as it ought to have been.

[32] *Works*, pp. 170.31, 171.8. Malory's dialect and spelling system were probably similar to those of the Winchester scribes: see A. McIntosh, review of W. Matthews, *The Ill-Framed Knight*, in *Medium Ævum* 37 (1968), 346–8. The fact that any linguistic differences that there may have been between author and scribes are unknown and probably undiscoverable means that editors must treat Winchester's orthographic norms by default as Malory's.

[33] The Vulgate list, if he had access to it, would have given him 23 names to choose from. Excluding Arthur, Ban, Bors, Merlin and Leodegan at the end, he could have taken 19 of Vulg 18–26 and 28–41.

APPENDIX:
ARTHUR'S 'FORTY KNIGHTS' IN MALORY AND HIS SOURCES

MALORY	POST-VULGATE SUITE	VULGATE SUITE
	1 le roi Arthur	1 Ban of Benoyk
	2 li roi Ban	2 Boors of Gannes
	3 le roi Boorz	3 Arthur
1 Lyonses	4 Lionce	
2 Phariaunce	5 Pharien	4 Antor
3 Ulphuns	6 Ulfin	5 Ulfin
4 Brascias		
5 Ector	7 Kex	6 Bretell
6 Kayus	8 Hector son pere	7 Kay
7 Lucas de Butler	9 Lucan	8 Lucas the Botiller
8 Gryfflet la Fyse de Deu	10 Girflet	9 Gifflet
9 Marrys de la Roche	11 Maret de la Roche	10 Maret de la Roche
10 Gwynas de Bloy	12 Guinas le Bloi	
11 Bryaunte de la Foreyste Saveage	13 Driant de la Foreste Sauvage	11 Drias de la Forest Savage
12 Bellaus	14 Belians l'Amoreus du	12 Belias de Amerous of
13 Morians [= *l'Amoreus*] of the Castel Maydyns	chastel es Puceles	Maydons Castell
14 Flaundreus of the Castel of Ladyes	15 Flaundrins du chastel as Dames	13 Flaundryns le Bret 14 Ladynas de Benoyk
15 Annecians that was Kynge Bors godson [= *li filiol au roi Boorz*]	16 Anciaumes, du chastel de Benoic seneschaus 17 Blariz li filiol au roi Boorz a tote la grant enseigne	15 Amoret le Brun 16 Anticolas le Rous 17 Blois del Casset 18 Blioberis 19 Canade
16 Ladinas de la Rouse	18 Ladinas le Rous	20 Meliadus le Bloys
17 Emerause [= *e Mares*]	19 Mares	21 Aladan the Crespes
18 Caulas	20 Taullas	22 Placidas ly Gays
19 Graciens le Castilion [= *li chastelains*]	21 Graciens li chastelains de Trebe	23 Leonpadys of the Playn 24 Jerohas Lenches
20 Bloyse de la Case	22 li Blois de la Case	25 Christopher de la Roche Byse 26 Ayglin de Vaus
21 Sir Colgrevaunce de Goore	23 Calogrenanz de Gorre	27 Calogrevaunt 28 Aguysale de Desirouse 29 Agresiaux the nevew of the Wise Lady of the Forest without Returne

30 Chalis the Orpheyn
31 Grires de Lambal
32 Kehedin de Belly
33 Meranges de Porlenges
34 Gosnayus Cadrus
35 Clarias of Gaule
36 the Lays Hardy
37 Amadius the Proude
38 Osenayn Cors Hardy
39 Galescowde
40 Gales
41 Bleoris the sone of
Kynge Boors
42 Merlin
43 Kynge Leodegan

III

FOOLING WITH LANGUAGE: SIR DINADAN IN MALORY'S *MORTE DARTHUR*

Joyce Coleman

In *Antecedents of the English Novel, 1400–1600*, Margaret Schlauch hails the 'courtly realism' of Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur* and, in particular, 'the comically realistic Sir Dinadan', whose jokes about his fear of jousting have his listeners laughing so hard they can barely keep their seats.[1] 'Sir Dinadan, the realist' (Elizabeth Edwards),[2] the 'rational moralist' ruled by a 'pragmatic creed' (Donald Hoffman),[3] remains a standard figure of Malorian analysis. Equally standard, however, is the scholarly observation that Dinadan's humorous cowardice never seriously challenges the ideology of knightly worship. This essay will re-examine Dinadan's role in Malory, questioning the alleged innocuousness of his comic counter-ideology. Dinadan making fun of chivalry may not be dangerous, but, I will argue, Dinadan turning language into the medium of foolery and japing is.

Sir Dinadan first appears in the anonymous French romance known as the *Prose Tristan*, written around 1230. In it he acts as Tristan's sidekick, a devoted friend and champion, who revenges Tristan's murder by King Mark. Sometime later, what Eugène Vinaver labeled the 'Second Version' of the *Prose Tristan* transformed Dinadan into a sarcastic critic of knightly manners and customs,[4] one whose 'philosophy of happiness', according to Vinaver, 'spares nothing, questions everything: knightly worship, courtly love,

1 Margaret Schlauch, *Antecedents of the English Novel, 1400–1600* (London, 1963), pp. 75–6.

2 Elizabeth Edwards, *The Genesis of Narrative in Malory's 'Morte Darthur'* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 52.

3 Donald L. Hoffman, 'Dinadan: The Excluded Middle', *Tristania* 10 (1984–5, no. 1–2), 3–16 (pp. 6–7).

4 Eugène Vinaver, *Le Roman de Tristan et Iseut dans l'oeuvre de Thomas Malory* (Paris, 1925), pp. 134–7; Vinaver, *Etudes sur le 'Tristan' en prose: Les sources, les manuscrits, bibliographie critique* (Paris, 1925), pp. 23–34; Vinaver, 'Un chevalier errant à la recherche du sens du monde: Quelques remarques sur le caractère de Dinadan dans le *Tristan* en prose', in *Mélanges de linguistique romane et de philologie médiévale offerts à M. Maurice Delbouille*, 2 vols. (Gembloux, 1964), II, 677–86; Vinaver, 'Commentary', in Sir Thomas Malory, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. Vinaver, 2nd edn, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1967), III, 1281–1663 (p. 1443). More recently, it has been suggested that this text could be classified as the fourth version of the *Prose Tristan* (see Denis Lalande and Thierry Delcourt, 'Introduction', in *Le Roman de Tristan en prose*, vol. 5, ed. Lalande and Delcourt, gen. ed. Philippe Ménard [Geneva, 1992], pp. 13–65 [pp. 16–18]).

Christian belief'.[5] Dinadan in the *Prose Tristan* burlesques established rituals. In one episode, for example, he is riding through a forest when he meets an unknown knight. The *chevalier* accosts him with a standard demand: 'Sir knight, you must joust with me!' The stranger is puzzled by Dinadan's response: 'Sir knight', he says, 'so God give you good adventure, don't you know any other way to greet a knight-errant than to say, "You must joust with me"? So help me God, this greeting is hardly courteous!' The befuddled stranger can only repeat his first question: Will Dinadan joust with him? 'Tell me', says Dinadan, 'this joust that you demand from me, do you seek it for love or for hate?' For love, of course, the stranger says. Well, says Dinadan, 'Go show your love to somebody else, because if that's your idea of love, I'd rather be your enemy.'[6]

Of course, the stranger knight's request was completely 'courteous', or *courtois*, as courtliness was understood within the traditions of Arthurian knighthood. What is shockingly unorthodox is Dinadan's refusal to respond with a similarly curt phrase, lower his lance, and charge. In abdicating the socially normative and respectable behavior of a knight in favor of an egregiously idiosyncratic response, Dinadan abruptly exposes the fragility of the social norms. We today, as much no doubt as the audiences of the late Middle Ages, respond to his logic with instant agreement – yes, it is ridiculous to engage total strangers in possibly fatal combat.[7] In concocting the 'Second Version' of the *Prose Tristan*, the anonymous author obviously felt that Arthurian romance had reached a *reductio ad absurdam* of endlessly fractured lances and hearts. Accordingly, he inserted an absurdist voice, a classic fool who challenged, to the point of dissolving, the boundaries of the socially normative and acceptable.[8] Dinadan's irreverence is so tolerated in the ethos of the text, the boundaries he challenges prove so elastic under his assault, that those boundaries begin to look like jokes themselves.

Dinadan's next literary appearance took him into a very different environment. Thomas Malory considered Arthur to be a great, historical king, and wasn't about to have the Arthurian ethos undermined by clever French

5 '. . . cette philosophie du bonheur n'épargne rien, met tout en question: valeur chevaleresque, amour courtois, foi chrétienne'; Vinaver, 'Un chevalier errant', p. 681.

6 '. . . [il] dist a Dynadam qui ja estoit allez prés de lui: "Sire chevalier, a jouster vos convient!" Dynadam . . . li dist: "Sire chevalier, se Diex vos doinst bonne aventure, ne savez vos en autre maniere saluer chevalier errant fors qu'en disant 'a jouster vos convient'? Se Diex me saut, ce saluz n'est mie trop courtois! Et vos, que savez ore se je suis aiesiés de jouster?" "Certes", fet le chevalier, "je ne sai, mes encore vos di je bien que a jouster vos convient a moi". "Or me dites", fet Dynadam, "ceste jouste yci que vos me demandez, la volez vos par amours ou par haïne?" "Certes", ce dit le chevalier, "je ne la demande pas par haïne, mes par amours et par soulaz" . . . [Dinadan replies:] "Ceste amour monstrez a un autre que a moi, car avant voudroie je mielz estre vostre anemi, pour tant que vous me monstrissiez tele amour" ' (quoted in Vinaver, 'Commentary', p. 1491; the extended passage is in Vinaver, *Etudes*, pp. 93–5). All translations from the *Prose Tristan* are mine.

7 For commentary on the French Dinadan's origins in and challenges to the romance tradition, see Keith Busby, 'The Likes of Dinadan: The Rôle of the Misfit in Arthurian Literature', *Neophilologus* 67 (1983), 161–74.

8 Cf. William Willeford, *The Fool and His Scepter: A Study in Clowns and Jesters and Their Audience* (Evanston, 1969), pp. 132–7.

nonsense. Malory drew on the *Prose Tristan* for the long 'Book of Sir Tristram de Lyones', which forms the crucial middle book of the *Morte Darthur*. In the course of an adaptive translation that reduced the *Prose Tristan* to about a sixth of its original length,[9] Malory consistently toned Dinadan down, his long speeches disappearing in favor of a line or two of what Schlauch calls his 'comic realism'. Dinadan's encounter with the unknown knight, for example, shrinks from about 95 lines to about 20:

> So on the morne sir Dynadan rode unto the courte of kynge Arthur. And by the way as he rode he sawe where stoode an arraunt knyght, and made him redy for to juste.
>
> 'Nat so', seyde sir Dynadan, 'for I have no wyll to juste'.
>
> 'Wyth me shall ye juste', seyde the knyght, 'or that ye passe this way'.
>
> 'Sir, whether aske you justys of love othir of hate?'
>
> The knyghte answerde and seyde,
>
> 'Wyte you well I aske hit for loove and nat of hate'.
>
> 'Hit may well be', seyde sir Dynadan, 'but ye proffyr me harde love whan ye wolde juste with me wyth an harde speare! But, fayre knyght', seyde sir Dynadan, 'sytthyn ye woll juste with me, mete wyth me in the courte of kynge Arthure, and there I shall juste wyth you'.
>
> 'Well', seyde the knight, 'sytthyn ye woll not juste wyth me, I pray you tell me your name'.
>
> 'Sir knyght, my name ys sir Dynadan'.
>
> 'A, sir', seyde that knyght, 'full well knowe I you for a good knyght and a jantyll, and wyte you well, sir, I love you hertyly'.
>
> 'Than shall here be no justys', seyde syr Dynadan, 'betwyxte us'.
>
> So they departed. (372)[10]

Compared to the original, we recognize the repeated demand for a joust and the joke about jousting for love or hate. Dinadan no longer denounces the invitation to joust as a form of courteous greeting, and he does not go on to the long discussion of friendship and enmity provided in his source. On the other hand, Malory does introduce a rather good joke of his own – about proffering hard love when you would joust me with a hard spear – as well as Dinadan's closing pronouncement, that if the stranger loves him, 'Than shall here be no justys'.

Less obviously, Malory also adds certain phrases and interchanges that he has previously established, through long repetition, as key markers of chivalric virtue. Dinadan's concise 'Nat so', when invited to joust, is a standard heroic declaration – though one more often used to reject pacifism, as when Sir Gawain, urged not to fight the 'passynge good knight' Sir Marhaus, responds: 'Nay, . . . nat so! Hit were shame to us and he were nat assayed, were he never so good a knyght' (95). Dinadan speaks throughout with a

9 Vinaver, 'Commentary', p. 1443.

10 All quotes from the *Morte Darthur* are taken from Vinaver's one-volume 1971 edition: Sir Thomas Malory, *Works*, 2nd edn, ed. Eugène Vinaver (Oxford, 1971). See n. 6 above for the original French.

terseness characteristic of Malory's knightly diction and very foreign to his French original.[11] The stranger knight's request for Dinadan's name is also standard, though it usually occurs during an interval of an ongoing combat. Sir Tristram and Sir Bleoberys, for example, meet, exchange defiances, fight until they both collapse 'grovelynge on the erthe', and only then ask each other their names. Like Dinadan and his unknown would-be assailant, Tristram and Bleoberys discover that they are friends, and the fight ends with an exchange of compliments (249–50). In fact, someone used to Malory's discourse patterns will recognize, in Dinadan's closing words, a form of joke more subtle than any in the French. The fact that the exchange of compliments often signals the end of a combat makes it seem appropriate, in a humorous way, for Dinadan to declare their nonexistent joust over.

In short, while his responses challenge chivalric expectations, Dinadan never exits from the forms of chivalric signification crucial to Malory's construction of knightly identity. Malory offers many testimonials to this effect – noting, for example, that Dinadan 'had suche a custom that he loved all good knyghtes that were valyaunte, and he hated all tho that were destroyers of good knyghtes' (379). Dinadan will fight when he has to, as when he smites down the wicked Sir Brewnys Saunz Pité, to stop him trampling on Aggravain (379). Malory suggests that Dinadan saves his chivalric exploits for when they're needed – or for when his opponent is weak enough.

As many scholars since Vinaver have noted, therefore, Malory transformed the Gallic cynicism of the *Prose Tristan*'s Dinadan into the good-humoured eccentricity of a fundamentally conventional knight. The boundaries that the French author and audience happily watched dissolve were too sacred to the English author and audience. Malory's Dinadan, in Larry D. Benson's view, acted as a pressure valve, allowing 'the reader to smile at the excesses of chivalry from within the system and thus to admire the chivalric heroes even while conscious of the commonsense objections to which he gives voice'. Yet Malory leaves us in no doubt, as Benson also observes, that Dinadan 'shares the system of values that he comically attacks'.[12] This, too, can be seen as the function of the fool; as William Willeford notes in *The Fool and His Scepter*: 'The fact that the [fool's] rebellion is allowed and even encouraged implies that the social institutions and the persons in power are strong enough to tolerate it; thus it serves the interests of authority and of social cohesion.'[13]

11 P. J. C. Field, *Romance and Chronicle: A Study of Malory's Prose Style* (London, 1971), pp. 113–16.

12 Larry D. Benson, *Malory's 'Morte Darthur'* (Cambridge, MA, 1976), p. 113; for similar affirmations of Dinadan's endorsement of the chivalric value-system, see, e.g., Field, *Romance and Chronicle*, p. 111; Julia Lathrop Scandrett, 'The Character of Dinadan in Malory's *Morte Darthur* and His Sources' (unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 1977); Terence McCarthy, *An Introduction to Malory* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 34–5; Andrew Lynch, *Malory's Book of Arms: The Narrative of Combat in 'Le Morte Darthur'* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 99–101; Gergely Nagy, 'A Fool of a Knight, a Knight of a Fool: Malory's Comic Knights', *Arthuriana* 14 (2004), 59–74; Kenneth Hodges, *Forging Chivalric Communities in Malory's 'Le Morte Darthur'* (New York, 2005), pp. 104–6.

13 Willeford, *The Fool and His Scepter*, p. 155.

The Trouble with Jokes

To this extent Schlauch's analysis does not hold up, or else credit for Dinadan's deflations of courtliness should go to Malory's source rather than to him. In a different way than Schlauch or other scholars since her day have noticed, however, Malory's Dinadan does undermine Arthurian chivalry. He does this not so much by challenging the institution of personal combat itself as, rather, by undermining the linguistic ethos that has served to define the chivalric worldview. The threat moves from the surface structure of the narrative into the deep structure of Arthurian society.

Before the 'Book of Sir Tristram', Malory's readers or hearers watch the young Arthur coming to power and establishing his Round Table. After it, we watch the Grail Quest and the violence and civil war that result in the end of Arthur's reign. Before the 'Tristram', knights had spoken in a standard heroic language, characterized – as first noted by P. J. C. Field and by Mark Lambert – by irony, understatement, taciturnity and a bias toward moral and emotional evaluation.[14] Together these criteria not only generate a diction but project the sense of a society whose values the diction encodes. They are, in John Searle's words, 'constitutive'; they control 'an activity the existence of which is logically dependent on the rules'.[15] This constituted 'activity', in Malory's *Morte*, is Logres: 'a passionate, violent, limited, aristocratic society, which even in its absurdities forms one imaginative world, true to its own laws'.[16]

Up to the 'Book of Sir Tristram', that constituted reality runs along fairly evenly, projecting a relatively straightforward world of clear choices and transparent loyalties. Good knights use certain words and phrases to other good knights, for example, and different words and phrases to bad knights. When the action shifts to Cornwall, however, language begins to move out of this socially reinforcing mode. Ultimately, as John Plummer has penetratingly detailed, the 'lack of accord between heart and mouth, fact and speech', will contribute to the undoing of Logres itself.[17] The language that had constituted knightly identity will become so bankrupt that the most devastating phrase of all – 'destroyer of good knights' – will be applied to Malory's exemplar of chivalric virtue, Sir Lancelot.[18] Appeals to honor will be dismissed as

14 Field, *Romance and Chronicle*, pp. 107–19; Mark Lambert, *Malory: Style and Vision in 'Le Morte Darthur'* (New Haven, 1975), pp. 19–33; see also Mary Hynes-Berry, 'Language and Meaning: Malory's Translation of the Grail Story', *Neophilologus* 60 (1976), 309–19 (pp. 312–15).

15 John Searle, 'What is a Speech Act?', in *Language and Social Context: Selected Readings*, ed. Pier Paolo Giglioli (Harmondsworth, 1972), pp. 136–54 (p. 139).

16 D. S. Brewer, 'Form in the *Morte Darthur*', *Medium Aevum* 21 (1952), 14–24 (p. 15).

17 John F. Plummer, '*Tunc se coeperunt non intelligere*: The Image of Language in Malory's Last Books', in *Studies in Malory*, ed. James W. Spisak (Kalamazoo, 1985), pp. 153–71 (p. 157).

18 The phrase, used originally of marginal figures such as the four sorceresses (152), King Mark (306, 356–7, 365), Morgan le Fay (367) and Brewnys Saunz Pité (379, 419), comes home to Lancelot when, late in the *Morte*, an enraged Gawain accuses him: 'for thou haste many longe dayes overlad me and us all, and destroyed many of oure good knyghtes' (689).

mere words: 'Thou shamyst all knyghthode and thyselffe,' says Guenevere to her abductor, Sir Meliagrance, who retorts: 'As for all thys langayge, . . . be as hit be may' (651).[19] Lancelot's attempts to reason with Gawain will be countered with the nihilistic retorts: 'Now, fy on thy proude wordis!' (689); 'Make thou no more langayge' (697), and 'leve thy babelynge' (703). With the dissolution of a shared language will come the dissolution of the social bond, and thus of Arthurian society.

Although Plummer begins his chronicle of distress with Camelot post-Grail, I would suggest that the social and linguistic disjunction has its origin in the 'Book of Sir Tristram', where the mismatch of 'fact and speech' enters society through deviances both of behavior and of language.[20] In the 'Tristram' we first encounter adultery – as yet fairly benign because offset to Cornwall, but due soon to become a major issue at Arthur's court itself. Tristram's episode of insanity (303–9) introduces another form of social disarray, one that is echoed by Palomides' shorter breakdowns (324–5, 329–30) and paralleled by Lancelot's two-year madness (487–500). Lamerok is murdered, not by an outlaw like Brewnys Saunz Pité but by Arthur's nephews, amid the first rumblings of clan warfare.

Dinadan's jokes are just one of a variety of divergent speech acts introduced in the 'Tristram', including lies, hypocrisy and tact – newly emerging from the mouths not only of marginal characters or villains but also of good knights. Yet it is the jokes that are particularly troublesome, because they most directly challenge the equation of thought and speech, of speech and identity, characteristic of the earlier books. The formality and standardization of Malorian speech pre-'Tristram' rendered language quickly familiar and unremarkable; we focused through it, as through a clear window, on to a set of relatively solid and stable social meanings. Dinadan's jokes and manipulations of language focus us, suddenly and disconcertingly, on the window itself. Malory's Dinadan always acts and speaks from the most orthodox of chivalric motives: to amuse or to protect the good knights he loves. But each manipulation of discourse adds a new layer of nuance, obliquity, ambiguity and, ultimately, unreliability to the function of language. If language can refract reality, can work on two levels at once, can contradict itself, it certainly gains complexity, but it loses constitutiveness – it can no longer project social cohesion. The long-term effect of Dinadan's entirely loyal and well-meant words is, repeatedly, to undermine not the boundaries but – more frighteningly – the very core of Arthurian society.

This disjunctive energy propagates in a subtle fashion that I will call 'diffusion'. A word or linguistic strategy once introduced will diffuse from one context into another, unrelated one, subtly dis-integrating perception and

19 Cf. Plummer, '*Tunc se coeperunt*', pp. 162–4.

20 The pivotal narrative function of the 'Tristram' was first explored by Thomas C. Rumble in his 'The Tale of Tristram: Development by Analogy', in *Malory's Originality: A Critical Study of 'Le Morte Darthur'*, ed. R. M. Lumiansky (Baltimore, 1964), pp. 118–83.

practice as it goes. No one comments on the process; there are no logical links from one context to the next. The local, somehow, just turns global, twisting language more and more out of its constitutive frame. Diffusion can be illustrated from the history of a key term whose permutations almost seem to herald Dinadan's entry into the 'Tristan': the word 'fool'.

The series starts with Sir Dagonet, the only knight for whom 'fool' is a job description. After Sir La Sir Cote Male Tayle has left Arthur's court with the damsel Maledysaunte, Sir Kay sends Dagonet to engage him in a joke-joust (284). Immediately we see that a sort of contagion attends foolery; two pages after his encounter with Dagonet, Maledysaunte is calling La Cote 'my foolyssh knyght' and greeting his claim of victory at the Castle Orgulus with the rebuke: 'Thow gabbyst falsely. . . . For as a foole and a dastarde to all knyghthode they have latte the passe' (286). Another doubling of folly occurs when, in one line, we are told that the peasants caring for the mad Tristram 'clypped hym with sherys and made hym lyke a foole' and, in the next line: 'And so uppon a day sir Dagonet, kynge Arthurs foole, cam into Cornwayle'. The two meet at a fountain, where Tristram dunks Dagonet and his squires (305). Dagonet seeks revenge by beating Tristram's keepers. Tristram unhorses Dagonet, kills one of the squires, and runs off into the woods. When Dagonet reports the incident to King Mark, he creates another dyadic echo: 'that foole and I, foole, mette togydir', he says, 'and he had allmoste slayne me' (306).[21] Cowardice, madness and foolery continue to compound when, through an elaborate strategem, Dinadan and friends convince Mark that Dagonet is Lancelot. Mark flees in panic as the disguised fool charges, then pursues him, 'cryynge and ratynge hym as a woode man, thorow a grete foreste' (360–1, quote from 361).

Next it's the turn of love. First, both Mark and Dinadan overhear a forlorn Sir Palomides proclaim himself 'but a foole' for trying to win Isode (363). Further into the book, Dinadan equates the 'folyshe knyght' Tristram with the young Sir Epynogrys, who lay by a well 'lyke a fole grennynge and wolde nat speke, and his shylde lay by hym, and his horse also stood by hym. And well I wote he was a lovear' (420). This same Epynogrys later tells Palomides that it 'ys grete foly' to love Isode, because he cannot hope to best Sir Tristram (467). This last reference bridges 'folly' into a new arena, where it designates a knight's misjudgment of his opponent or of the combat situation. Tristram

21 The dyadism is present but less strikingly expressed in the French: ' "Li faus," fait Daguenés, "le [his sword] me toli. Il estoit faus, et pour ce se je estoie faus ausi com il estoit, ne m'ala il pas espargnant, ains a tant fait que je m'en sent" ' [' "The fool," said Daguenés, "took it [his sword] from me. He was a fool, and because I was a fool also like he was, he didn't spare me, but did so much that I still feel it" '] (*Le Roman de Tristan en prose*, 9 vols., gen. ed. Philippe Ménard [Geneva, 1987–97]; vol. 1 [1987], ed. Ménard, p. 254). Note that Ménard and his team based their edition on Vienna, Osterreichische Nationalbibliothek ms 2542 (Ménard, 'Introduction', in *Le Roman de Tristan en prose*, vol. 1, ed. Ménard [Geneva, 1987], pp. 7–59 [p. 10]), whereas Vinaver identified a different set of manuscripts as the ones closest to Malory's 'Book of Sir Tristram' (Vinaver, 'Commentary', p. 1449). When available, I will use the French text cited by Vinaver for comparison; when Vinaver does not give the French, I will use the Ménard edition.

calls Brewnys Saunz Pité a fool for attacking him and Palomides, two stronger knights (439); Arthur calls Palomides a fool for thinking he could defeat Tristram in a tournament (456); Palomides marvels at Tristram's 'woodnes' and 'foly' for wanting to fight him without armor (507).

By the end of the 'Tristram', folly has attached to the great Lancelot himself, the last period of whose madness is spent living on a straw mat under the gate of Corbyn Castle, where he is twice referred to as 'the foole' (499, 500). Healed by the Grail and back in Camelot, Lancelot hears Arthur attribute his madness to his love for Elaine and, knowing the cause was his love for Guenevere, answers curtly: 'My lorde, . . . yf I ded ony foly I have that I sought' (506). The statement resonates with manifold unspoken echoes, of past and future grief; it exemplifies Plummer's divorce of 'heart and mouth'; and it completes the long trajectory of 'fool' and 'folly' by absorbing the concept into an acute subjectivity, synonymizing it with an extended sense of human imperfection. Malory's later word for this condition is 'unstableness', a force that, as this example makes clear, can apply to words and meaning as much as to motivation and action.

The connotative diffusion of the word 'fool' cannot be accidental, because it is too patterned. The word enters the system in the person of an actual fool, Dagonet, and passes through dyadic couplings into the general population. Its meanings proceed or expand in clusters, progressively 'infecting' less and less negative areas of human behavior. The term 'fool', that is, applies first to cowards, who are bad; then to madmen, who are unfortunate; then to lovers, who are, say, merely preoccupied; then to miscalculating knights, who are just momentarily stupid; then to Lancelot, who is . . . trapped. En route, the general term 'folly' appears, as the quality of being a fool transcends the individual to take on the status of an abstraction like 'worship'.

Just as the idea of foolery introduced by Dagonet seems to propagate through a range of activity, so Dagonet seems gradually to give way to Dinadan. Dagonet first appears on page 284, turns up again on pages 305–6 and 360–1, and is last mentioned on page 371. Dinadan first emerges on page 309 and is heard from every few pages through 465. The handover implicates an evolution from Arthurian slapstick to a more verbally based comedy. Apparently, just the sight of Dagonet in armor is amusing; one must imagine him as ungainly and small, if not also odd-looking. His humor consists mostly, it seems, of clowning; Sir Gryfflet describes him as 'the beste felow and the meryeste in the worlde' (360), but no comments suggest specifically verbal skills. Comments abound, however, linking Dinadan to language. He is 'a grete skoffer and a gaper [japer]' (407), 'the beste bourder and japer', 'the myrryeste knyght that ever ye speke wythall, and the maddyst talker' (423).[22] The lay that Dinadan writes, in defense of Tristram, is made

[22] Malory emphasizes Dinadan's verbal skill somewhat more than his source. Malory's 'the beste bourder and japer' (423) is the *Tristan*'s 'de meilleurs paroles et de mieudres soulas' ['of best words and the most amusing'] (*Roman de Tristan*, vol. 5, ed. Denis Lalande and Thierry Delcourt [Geneva, 1992],

'wondirly well and yll' (387). At the same time he is, unlike Dagonet, one of the boys – a colleague not a clown or mascot. It is this combination – social centrality and linguistic lability – that will render Dinadan's wit so efficaciously subversive.

Dinadan's early appearances alternate fairly standard knightliness with episodes of 'enlightened cowardice', refusals such as the 'joust for love or hate' one to take on fights that he can't win or that are not worth fighting. The alternation maintains his crucial position as simultaneously 'a fyne japer and lovynge unto all good knyghtes' (403) – at the same time as it adroitly manages the stresses that Dinadan's verbal skill is releasing into the system: push, step back, push again, step back again, allowing equilibrium to be re-achieved each time before pushing again. Each time, however, the equilibrium has migrated towards the pole of linguistic disjunction: Malory's knights, and his audience, have both gradually absorbed the idea that words can be tricky and unreliable.

The process runs on for a long time before anyone notices: the first explicit reference to Dinadan's comic genius doesn't come until seventy pages after his first appearance on page 309. Ominously, it arrives as part of the flash-forward to his murder: 'And aftir, in the queste of the Sankgreal, cowardly and felonsly they [Mordred and Aggravain] slew sir Dynadan, whyche was a grete dammage, for he was a grete bourder and a passynge good knyght' (379). Dinadan's slanderous lay about Mark arrives in Cornwall shortly afterward, arousing Tristram's praise and Mark's outrage (387–88). It is at the tournament of Surluse that Dinadan himself truly 'arrives', in the sense of having a reputation for comedy that precedes him. Sir Galahalt the Haute Prince fears his 'mokkis and his japys' (402); Dinadan 'mocked and japed' with the day's winner King Bagdemagus (403); even when Dinadan is performing well in the tournament, Malory pauses to tell us he was a 'grete skoffer and a gaper' (407). Finally, on the fifth day of the tournament Lancelot smites Dinadan down and brings him to Guenevere and Galahalt, who 'lowghe at sir Dynadan, that they myght nat stonde' (407). Surprisingly, it has taken some hundred pages of japing for anyone to actually laugh at Dinadan. From this point on, through the section Vinaver labeled 'Joyous Gard' (411–32), the laughter resounds frequently, setting off some odd echoes.

p. 123). Malory's 'the myrryeste knyght that ever ye speke wythall, and the maddyst talker' (423) is the *Tristan*'s 'vous orrés de lui les plus merveilleuses paroles et les plus soulagans que vous onques oïssiés de nul cevalier' ['you will hear from him the most marvelous and most amusing words that you ever heard from any knight'] (*Roman de Tristan*, V, 125).

'Joyous Gard'

Lancelot's famous cross-dressing on day six of the tournament of Surluse sets off a new form of diffusion. After Lancelot throws a maiden's robe over his armor and unhorses Dinadan, varlets take Dinadan away, put a woman's gown on him, and parade him before a court that, again, falls over itself laughing. Dinadan's response to all the mockery is only a mild 'Well, . . . sir Launcelot, thou arte so false that I can never beware of the' (410).[23] End of episode. On the next page, which starts 'Joyous Gard', we are told in passing that 'sir Trystrams was nat so behated as was sir Launcelot' (411) – only the second reference to hatred of the Round Table's chief knight, and the first that describes it as a general feeling.[24] Is there any connection? Not logically. We can imagine waves of gossip sweeping the story of Lancelot's imposture and Dinadan's joke through the court, and deep-lying jealousies finding their way to the surface under cover of humour; but Malory gives us none of this. Yet some deeper sort of connection seems to lurk, a seepage from Dinadan's application to Lancelot of a descriptive, 'false', addressed properly only to evil knights and other villainous individuals.[25]

Malory seems to have wanted the echo to be heard, since he manipulated his narrative here in order to insert it. 'Joyous Gard' begins with King Bagdemagus and Sir Galahalt the Haute Prince planning a tournament, with the treacherous motive of slaying or destroying Lancelot. But Lancelot never attends the tournament, or even hears of it. Instead, in short order, Tristram comes in disguise, is mistaken for Lancelot (but not feloniously attacked), wins the prize, is taken away wounded by Mark, and put in prison (411–12). The story continues with Tristram, making no further reference to the tournament or the men who organized it. On the surface the go-nowhere episode suggests another case of Malory overwhelmed by his source's *entrelacement*;[26] at a deeper level, however, it adroitly transposes Dinadan's tinkling bell of mock-disaffection into an alarming bass note that will rumble on through the following pages. Lancelot is next called 'false' by an infuriated Guenevere, first when she hears of the child he has had with Elaine (485) and again (three times in one page) when she suspects and then discovers he

23 Vinaver notes that '*F* has no equivalent to this beyond the remark that Dinadan "se deffendoit de tout moult bien" ' ['defended himself against it all very well'] ('Commentary', p. 1507 n. to p. 670.3–4). This is the first time in the *Morte* that Dinadan uses the word 'false' to or of anyone.

24 The first reference came shortly before, when King Bagdemagus 'sente away his sonne Mellyagaunce, bycause sir Launcelot sholde nat mete with hym; for he hated sir Launcelot, and that knewe he [Lancelot] nat' (402–3).

25 The accusation of falsehood is applied, in the 'Tristram', primarily to King Mark and to the outlaw knight Sir Brewnys Saunz Pité (Mark: 306, 336, 355, 364, 365, 375, 376, 389, 391, 398, 413; Brewnys: 317, 331, 345, 417, 419).

26 Cf. Vinaver, 'Commentary', p. 1508. I was unable to compare this juxtaposition of ideas and the account of the Galahalt/Bagdemagus tournament with the French, because Vinaver doesn't give the text and the Ménard edition is based on a manuscript that doesn't include the tournament of Surluse.

has visited Elaine's bed rather than hers (487). Ultimately, the very word that Dinadan tossed at Lancelot in jest, Gawain will pronounce in deadly earnest, decrying Lancelot repeatedly in many variations of the phrase 'false recreant/traitor knight' (689–90, 703–5).

In the next instance of japing, an episode that bizarrely upends established roles, Dinadan himself recognizes the danger. Sent by Lancelot to find Tristram, Dinadan meets his friend near Joyous Garde but unaccountably fails to recognize him. Dinadan is unusually truculent, and after some byplay about lovers and fools, he wants to fight Tristram because he won't give his name. Tristram takes up Dinadan's former pose, refusing to accept the challenge. Instead, Dinadan is knocked down by the fool-like lover, Epynogrys. Tristram mocks him, and Dinadan angrily, and apparently seriously, retorts: 'Fye on the, cowarde! . . . And yf thou be a good knyght, revenge me!' (421). Instead, Tristram rides back to Joyous Garde, where he hides while Isode, also unrecognized, teases Dinadan further about love and asks him to defend her from three knights, which he refuses to do. 'Than Isode lowghe', Malory says, 'and had good game at hym' (424).

Dinadan is no longer in charge here; rather, his former audience is prodding him unwittingly through his well-known routines, like rowdy fans accosting a tired old comic in a bar. The next morning's renewed encounter with the still unknown Tristram has Dinadan repeating his demands for battle (424). As Dinadan declares, 'Fye on the, cowarde! . . . Thou shamyste all knyghtes!' Tristram adopts the role of humble squire who will ride under Dinadan's protection.[27] When another knight appears and gives Dinadan a fall, Dinadan offers battle on foot. His assailant responds with a disconcertingly familiar question (not in the *Prose Tristan*):[28] 'Whether in love other in wrathe?' (425).[29] The inverter is being inverted: Dinadan's famous joke is coming back at him, this time with him appearing thick-headedly belligerent and the stranger knight (who turns out to be Sir Gareth) running the show. The parody of a parody runs through to the end: Dinadan offers to do battle in love, Gareth asks his name, each reveals his identity, and the discovery that they are friends ends the battle (426). Dinadan doesn't recognize Tristram

27 Lancelot had briefly teased Dinadan along the same lines, at the tournament of Surluse, when he informed him that he would 'no more mete with the, nother with thy grete speare, for I may nat sytte in my sadyll whan thy speare hittyth me' (409). The interchange doesn't seem to carry the weight of the later one, though perhaps it functions (retrospectively) as a foreshadowing. Alternatively, Field may be right in assuming that a scribal error assigned to Lancelot a speech that should have been Dinadan's (Field, *Romance and Chronicle*, p. 1759, n. to p. 668.20).

28 Some love/hate wordplay does emerge a little later in the French version of this battle. After they have agreed not to fight, Gaheriés (Gareth) assures Dinadan that he has not spoken 'par haïne que je eüsee a vous' ['from hatred that I have towards you']. Dinadan replies: 'Certes, . . . grant amour i avés vous ore voirement, je m'en sui bien aperceüs! De la grant joie que vous eüstes de ma venue me portastes vous si doucement a tere que encore m'en deulent li os!' ['Certainly, . . . truly you recently showed great love for me, I'm very aware of that! Because of the great joy that you had at my arrival, you knocked me to the earth so softly that my bones still grieve me!'] (*Prose Tristan*, V, 143–4).

29 It's just this side of possible, and nice to think, that Malory intended us to notice that the amateur's 'Whether in love other in wrathe?' (425) doesn't work as well as Dinadan's more strongly contrasted 'whether aske you justys of love othir of hate?' (372).

until the latter knocks down Palomides, after which, with a minimum of discussion, they merge back into the pattern of fellow knights-errant (426–7).[30]

Am I alone in finding something deeply disturbing about this series of events? As I was rereading the 'Tristram' for this essay, this episode distressed me so much that I stopped reading for that evening, and it lingered with me the rest of the night. It may pass easily enough as another piece of Dinadan-centered fun, but it stands out in a reading focused on language. Of course, Malory seems to be rather clumsily juggling with his character: Why can't Dinadan recognize Tristram and Isode? And why is he suddenly so eager to fight a big strong knight for no particular reason, and so easily beswizzled by not only Tristram and Isode but even Gareth? But that isn't what disturbs me; in fact, I don't think it's sheer clumsiness, but like the tournament organized by Bagdemagus and Galahalt, a device used to insinuate a much more worrisome development. As a demeaning of stature rippled out from Dagonet's foolery, a disjunction of word and referent has been diffusing out from Dinadan's japery. This episode reveals how deeply it has worked its way into the system at large: now everyone's doing stand-up, and the erstwhile comedian himself is left, paradoxically (but we know that Malory is famous for posing paradoxes), fighting stubbornly for things to mean what they always used to mean. A feeling of decadence radiates from this episode, and from the glee with which Tristram and Isode play their old friend for laughs, a more sustained and meaner version of Lancelot's foolery with ladies' dresses.

It is typical of the 'push, step-back' pattern in the 'Tristram' that the odd, distressing edge exhibited by language and behavior in the 'biter-bit' episode fades out again, and things more or less resume their usual configuration. Dinadan's career of japing winds down when he and Tristram encounter some knights who demand his helmet. Dinadan here reverts to form: when Tristram invites him to fight, he demurs, declaring, twice, 'I woll nat thereof'. Tristram knocks down the knights, he and Dinadan return to Joyous Garde, Dinadan berates Isode (the source of the helmet), and 'there was lawghynge and japynge at sir Dynadan, that they wyste nat what to do wyth hym' (432).

30 Malory essentially preserved the episode as presented in the *Prose Tristan* (V, 102–13, 121–55), with the following significant changes: he cut it severely, from about 45 pages to about 3; he eliminated the French author's explanation of Dinadan's failure to recognize Tristan (he had a new horse and unfamiliar arms) (102); he augmented the number of times and the intensity with which Dinadan calls Tristram a coward; he eliminated Yseut's reproof to Tristan that in teasing Dinadan he was doing 'vilonnie et mal' ['villainy and wrong'] (123); he had Dinadan recognize Tristram by his prowess in unhorsing Palomides, whereas in the French Dinadan doesn't know Tristan until the latter tells Palomides his name (150). In general, Malory shifted focus from love and *double entendres* about lances to emphasize knightly ceremony and status; he also added the undertone of desperation to Dinadan's reactions.

'Lonzep'

'The Tournament at Lonezep' (pp. 440–66) is the last section of the 'Tristram' before attention switches to Palomides and then to pre-Grail adventures, and among other things it serves to introduce two further disruptions of language. One, associated with Palomides, is clearly negative; the other, associated with Dinadan, seems to function as a positive counterweight but at a deeper level works negatively as well. Palomides' contribution comes when, on the second day of the tournament, he starts telling lies. First, he informs Tristram he's too tired to follow him into the tournament (lie 1), then enters the fray and does 'mervaylous dedis of armys' (454). Later, disguised, he rides with Tristram and his party back to their lodging, claiming (lie 2), 'as though he had nat knowyn sir Trystram', that Tristram had invited him into the party (459). When Tristram recognizes and denounces him, Palomides says (lie 3) he'd thought the knight he'd been fighting was the king of Ireland (459–60). After Tristram explains why he was bearing the arms of Ireland, Palomides claims (lie 4) that he thought Tristram had joined Lancelot's party, and so felt obliged to fight him (460). At dinner, when Isode angrily rebukes him for the entire day's treacherous activity, he insists (lie 5): 'be my knyghthod, I knew nat my lorde sir Trystram' (460). Finally, when Arthur reproaches him for his behavior, he replies (lie 6): 'I knew nat sir Trystram, for he was so disgysed' (462). Malory signals the first of Palomides' lies very clearly – 'And all thes wordis seyde sir Palomydes but to begyle sir Trystram' (454) – and emphasizes the breach of language again when he has Isode, who has witnessed each of Palomides' deceptive moves, go over them all again (460). The episode works well within the narrative, in motivating Palomides' ultimate acceptance of the chivalric code, his final battle with Tristram, and his baptism. At the same time that it seems to reinforce the cohesion of the Round Table, however, it erodes it. Palomides' lies, spoken not by a villain but by a 'good' knight, introduce the deliberate separation of statement from meaning into the core institution of chivalry, knightly combat.[31]

In contrast to Palomides' linguistic dissidence, Dinadan, in his role of steadfast friend to Tristram, switches from japing to tact: the use of speech (or silence) to preserve a social surface. The first example comes after Tristram has praised Palomides' extraordinary fervor at the tournament: ' "Sir, hit is his day", seyde sir Dynadan, and he wolde sey no more unto sir Trystram, but

31 Some scholars consider the assumption of a disguise, especially by Lancelot, to be an implicit lie (e.g., Linda K. Hughes, 'The Pleasure Lies in Power: The Status of the Lie in Malory and Bradley', *Arthurian Yearbook* 2 [1993], 99–112). This seems too harsh a judgment to me; disguise is one of the subsidiary strategies of chivalry, useful for a variety of reasons. Any particular instance may, of course, take on negative connotations within a given episode, but surely Malory would not think a device so productive of interesting combat to be negative in itself. In any case, disguising is not, or is only incidentally, an attack on language; what concerns me, and I think Malory, here is the disruptive impact that spoken lies have on the trustworthiness of all language.

to hymselff he seyde thus: "And sir Trystram knew for whos love he doth all this dedys of armys, sone he wolde abate his corrage" ' (448). A repetition, after Palomides wins the day's prize, draws our attention again to this new, or newly featured, linguistic strategy: ' "Well", seyde sir Dynadan to hymselff, "all this worshyp that sir Palomydes hath here this day, he may thanke the quene Isode: for had she bene away this day, had nat sir Palomydes gotyn the pryse" ' (448). Tact inspires Dinadan next to 'rail' at Tristram, calling him again, in a different mood this time, a coward. Tristram, who claims rather confusingly that he 'was never called cowarde or now of earthely knyght in my lyff', grows angry (450). 'But all this langayge', Malory explains,

> sir Dynadan sayde because he wolde angur sir Trystram for to cause hym to wake hys speretes, for well knew sir Dynadan that, and sir Trystram were thorowly wrothe, sir Palomydes shulde wynne no worship uppon the morne. And for thys entente sir Dynadan seyde all this raylynge langage ayenste sir Trystram. (451)

Again, Malory emphasizes this event by repeating it: the next day, Gareth explains to a still-annoyed Tristram that Dinadan's words were meant to fire him to defeat Palomides (454).[32]

As with the idea of foolery, once Malory has emphasized the new element by doubling it a couple of times, he lets it flow on into the system. Dinadan proceeds to deploy tact to indirectly or directly communicate identities, each time in order to head off some sort of awkwardness. When Tristram and Lancelot are about to fight each other, neither knowing who the other is, Dinadan handles the situation with a deftness previously unknown in the *Morte*: he 'gate sir Trystrams horse and seyde on hyght, that sir Launcelot myght hyre: "My lorde sir Trystram, take your horse!" ' Lancelot immediately exclaims: 'A, Jesu! what have I done?' and asks Tristram's pardon, 'for and I had knowyn you we had nat done this batayle' (458). The second incident has two knights coming to visit Tristram and Isolde in their pavilion:

> And whan their helmys were of, sir Trystram thought that he sholde know them. Than spake sir Dynadan prevayly unto sir Trystram,
>
> 'That is my lorde kynge Arthure, and that other that spake to you fyrst ys my lorde sir Launcelot'.
>
> 'A, madame, I pray you aryse', seyde sir Trystram, 'for here ys my lorde, kynge Arthure'. (461)

Tristram doesn't recognize King Arthur? or Lancelot? Again, Malory has clouded the surface logic of his narrative in order to give occasion for and to highlight a permutation of language. Tact doesn't refract meaning, as japing does; rather, it privatizes it, one way or another. Used in a good cause, it is nonetheless inherently deceptive. You hide your thoughts from your friend. You insult the friend in order to help him. You speak to one man in order that

[32] Cf. Edwards, *Genesis*, p. 77.

another may hear you. Language as tact becomes less a collective discourse, in service of a self-constituting social whole, and more personal, engineered – like a smart missile, perhaps. It doesn't blanket a whole area; it finds the one target it's after and connects.

In identifying Arthur and Lancelot, Dinadan is not doing anything particularly adroit – though he certainly targets that information by speaking it 'prevayly' into Tristram's ear. Instead, what we see is the linguistic innovation diffusing, as Tristram tactfully informs Isode of their guest's identity, ensures the proper ceremony, and greets the king, all in one short sentence. The next stage would be for Tristram to use tact independently, without prompting from Dinadan; and so he does. When he, Gareth, and Dinadan peek into Palomides' chamber the next morning and see the marks of tears on his cheeks, it is Tristram, not Dinadan, who admonishes the others: 'Say ye nothynge, . . . for I am sure he hath takyn angir and sorow for the rebuke that I gaff hym and La Beall Isode.' The men withdraw, and Tristram sends a servant to summon Palomides to the tournament (462).

Conclusion

In contrast to the progressive disintegration of language characteristic of the last two books of the *Morte*,[33] disruption comes and goes in the 'Tristram'. In one way or another, some individualization of language and perspective emerges; it is repeated, expanded, internalized and then it melts away. The surface resumes its smoothness – but the smoothness feels increasingly unreliable. Tristram, Palomides, Lancelot go mad and recover. Dinadan parodies chivalry, then rescues a damsel. Palomides lies, is forgiven and is baptized. Lamorak doesn't come back to life, though. There are people around who hate Lancelot. 'Words' and 'language' have picked up negative connotations. Folly has become endemic. Dinadan diverts his verbal talent to the avoidance of antagonism or offense – which, since such art must be expended in averting them, begin to seem more imminent and dangerous. The 'Tristram' is full of such feints and evolutions. Here I have concentrated primarily on language events, and primarily on those associated with Dinadan, because while the behavioral issues have often been discussed, the linguistic ones have remained more obscure.[34]

Appropriately for a character in what its author conceived of as a great national tragedy, Malory's Dinadan destroys what he most wishes to save. The inversions that he offers in jest will be reiterated as the perversions of the evil or disaffected knights who bring about Arthur's fall. The internalized or privatized conversations he initiates through tact help ease us into a world where words represent and negotiate individual realities, not communal

33 Lambert, *Malory*, pp. 190–4; Plummer, '*Tunc se coeperunt*'.
34 The analysis in this essay is part of a planned book on Malory's diction.

values. Both the French and the English Dinadan thus prove again the power of the fool, and of words, to define and undermine worldviews. Yet while to the French author the court of Arthur was a sort of literary toy, to be dressed up, played with, and broken without tears, the insular Malory was writing seriously about a king and a world that he, like most chroniclers of his time, accepted as part of his country's history. His Dinadan exposes not the superficial silliness of courtly ritual but the inevitably destructive consequences of human instability.

Schlauch is thus ultimately right, I would argue, in having tapped Dinadan as the agent of subversive modernity. Yet his subversiveness does not lie primarily in his burlesques of knightly behavior – for to Malory, knightly worship was and remained throughout his book the highest social value. Rather, Dinadan, involuntarily, tragically, undermines these values, which he shares, by unleashing on the simple, self-affirming discourse of Arthurian chivalry the power of language to distort, invert and misrepresent. That lesson inculcated, realism cannot be far behind.

IV

WILLIAM CAXTON, WYNKYN DE WORDE AND THE EDITING OF MALORY'S *MORTE DARTHUR**

D. Thomas Hanks Jr

Derek Pearsall first pointed out to me that the last four lines of verse in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* – thus arguably the last four lines of verse he ever wrote – had been moved about by F. N. Robinson so that Chaucer's last word prior to the Parson's Tale is no longer 'grace' but is now 'manere'.[1] I was shocked to learn that Robinson had been so cavalier in his editing.

Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur* has suffered equally great editorial interventions. Like Tom Sawyer washed and dressed for church by Aunt Polly, the edited *Morte* bears little resemblance to its original nature. When Malory wrote it, he envisioned a certain way of presenting his text – a presentation embodying conventions we now find strange. We find those conventions strange because we do not, for the most part, work with manuscripts. Malory, however, knew only manuscripts. Writing his *Morte*, he used the stylistic conventions of the manuscript age. We moderns, separated from Malory's conventions by centuries of editorial intervention following the coming of the printing press, can have only a reduced idea of his abilities as a stylist. A few comparisons will quickly show how much Malory's text has been altered by printer-editors; looking at the original state of the text will suggest that Malory is a better stylist, certainly a different stylist, than appears in any edited version postdating the surviving manuscript.

I must note the influence on my thinking of Jerome J. McGann, who followed up the pioneering work of British scholar D. F. McKenzie in his

* The first form of this essay was presented at a conference in honor of Professor Calvin Kendall of the University of Minnesota in 2003. I owe thanks to the organizers of the conference, Patricia Eldred and Jill Averil Keen, for their gracious support both financial and collegial. To Professor Kendall, my mentor during my doctoral work at the University of Minnesota, I owe a continuing debt for his kindly professional guidance and for his constant positive approach.

I must also thank Paul Szarmach and his colleagues of the Medieval Institute at Western Michigan University for granting me a visiting fellowship for Spring 2006. It was during the fellowship at the Medieval Institute that I finished this essay. I am grateful for the Medieval Institute's financial support, and even more grateful for the free time the fellowship afforded me.

1 Professor Pearsall remarked upon this in a seminar at the University of Minnesota in 1974.

1983 *A Critique of Textual Criticism* and in many works since.[2] McGann's core insight is to affirm both the lexical and bibliographical texts of a work. The lexical text, of course, is simply the words; the bibliographical text is the visual presentation of those words, including such items as the mise-en-page, illustrations if any, paragraphing, capitalization or lack thereof, type style and size, arrangement in columns, punctuation and so forth. Modern editors have for the most part been faithful to lexical texts, as Robinson largely is to the lexical text of Chaucer's Ellesmere Manuscript. The bibliographical text, however, they have treated with the ruthless hands of Aunt Polly, rearranging lines, typography, pages, etc., to fit their own ideas of proper presentation – a treatment no less ruthless for being well intentioned. This trend began with Malory's first editors, William Caxton and Wynkyn de Worde, who greatly altered both lexical and bibliographical texts, as will soon appear.[3]

I

For an opening example, consider folio 409 of the surviving manuscript of the *Morte*, a manuscript I shall henceforth call 'Win', for Winchester – the city where the manuscript was rediscovered in 1939 (see Figure 1).[4] Scholars agree that Win was *not* used by Caxton and his compositors as a printing copy; it has no casting-off marks, and thus could not have been a guide for printing. However, Lotte Hellinga has shown that Win does bear offsets of type fonts unique to Caxton during the period from 1480 to 1483, and that Win almost surely resided in his shop until 1489. Caxton produced the first printed edition of the *Morte* during that period (in 1485); Hellinga concludes that Caxton consulted Win when he was printing his 1485 first edition of the *Morte*.[5] Caxton, its first publisher, was the first editor of the *Morte*; he initiated the process of altering the text toward its present form.

2 J. McGann, *A Critique of Textual Criticism* (1983; rpt Williamsburg, VA, 1992).

3 Malory's actual first 'editors' were, of course, his scribes (as appears later in this essay). P. J. C. Field has recently noted specifics about their editing, and – to take this argument as far as it can go – has suggested that Malory himself made unconscious errors, which can be detected in comparisons of the Winchester Manuscript and Caxton's first edition. 'Malory and his Scribes', *Arthuriana* 14.1 (Spring 2004), 31–42. For the Caxton incunable I have used *Sir Thomas Malory*: Le Morte D'Arthur: *Printed by William Caxton: 1485* (London, 1976). For Wynkyn de Worde's 1529 edition I have used [*Le Morte Darthur*], Imprynted at London: In Fletestrete at [the] sygne of sonne, by Wynkyn de Worde, 1529 (located in the British Library, Shelfmark G10510).

4 For the story of the modern discovery of the Winchester Manuscript, written by Walter Oakeshott (the discoverer), see 'The Finding of the Manuscript', in *Essays on Malory*, ed. J. A. W. Bennett (Oxford, 1963), pp. 1–6.

I must note here my gratitude to the staff of the British Library for their unfailing courtesy and helpfulness while I worked with Win (London, British Library, Additional 59678) for several summers. Dr Michelle Brown was particularly courteous in granting my series of requests to work with Win.

5 L. Hellinga, 'The Malory Manuscript and Caxton', in *Aspects of Malory*, ed. T. Takamiya and D. Brewer (Cambridge, 1981, rpt 1986), pp. 127–41; see p. 134 for Hellinga's conclusions.

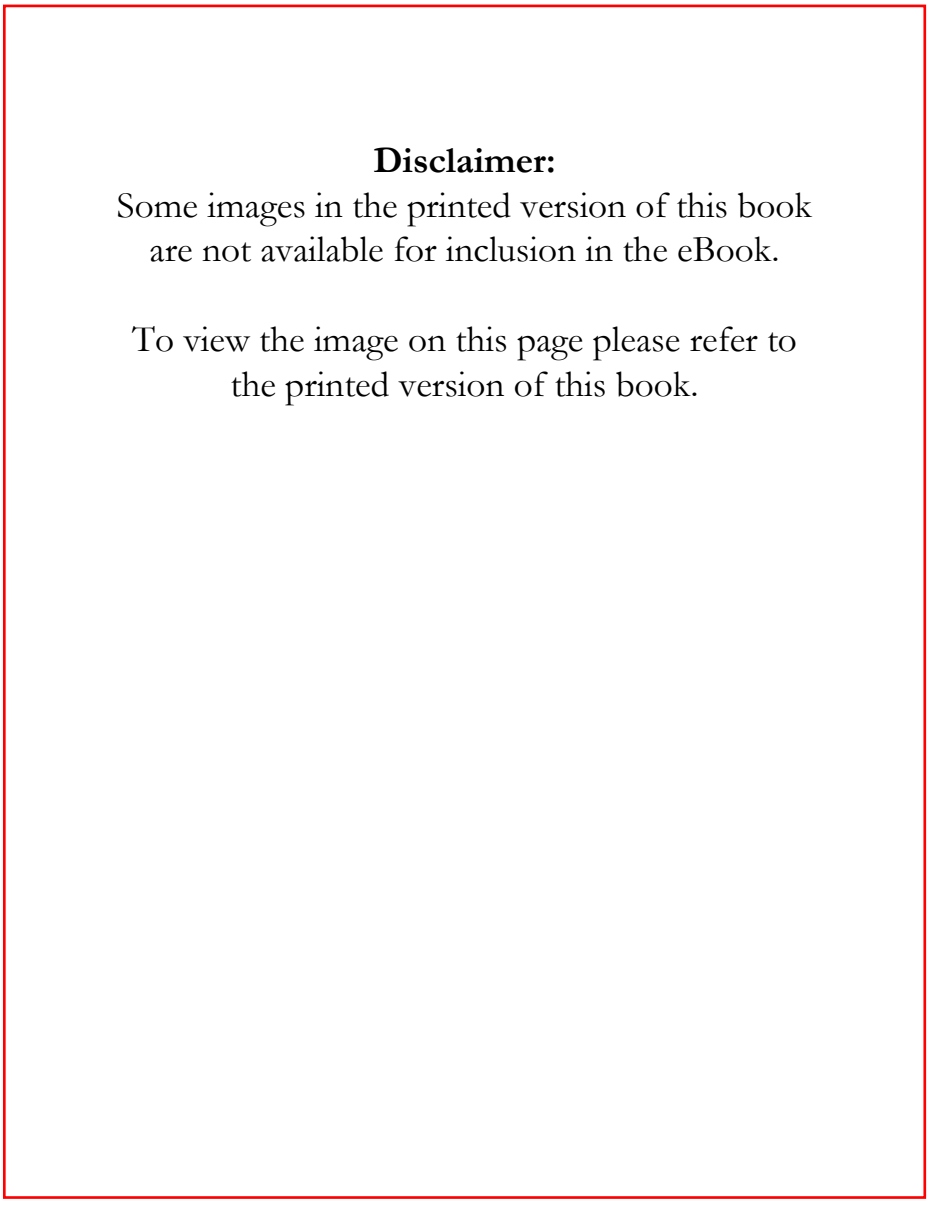


Figure 1. British Library, Additional MS 59678, fo. 409. Used by the kind permission of the British Library.

Figure 2. Parts of two pages from Caxton's 1485 printing of Malory's *Morte Darthur* (sig. U/V j verso to U/V ij). John Rylands University Library shelfmark Deansgate /18930. Reproduced by courtesy of the University Librarian and Director, The John Rylands University Library, The University of Manchester.

Concerning the manuscript page, one notes immediately the rubricated letters; the scribes of Win used red ink for proper names and, in certain instances, for emphasis. Both occur on this page: the names of Bors, Launcelot, Galahad, Arthur, Percival and the city of Sarras appear in red, as does the title of the Sankgreal (after a false start with a small 's' in black ink). Closing the page and the section is the rubricated name of 'Thomas Maleorre knyght•' followed by the equally rubricated plea, 'O blessed ih*es*u helpe hym thorow hys myght• Amen' A quick look at Caxton's printing of this passage shows that he did not attempt to reproduce the emphasis provided by the rubricated letters (Figure 2). Parts of two pages appear in the figure; Bors, Launcelot, Galahad et al., have lost their red ink. They now blend quietly into the text. So does the Sankgreal, no longer emphasized to show its truest and holiest nature.

Most telling, and most surprising, is the loss of Malory's name and prayer. Malory inserted his name in six explicits in Win; here, and four other times in

Win, Caxton has deleted it.[6] Only in the preface and in the closing paragraph of the entire book does Caxton name him. Removing Malory's name from this passage is editing with a vengeance; Caxton does not stop there. In the same passage he both deletes from and adds to the lexical text as he prints: he deletes the 'Sir' in Galahad's first mention, he deletes 'my lorde' before 'kynge Arthure', he deletes 'hole' before 'courte', he converts 'both myne owne hondis' to 'with myn owne handes' and he deletes a 'sir' from Win's 's*ir* Launcelot'. He then adds the adjective 'gentyl' to Win's 'cousyn' and then a wholly new forty-seven words to the text of Win:

> and alle that euer I maye doo for yow and for yours ye shalle fynde my poure body redy atte all tymes/whyles the spyryte is in hit / and that I promyse yow feythfully/and neuer to fayle
> ¶ And wete ye wel gentyl cosyn syre Bors that (Cx sig. U i verso)

Caxton next exchanges his 'wylle' for W's 'shall', then changes W's 'as ye woll so woll I' to 'I wylle as ye wylle' (sig. U ii). Finally, he alters the explicit as noted earlier; there, he not only deletes Malory's name and prayer, he changes more words: Malory's 'tale' becomes the more weighty 'thistory'. Caxton adds the phrase 'in to Englysshe/', he changes Malory's 'tale' a second time into 'story' and finally he adds 'the whiche is the xvii book/', referring to the book and chapter divisions that he adds to Malory's much-less-divided book.

In short, Caxton deletes 19 words as he adds 57 to the original 179-word passage. Moreover, he substitutes an additional four of his own words for Malory's. Eighty words were affected in an originally 179-word-long passage. That is, very nearly one-half of the passage was transformed lexically, ignoring for the moment the bibliographical change to the no-longer-rubricated text. And yet – though it may seem that Caxton, like the young woman in Kansas City, has gone about as far as he can go – and yet, Caxton does not take the final transforming step. That was reserved for his co-worker and eventual inheritor, the happily named Wynkyn de Worde. De Worde, taking over Caxton's shop after Caxton's death in 1491, printed two editions of the *Morte*, one in 1498, the second in 1529. Because the 1529 edition was followed by other editors from its publication until the late nineteenth century, I ignore the 1498 edition in this study. De Worde's presentation of the passage at the end of the book of the Sankgreal appears in Figure 3. Again, I have cut and pasted to present two pages at once (sig. S v and S v verso).

As Figure 3 shows, de Worde has altered the bibliographical text to a two-column format. He follows Caxton's lexical text, and does not greatly alter the wording he finds there.[7] Compared to Caxton's cavalier attitude

6 I include in my count the work's closing explicit from Caxton, but assume that it is original to Malory; it does not appear in Win owing to the loss of the closing pages.

7 De Worde changes Caxton's 'to' to 'vnto' early in the passage, he deletes 'owne' from 'owne sone', he

Figure 3. Parts of two pages from de Worde's 1529 printing of Malory's *Morte Darthur* (sig. S v and S v verso). British Library shelfmark G10510. Used by the kind permission of The British Library.

toward the text, de Worde at first appears to be downright tame, even conservative: he did restore three 'sirs', after all, and added merely five words while substituting six and deleting three. Only about eleven words are affected, in short, instead of eighty. Where this might have seemed like taking immense liberties before one viewed Caxton's rough-and-ready way with his text, now one doubtless finds de Worde a gentler, kinder editor.

But: de Worde begins a bibliographical innovation beyond the two-column format, a bibliographical innovation that was to change Malory's text even more than Caxton's cavalier way with words. De Worde, as clearly appears in Figure 3, adds to his *Morte* what appear to be periods, developed from the medieval mark called the punctus. Win, the surviving manuscript, has one medial punctus after 'as ye woll so will I•', one after 'Maleore knyght', and two more in the last two words after the closing prayer. Caxton presents no punctus; de Worde supplies ten of them. The punctūs on Figure 3 appear unobtrusive; one becomes so accustomed to periods in the editions that one uses, and of course in one's daily writing, that one uses them, and reads them, automatically. Not so for Malory, and not so for Caxton. De Worde's periods were a syntactic innovation whose impact requires some background that is at once familiar and new.

To begin a review of that background, I repeat: Malory, writing in the manuscript tradition whose conventions were familiar to him, did not use syntactic punctuation. As his scribes' surviving manuscript (Win) shows, Malory could go on for an entire page or more without a single mark of punctuation beyond the occasional capital letter.[8]

This is probably stating the obvious. One who reads to this point probably knows that medieval manuscripts are largely unpunctuated, and may share in the almost-universal tacit assumption that punctuation evolved inexplicably but naturally, like the great vowel shift. Not so. Syntactic punctuation was invented by printers of the late fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries, with the Venetian printer Aldus Manutius providing many by 1494 – marks such as the comma and question mark, which de Worde did not yet have in his black-letter fonts when he printed his 1529 edition of the *Morte*.[9]

restores the 'sir' to Galahad, changes 'prayed' to 'prayeth', adds 'for' before 'to remember', changes 'vnsyker' to 'vnstedfast', adds 'full' to Lancelot's simple 'true', twice restores Launcelot's 'sir', deletes the 'ryght' from 'ryght welcome', converts 'my poure body' to 'me', changes 'whyles the spyryte is in hit' to 'whyle I haue lyfe', adds 'you' at the end of 'and never to fail', adds 'that' before 'oure lyues may laste', adds 'holy' before 'Sancgreall', and deletes 'the' from 'the whiche'.

8 On folio 236, for a randomly chosen example, appear one double virgule and two sets of Roman numerals set off by four punctūs; otherwise, only conjunctions and sporadic capitalization serve as punctuation for the entire page. A classic discussion of this matter appears in N. F. Blake's 'The Editorial Process' in his *The English Language in Medieval Literature* (London, 1977), pp. 55–79. Blake points out that Modern English has more punctuation marks than did Middle English, and that these marks show syntax (p. 67). He adds that punctuation such as the punctus was not used syntactically in the Middle Ages, but rhetorically, liturgically, or to regulate oral performance – e.g., in Gregorian chant (pp. 67–8).

9 M. B. Parkes has written a history of the invention of punctuation by printers; see Chapter 6, 'The Technology of Printing and the Stabilization of the Symbols', in his classic *Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993), pp. 50–61. Aldus

This may not seem a major revelation. Since 1951, when W. W. Greg referred to punctuation, capitalization and the like as 'accidentals' in a text – elements clearly not as important as what he termed 'substantives', which are solidly meaty *words*[10] – since then, we have all been prone to dismiss the importance of punctuation except perhaps when we meet the same attitude in our students, whom we then lecture about the importance of the comma and the semicolon and their distinctive uses.

At the risk of being tedious, I briefly review the uses of punctuation, quoting M. B. Parkes's monumental *Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West*: '[Punctuation's] primary function is to resolve structural uncertainties in a text, and to signal nuances of semantic significance which might otherwise not be conveyed at all, or would at best be much more difficult for a reader to figure out.'[11] For a simple illustration of the modern importance of punctuation, consider one medieval English archer turning to another and saying something as innocent as 'Let us go shooting, Will.' Prior to the 1530s, this could not have been printed as it appears here; there were no commas. Instead, the words would have had to be written and printed 'Let us go shooting Will,' which would have boded ill for Will. No such sentence appeared, however, because writers knew that the syntactic ambiguity would obscure meaning. Conversely, as one might logically assume, our current imposition of syntactic punctuation upon texts whose authors never envisioned such devices changes meaning, sometimes obscures meaning and *always* obscures the author's writing style.[12] To return to Parkes's definition of punctuation, imposing modern syntactic punctuation on a medieval text may indeed resolve structural uncertainties – but modern punctuation may also obscure the important stylistic elements that Parkes calls 'nuances of semantic significance'.

This is the chief point I wish to demonstrate in this essay. Malory's unique 'nuances' have been obscured for centuries, probably to some minor degree by his early scribes, then massively by his early editors. His best-known modern editor, Eugène Vinaver, has largely returned to the manuscript text that is clearly closest to the words that Malory wrote – but even the magisterial Vinaver has punctuated Malory's text without a thought as to how he altered that text in doing so.[13]

Malory's manuscript text can demonstrate his stylistic acumen for itself. Below, I reproduce a passage that is as unremarkable as one finds: opening his

Manutius and his punctuation marks, and the growing use of punctuation marks by English printers, appear on pp. 51–2.

10 W. W. Greg, 'The Rationale of Copy-Text', *Studies in Bibliography* 3 (1950–1), 19–36.

11 Parkes, 'Introduction', p. 1.

12 I have pursued this topic at length in 'Textual Harassment: Caxton, De Worde, and Malory's *Morte Darthur*', in *Re-Viewing the* Morte Darthur, *Arthurian Studies* 60, ed. K. S. Whetter and R. L. Radulescu (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 27–47.

13 Equal intention to reproduce the Winchester Manuscript, but similar punctuation of the final text, appears in S. H. A. Shepherd's recent edition, *Le Morte Darthur. Sir Thomas Malory* (New York, 2004).

Tristram-story, Malory introduces his hero's parents and refers to Arthur's kingship. He does so in the typical paratactic style of the medieval English narrator: that is, he lays out his information in a string of clauses whose beginnings he signals with the use of coordinating conjunctions, most commonly the conjunction 'and' as in this passage. I have in a following addition shown part of the passage separated typographically to make the paratactic style immediately obvious.

> There was a kynge that hyght Melyodas and he was lorde of the contrey of lyones And this Melyodas was a lykly knyght as ony was th*a*t tyme lyvyng And by fortune he wedded kynge Markis sist*er* of Cornuayle and she was called Elyzabeth that was called bothe good and fayre And at that tyme kynge Arthure regned and he was hole kynge of Ingelonde . Walys . Scotlonde and of many othir realmys how be hit th*er* were many kyng*es* that were lordys of many contreyes But all they helde th*er* londys of kynge Arthure . . .
>
> (BL, Add. MS 59678 [Win], fol. 148v)

And the opening of the same passage, separated at the conjunctions:

> There was a kynge that hyght Melyodas
> and he was lorde of the contrey of lyones
> And this Melyodas was a lykly knyght as ony was th*a*t tyme lyvyng
> And by fortune he wedded kynge Markis sist*er* of Cornuayle
> and she was called Elyzabeth . . .

In its original form, the passage is easy to follow; one soon forms the habit of regarding the 'and' just as modern readers regard the period or semicolon. If one hears the passage read aloud, it is immediately clear how easy it is for listeners to follow this, Malory's typical syntactic structure. (I note in passing that most of Malory's original audience was accustomed to listening to, rather than reading, the texts they encountered.[14])

That passage, though typical, is not syntactically or stylistically very interesting. It does the job with a minimum of effort required from the reader and the listener; a reader may appreciate that, but probably finds little stimulation. I turn to another passage, which I present similarly.

14 See J. Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge, 1996); and her 'On Beyond Ong: Taking the Paradox Out of "Oral Literacy" (and "Literate Orality")', in H. L. C. Tristram, ed., *Medieval Insular Literature Between the Oral and the Written II: Continuity of Transmission* (Tübingen, 1997), pp. 155–76. See also R. Crosby, 'Oral Delivery in the Middle Ages', *Speculum* 11 (1936), 88–110, and her later 'Chaucer and the Custom of Oral Delivery', *Speculum* 13 (1938), 413–32. An important essay, one that recapitulates Crosby's essay to a degree but expands her thesis while advancing new material, is W. Nelson's 'From "Listen, Lordings" to "Dear Reader" ', *University of Toronto Quarterly* 46 (1976–7), 110–24.

Several Malorians have experimented with presenting Malory's work orally at the annual International Medieval Congress at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo. Since the Congress of 2000 they have met enthusiastic receptions by growing crowds of conference-goers interested in hearing Malory rendered in a close approximation to his Early Modern English. A recent issue of *Arthuriana* was dedicated to the oral–aural Malory, with mention of the Kalamazoo sessions: *Arthuriana* 13.4 (Winter 2003).

The passage describes part of Gareth's battle with the Red Knight of the Red Lands. Malory recounts the battle paratactically, again relying on the conjunction 'and' to provide syntax. He also provides an interesting stylistic touch: ten present participles appear in the passage – 'waggyng stagerynge pantynge blowynge & bledyng' followed by 'trasyng trau*er*synge foynynge and rasynge . . . [and] grovelynge'.

> And than thus they fought tyll hit was paste none and neu*er* wolde stynte tyll at the laste they lacked wynde bothe and than they stoode waggyng stagerynge pantynge blowynge & bledyng ['& bledyng' inserted above the line] that all that be helde them for the moste p*ar*ty wepte for pyte // So whan they had rested them a whyle they yode to batayle a gayne trasyng trau*er*synge foynynge and rasynge as ·ij· borys And at som tyme they toke th*er* bere as hit had bene ·ij· ra*m*mys and horled to gydyrs that som tyme they felle grovelynge to the erthe and at som tyme they were so a mated that aythir toke oth*er*s swerde in the stede of his owne And thus they endured tyll evynsonge //
>
> (Win – BL, Add. MS 59678, fol. 128v)

The same passage, typographically separated at clauses:

> **And** than thus they fought tyll hit was paste none
> **and** neu*er* wolde stynte tyll at the laste they lacked wynde bothe
> **and** than they stoode waggyng stagerynge pantynge blowynge & bledyng
> **that** all that be helde them for the moste p*ar*ty wepte for pyte //
> **So** whan they had rested them a whyle they yode to batayle a gayne trasyng trau*er*synge foynynge and rasynge as · ij· borys
> **And** at som tyme they toke th*er* bere as hit had bene ·ij· ra*m*mys
> **and** horled to gydyrs
> **that** som tyme they felle grovelynge to the erthe
> **and** at som tyme they were so a mated that aythir toke oth*er*s swerde in the stede of his owne
> **And** thus they endured tyll evynsonge //

The participles suggest both simultaneity and present time: these actions are happening all at once. A reader finds no difficulty in distinguishing the individual clauses, thanks to the preceding conjunctions and (once) thanks to double virgules as well, all of which appear in bold type in my clause-separated repetition of the passage. Again, hearing the passage read aloud would be the best way to capture the medieval reading experience, since it was thus experienced by most of its early audience.

One soon realizes that this passage is considerably more sophisticated than the earlier one from the Tristram-book; it presents an exciting occasion in an exciting syntax of coordination and present participles. And it does so in great part because Malory exploited the possibilities of his non-punctuated manuscript context. Consider the same passage in Caxton's 1485 first published edition, then in de Worde's 1529 third edition.

From Caxton's text:

> And thenne thus they foughte tyl it was past none / and neuer wold stynte tyl att the laste they lacked wynde bothe/ and then*n*e they stode wagyng and scateryng pontyng/ [sic for 'pantynge'] blowynge and bledynge that al that behelde them for the moost party wepte for pyte/ Soo whan they had restyd them a whyle/they yede [sic] to bataille ageyne/ tracyng racyng [sic instead of 'trauersynge'] foynyng as two bores / And at some tyme they toke their renne as hit had ben two rammys & hurtled to gyders that somtyme they felle grouelyng to the erthe/ And at somtyme they were so amased that eyther took others swerd in stede of his owne / Thus they endured tyl euensong tyme / (sig. n vi verso)

Here Caxton has once again exercized his editorial prerogative, though not so drastically as in the passage examined earlier. He has substituted 'scateryng' for 'stagerynge' and obscured the assonance of the first three present participles, printing 'wagyng and scateryng pontyng/' instead of Malory's 'waggyng stagerynge pantynge'. Similarly, in the second participial passage he converts Malory's 'trasyng trau*er*synge foynynge and rasynge as · ij· borys' into the less euphonic '/ tracyng racyng foynyng as two bores' – keeping three of Malory's four present participles, but losing the alliterative pairing of 'trasyng trau*er*synge'.

More crucially, Caxton has added to the passage's punctuation. Malory does not punctuate the passage beyond one double virgule and four capital letters. Caxton, however, evidently dissatisfied with these syntactic markers, adds one capital letter and nine more virgules to the passage. To repeat, the virgule was at this time a syntactic marker used to show a pause; with two exceptions, Caxton deployed his virgules to double-mark Malory's conjunction pauses with a preceding virgule. In the first exception, he used a virgule to mark a pause in the midst of the first participial passage, after his respelled 'pontyng'. In the second exception, he inserts a virgule-pause before the now-three-participle passage, '/ tracyng racyng foynyng as two bores'.

Caxton has not ruined the style of the passage; indeed, one could argue that nine of his ten virgules simply underline Malory's syntax, pointing to the pauses that the manuscript context had naturally assumed at each conjunction. Note, though, that in one instance Caxton's virgule has broken up the stylistic continuity of a group of present participles. Punctuation has done some harm to the simultaneity that Malory built into the passage, simultaneity that is its chief stylistic device.

De Worde's 1529 edition of this passage appears below. I pass over his changes to the lexical text here, just noting that they *are* major changes, involving some 24 separate words. The lexical details appear in Appendix 1.

And thus styll they fought tyll it was past noone & wolde not stynte/tyll at the last they lacked bothe wynde/& than they stode waggynge/stakerynge/ pantynge/ blowynge/and bledynge/so that all those that behelde them for the moost parte wepte for pite And wha*n* they had rested them a whyle they went to batayle

again/trasynge/rasynge & foynynge as two bores. And somtyme they ranne that one against y^{t} other as it had been two wylde rammes and hurtled so togyder that they fell to the grou*n*de grouelynge. And somtyme they were soo amased that eyther toke others swerde in stede of theyr owne . Thus they endured tyll euensongtyme (sig. 1 viii verso)

To the bibliographical text he has made changes even more far-reaching than his two-column format: his virgules, and his three punctūs, continue the assault on Malory's style. In de Worde's text Malory's syntax begins to vanish into printerly syntax. Recall that Caxton altered the simultaneity of one participial passage, though largely retaining Malory's syntax in the rest of the passage. De Worde, forty-four years later, goes much further. He deletes the virgule before the first ampersand, restoring Malory's syntax at that point. However, he adds a virgule, and thus a pause, after 'stynte'. It is in the first participial passage, though, that one finds him going well beyond Caxton in breaking up Malory's stylistic simultaneity with a series of pauses. Here he has inserted five virgules, which is to say five pauses, and all simultaneity vanishes: 'than they stode waggynge/stakerynge/ pantynge/blowynge/and bledynge/'. One need only compare Malory's phrasing, 'than they stoode waggyng stagerynge pantynge blowynge & bledyng', to see the slowing effect de Worde wrought upon the original.

To be sure, de Worde does delete Caxton's virgules after 'pite' and 'whyle', but he inserts another into the next string of participles, between 'trasynge' and 'rasynge': '/trasynge/rasynge & foynynge as two bores'. For the entire passage, simultaneity vanishes into pauses.

The destruction of Malory's simultaneity is the most noteworthy change in this passage. Also significant in the long run is the use of the three punctūs after 'bores'. 'grouelynge' and 'theyr owne'. The punctūs constitute a new development, and are interesting as an indication of the continuing development of our modern punctuation, but it is the inserted virgules – later to be commas – that mark the shift to another syntactic system, and thus the shift away from Malory's syntax. To illustrate our current end-point in that shift, I reproduce the passage below as it appears in the current definitive text of the *Morte*, the Oxford University Press third edition, edited by Eugène Vinaver and P. J. C. Field:

> And than thus they fought tyll hit was paste none, and never wolde stynte tyll at the laste they lacked wynde bothe, and than they stoode waggyng, stagerynge, pantynge, blowynge, and bledyng, that all that behelde them for the moste party wepte for pyté. So whan they had rested them a whyle they yode to batayle agayne, trasyng, traversynge, foynynge, and rasynge as two borys. And at som tyme they toke their bere as hit had bene two rammys and horled

> togydyrs, that somtyme they felle grovelynge to the erthe; and at som tyme they were so amated that aythir toke others swerde in the stede of his owne.
>
> And thus they endured tyll evynsonge, . . .[15]

The trend begun by de Worde culminates in Vinaver–Field. A reader finds twelve commas, three periods, one semicolon and one paragraph break, all of them alien to Malory's syntax. To be fair, one must observe that many of the Vinaver–Field punctuation markers support Malory's parataxis; in the participial passages, however, Vinaver–Field adds eight pauses where de Worde added six and where Malory intended none. The stylistic change is radical. Malory's original staggering bleeding breathless battle has become a stylized, intricate, slow-moving minuet.

Neither space nor, perhaps, readerly patience permits further comparison of passages. Instead, I turn now to examining Malory's syntax alone. I will then close with one final comparison.

II

A simple but elegant passage shows Malory's syntax at its best as he describes the love between Tristram and Isode.

> . . . and to telle the Ioyes that were be twyxte la beall Isode and S*ir* Trystramys there ys no maker can make hit nothir no harte can thynke hit noth*ir* no penne can wryte hit noth*ir* no mowth can speke hit (fol. 201)

Again, to make Malory's parataxis clear, I divide the passage at its syntactic markers:

> and to telle the Ioyes that were be twyxte la beall Isode and S*ir*
> Trystramys there ys no maker can make hit
> nothir no harte can thynke hit
> noth*ir* no penne can wryte hit
> noth*ir* no mowth can speke hit (fol. 201)

One recognizes the inexpressibility topos, carefully balanced in its expression. Malory has introduced the negative in the humble 'no maker', then used the series of 'nothir no' negatives to separate his clauses. The first 'no maker' negative sets up the expectation, which then tells a reader (whether a reader-aloud or a silent reader) to divide passages at the complementary following negatives, all carefully parallel. No punctuation need appear, thanks to Malory's careful balance of clauses. One admires the parallel structure, and enjoys the rhythmic pattern of 'nóthir nó hárte . . . nóth*ir* nó pénne

15 *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory: Third Edition*, ed E. Vinaver and P. J. C. Field, 3 vols., continuously paginated (Oxford, 1990), p. 323.

. . . nóth*ir* nó mówth', each with its opening trochee followed by an emphatic spondee preceding yet a second spondee: 'cán thínk, cán wríte, cán spéke'.

Another passage is familiar to all readers of Malory: it is the account of Arthur's slaying of Mordred, and of Mordred's dealing a seemingly mortal wound to Arthur. It appears below as the one passage it is in the manuscript, then separated at clause markers. Again, reading the passage aloud shows how easily one follows Malory's syntax by ear:

> Than the kynge gate his speare in bothe hys hondis and ran towarde s*ir* Mordred cryyng and saying traytoure now ys thy dethe day com And wh*a*n s*ir* Mordred saw kynge Arthur he ran vntyll hym w^{t} hys swerde drawyn in hys honde And there kyng Arthur smote s*ir* Mordred vndir the shylde w^{t} a foyne of hys speare thorow oute the body more than a fadom And w[ha]n s*ir* Mordred felte that he had hys dethys wounde he threste hym selff w^{t} the myght that he had vpp to the burre of kyng[e] Arthurs spear And ryght so he smote hys fadir kynge Arthure w^{t} hys swerde holdynge in both· hys hondys vppon the syde of the hede that the swerde perced the helmet and the tay of the brayne And there w^{t} Mordred daysshed downe starke dede to the erthe And noble kynge Arthure felle in a swouȝe to the erthe and th*er* he sowned oftyn tymys (fol. 480)

The same, separated at clause markers:

> Than the kynge gate his speare in bothe hys hondis
> And ran towarde s*ir* Mordred cryyng and saying
> traytoure now ys thy dethe day com
> And wh*a*n s*ir* Mordred saw kynge Arthur he ran vntyll hym w^{t} hys swerde drawyn in hys honde
> And there kyng Arthur smote s*ir* Mordred vndir the shylde w^{t} a foyne of hys speare thorow oute the body more than a fadom
> And w[ha]n s*ir* Mordred felte that he had hys dethys wounde
> he threste hym selff w^{t} the myght that he had vpp to the burre of kyng[e] Arthurs spear
> And ryght so he smote hys fadir kynge Arthure w^{t} hys swerde holdynge in both· hys hondys vppon the syde of the hede
> that the swerde perced the helmet and the tay of the brayne
> And there w^{t} Mordred daysshed downe starke dede to the erthe· And
> noble kynge Arthure felle in a swouȝe to the erthe
> and th*er* he sowned oftyn tymys (fol. 480)

This is masterfully written, not only for its content – the mortal confrontation of son and father – but for its style. Concerning content, one stratum of the entire *Morte Darthur* has been rising to this point since Arthur lay with Morgause and Merlin told him, 'ye have lyene by youre syster and on hir ye have gotyn a childe that shall destroy you and all the knyghtes of youre realme' (Vinaver–Field 44.17–19). Here that prophesy finds fulfillment.

The style of the passage is suitably somber. One notes that four of the shortest clauses tell the story in brief:

traytoure now ys thy dethe day com
. . .
And there w^{t} Mordred daysshed downe starke dede to the erthe
And noble kynge Arthure felle in a swouȝe to the erthe
and th*er* he sowned oftyn tymys

One may admire the telling brevity of Arthur's introductory utterance and of the three closing passages that narrate the results of the encounter. Where other romance writers would have spent pages upon this meeting, and line after line upon its climax, Malory employs what looks to modern eyes like a paragraph to narrate the entire event, and these four succinct clauses to present its introduction and conclusion. Within the passage, the central clauses narrate Arthur's spearing Mordred, Mordred's thrusting himself forward up the spear's length, then his striking his father king Arthur 'w^{t} hys swerde holdynge in both[e] hys hondys'. Surely Malory did not sit there in his Newgate cell and say to himself, 'Now I'll introduce these events in three clauses, present them in five clauses and then conclude them in four clauses' – no writer thinks this way, with the possible exception of Dante. Malory led up to the central events, then led down from them, with his story-teller's instinct – and the result was this finely balanced passage of twelve clauses.

One notes other stylistic felicities in the passage, beyond its rapid pace. See, for example, the emphatic alliteration of 'dethe day' in the second clause, and the parallel but reversed clause beginnings that follow:

And wh*a*n s*ir* Mordred saw kynge Arthur . . .
And there kyng Arthur smote s*ir* Mordred

In these two introductory phrases, Malory has produced rhythmic parallels: each is strictly iambic:

And wh*á*n s*ir* Mórdred sáw kynge Árthur . . .
And thére kyng Árthur smóte s*ir* Mórdred . . .

And, finally, the alliterative 'dáysshed dówne stárke déde' combines threefold alliteration with four rhythmically stressed words in a phrase that powerfully presents Mordred's end.

III

Up to this point, I have suggested that Malory's style has been altered by early printer-editors' altering Malory's bibliographic (as well as lexical) text. I have also shown parts of his manuscript text that demonstrate what a fine stylist Malory actually is, in his own textual environment. I turn to a final example of the influence of the bibliographic text upon one's perception – and reception – of the text.

Malory inserts two May passages into his *Morte*, both of them extended

narrative comments. The first is over a page long, and it celebrates the love of Launcelot and Guenevere as only comparable to those fine days in May when flowers blossom and burgeon, unlike love 'nowadayes'. The May-metaphor runs throughout the first passage, comparing true love to late spring and early summer.[16]

In the second May passage, which comes late in the book and heralds the end of the Round Table, Malory transforms the May metaphor:

> In May whan eu*er*y harte floryshyth /&/ burgenyth
> for as the season ys lusty to be holde and comfortable so man
> and woman reioysyth and gladith of som*er* com*m*ynge w^{t} his
> freyshe floures ffor wynter wyth hys row3e wyndis and
> blastis causyth lusty men and women to cowre and to syt
> by fyres // So thys season hit be felle in the moneth· of may
> a greete angure and vnhappy that stynted nat tylle þ^{e} floure
> of chyvalry of the worlde was destroyed and slayne And all [to 449v]
> was longe vppon ij· vnhappy knyghtis whych· were named
> s*ir* Aggravayne and s*ir* Mordred that were brethirn vnto sir
> Gawayne for thys s*ir* Aggravayne and s*ir* Mordred had eu*er* a
> prevy hate vnto the quene dame Gwenyu*er* and to sir Launc*elot*
> and dayly and nyghtly they eu*er* wacched vppon s*ir* Launc*elot*
> So hyt mysse fortuned . . . (fols. 449–449v)

Just before this passage the manuscript has presented the explicit for the preceding episode, complete with another rubricated reference to Sir Thomas. In this passage appears the incipit for the following story, presented without the usual 'here begynnyth' but with a row of *literae notabiliores* as Malory turns to his second May passage.

The second passage reverses the thrust of the earlier May passage, which repeatedly turns from winter to May and to its flourishing and burgeoning. The first May passage introduces the sole episode in which Lancelot and Guinever make love in Malory's *Morte*, and is appropriately springlike. This second passage goes from May to winter, and remains wintry. That is, it begins with 'so man and woman reioysyth and gladith of som*er* com*m*ynge w*ith* his freyshe floures' then turns to the chilly 'ffor wynter wyth hys row3e wyndis and blastis causyth lusty men and women to cowre and to syt by fyres'. With no return to summer, but retaining with 'So' the idea of rough winds, blasts and cold, the narrator continues, '// So thys season hit be felle in the moneth·of may a greete angure and vnhappy'. The passage stops at winter, appropriately for the beginning of the episode Vinaver titles 'Slander and Strife', in which Lancelot will be surprised in Guenevere's chamber, will flee the court, and will accidentally slay his protégé Gareth as he rescues the queen from the fire. The passage shows an effortless return to Malory's earlier

16 The 'May Passage' appears in Vinaver–Field's *The Works* on pp. 1119–20.

winter–spring metaphor, coupled with an equally effortless reversal to spring–winter imagery.

Caxton adds six virgules to this passage, as we might expect from the earlier samples of his revision (Appendix 2); aside from that, he makes few changes, and they are minimal ones: he changes 'euery harte' to 'euery lusty herte', he adds a few words, and he shifts one phrase to a later position (sig. aa vi). The virgules, of course, are the ancestors to our modern comma; Caxton deploys them to emphasize the clause separations in the text.

Where Caxton remains largely faithful – for him – to Malory's lexical and bibliographical text, de Worde introduces several innovations:

AT the season of y^{e} merry moneth of Maye wha*n* euery lusty hert flourysshetb & burgeneth. For as y^{e} season is lusty to beholde & co*m*fortable / so man & woman reioyce and be gladde of somer comynge with his fresshe floures. For wynter with his rough wyndes and blastes / causeth a lusty man and woman to coure and syt by the fyre. So in this season as the moneth of Maye / it happened there befel a grete angre/the whiche stynted not tyll the floure of chyualrye of all the worlde was destroyed and slayne . And all was longe of two vnhappy knyghtes/ the whiche were named sir Agrauayne and syr Mordred that were bretherne vnto sir Gawayne For these two knyghtes sir Agrauayne and syr Mordred had euer a preuy hate vnto the quene dame Gueneuer & vnto syr Launcelot / and dayly and nyghtly they euer watched vpon syr Lau*n*celot. So it myshappened . . . (sig. A iiij verso)

I mention first two changes in the lexical and bibliographical texts: changes in wording and the addition of de Worde's developing system of punctuation.

De Worde's changes in the lexical text – the wording – are on a par with the rough-and-ready editing we've already seen in Malory's first two printer-editors. For the most part, de Worde retains Caxton's changes; he adds several phrases or words, beginning with the opening words, where Caxton alters the text only by adding 'lusty' to 'euery herte'. De Worde changes Caxton's 'In May whan euery lusty herte florysshetb . . .' to 'AT the season of y^{e} merry moneth of Maye when euery lusty hert flourysshetb. . . .' I cannot resist pointing out that this passage has left its mark in Hollywood: the phrase 'y^{e} merry moneth of Maye' has been immortalized in the Lerner and Lowe play and film *Camelot*. Most readers will recall the opening line of the song, 'It's May; it's May; the MER-ry month of May . . .' This whimsical little alliterative opening stems directly from the alliteratively named Wynkyn de Worde. It appears in this second May passage neither in Win nor in Caxton.

De Worde makes few other changes, adding, in the middle of the passage, 'it happened there befel' to replace Caxton's 'it byfelle', 'the whiche' to replace Caxton's 'that' and finally 'these two knyghtes' to replace the 'this' appearing in Caxton. All of these may be compositors' changes, making the lines fit the double-column format.

In the bibliographical text, three items are of interest. First, and to repeat, de Worde has changed the reading experience by printing the *Morte* in two

columns. The second interesting item, and one central to my concern, appears in de Worde's inserting five punctūs into Malory's text. In every instance his punctus replaces one of Caxton's virgules, which would not be troublesome were it not for the further development of English punctuation. That development led the punctus to become a period, as we now call it, a mark that signals not a pause but a stop. Thus, the first punctus appears after 'burgeneth' in 'AT the season of y^{e} merry moneth of Maye wha*n* euery lusty hert flourysshеth & burgeneth'. This change shows how modernizing Malory's syntax makes his writing appear clumsy. Malory would have expected only a brief pause after 'burgeneth' before the conjunction 'For'. The 'For' introduces a narrative reflection about May, an excursus punctuated by the series 'For . . . so . . . For' and arriving at a second 'So', which returns us to the May month where we began. It is a smoothly, even masterfully, shaped series of clauses as Malory constructed it, and *it is not a sentence: Malory did not have the syntactic concept of sentences*. In de Worde's hands it moves toward clumsiness, beginning with what we now call a sentence fragment leading to the now-separated 'sentence', 'For as y^{e} season is lusty to beholde & co*m*fortable / so man & woman reioyce and be gladde of somer comynge with his fresshe floures'. The unity of Malory's introduction to his second May passage has vanished. As I have suggested elsewhere, much of Malory's unity of utterance has vanished owing to the editorial imposition of modern syntactic punctuation; Caxton to some degree, and de Worde to a much greater degree, are the first in a series of disunifiers.[17]

Without belaboring that point, I turn to the third bibliographical innovation de Worde brings to the *Morte*. Here, de Worde does the text a favor, even though he greatly changes the reading experience by his innovation. He presents a woodcut introducing his book 20 (Figure 4). This woodcut – one of twenty-one that de Worde added to the text in both the 1498 and the 1529 printings – is, to my mind, an increaser of immediacy. It appears on the page preceding de Worde's text as examined above. One sees in the woodcut a group of tall, aristocratically garbed figures to the left, and a group of much shorter, roughly dressed, armed figures to the right. As the chapter heading below it testifies, this woodcut shows Aggravaine – here dramatically smaller than the figures he addresses – either telling Gawain and three others of his intent to make the Lancelot–Guenevere love affair known to the king, or, perhaps, Aggravaine actually telling Arthur of the affair. The woodcut probably signifies both instances, even with a glance at the hunt that Aggravaine

17 See D. T. Hanks, Jr and J. Fish, 'Beside the Point: Medieval Meanings vs. Modern Impositions in Editing Malory's *Morte Darthur*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 3.98 (1997), 273–89. See also Hanks, 'Back to the Past: Editing Malory's *Morte Darthur*', in *The Malory Debate: Essays on the Texts of* Le Morte Darthur, ed. B. Wheeler et al. (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 285–300. That essay analyzes chiefly the 'May Passage' in what Vinaver called 'The Knight of the Cart', arguing that modern editions of Malory's *Morte* effect major changes upon Malory's bibliographical and lexical texts. See also Hanks, 'Textual Harassment', noted above.

Figure 4. Woodcut from de Worde's 1529 printing of Malory's *Morte Darthur* (sig. A iiij). British Library shelfmark G10510. Used by permission of The British Library.

later suggests to Arthur as a means of trapping Lancelot and Guenevere. It is significant, of course, that the woodcut depicts the Aggravaine-led group to the right dressed as huntsmen with dogs – each dog appropriately snarling. Later in this episode, Lancelot and Guenevere are indeed to be hunted down, by armed men, in Guenevere's chamber. The malicious busy-ness of Aggravaine appears in the positions of hands and legs in the foremost huntsman figure; the mannerly disapproval that Gawain shows throughout the following passage appears in the slight backward movement of the well-dressed figure whom the smaller Aggravaine addresses. Of course, if the well-dressed figure be seen as Arthur, his being taken aback by Aggravaine's

comments is, again, wholly consistent with the tone of the conversation between the two.

As Edward Hodnett said years ago, these woodcuts are masterpieces;[18] I see this bibliographical addition as the forerunner of such illustrated books as Howard Pyle's *The Story of King Arthur and His Knights* and of other illustrated books that attempt to capture the imagery of Arthurian adventure. In de Worde's case, the woodcut ushers the reader into the new chapter with a distinct sense of drama and – given the wintry imagery of the first passage in the coming chapter – with a sense of coming disaster. It is a major bibliographic addition to Malory's text; I cannot but see it as a beneficial innovation, even though one that distinctly alters a reader's conception of the work.

In this essay I have examined several passages from Malory's *Morte Darthur*, a monument of English prose style as well as the embodiment of one of our culture's most enduring stories. My intent has been to compare Malory's prose style – the style of a manuscript context – with the style imposed upon him by his later editors, beginning with William Caxton and Wynkyn de Worde. As you have seen, neither printer-editor scrupled to add to the lexical text of the *Morte*. More tellingly in the long run, each has also added to the bibliographical text. I cannot deplore the woodcuts that de Worde added to his bibliographical text; I can and do deplore the lessened view of Malory's stylistic mastery that results from the imposition of syntactic punctuation upon his writing. His syntax was not our syntax, but his style is one we can appreciate.

Do not assume that I urge our return to the largely unpunctuated texts of medieval works. Not only would students find them daunting, so would more seasoned scholars. Medieval reading conventions are not modern reading conventions, and there is no turning back the clock. What one can do, though, is to present to oneself, and to one's students, passages where Malory's style – or Chaucer's style – or Langland's style – or the Pearl Poet's style – is particularly striking if we view it without the imposition of modern syntactic punctuation. As I hope the examples in this essay show, in the case of the *Morte Darthur* one can gain from such a viewing a new appreciation for the writing skill of Sir Thomas Malory, knight-prisoner.

[18] E. Hodnett, *English Woodcuts, 1480–1535*, corr. edn (Oxford, 1973), p. 14.

Appendix 1

De Worde's version of the participial passage, in his 1529 edition of the *Morte*:

And thus styll they fought tyll it was past noone & wolde not stynte/tyll at the last they lacked bothe wynde/& than they stode waggynge/stakerynge/ pantynge/blowynge/and bledynge/so that all those that behelde them for the moost parte wepte for pite And wha*n* they had rested them a whyle they went to batayle agayn/trasynge/rasynge & foynynge as two bores. And somtyme they ranne that one agaynst y^{t} other as it had ben two wylde rammes and hurtled so togyder that they fell to the grou*n*de grouelynge. And somtyme they were soo amased that eyther toke others swerde in stede of theyr owne. Thus they endured tyll euensongtyme (sig. l viii v^{o})

Lexical revisions: de Worde changes the opening, using 'thus styll' instead of Caxton's 'thenne thus'. Similarly, he converts 'neuer wold stynte' to 'wolde not stynte', then inverts 'lacked wynde bothe/' to 'lacked bothe wynde/'. He returns to Malory's 'stagerynge'. spelling it 'stakerynge', and restores the assonantal 'a' to 'pantynge/', adds 'so' to precede 'that', adds 'those' to 'all', substitutes 'And' for 'Soo', deletes the 'at' before 'somtyme', converts 'they toke their renne' to 'they ranne that one agaynst y^{t} other' – a fairly major change – and converts Malory and Caxton's 'rammes' into 'wylde rammes'. He then adds another 'so' before 'togyder', and converts another passage: Caxton's 'they felle grouelyng to the erthe/' becomes the alliterative 'they fell to the grounde grouelynge'. Finally, de Worde deletes the 'at' before 'somtyme'.

Appendix 2

Caxton's version of Malory's second May passage:

> In May whan euery lusty herte florysshеth and burgeneth/ For as the season is lusty to beholde and comfortable/ Soo man and woman reioycen and gladen of somer comynge with hys fresshe floures/ for wynter with his rouȝ wyndes and blastes causeth a lusty man and woman to coure / and sytte fast by the fyre / So in this season as in the monethe of May it byfelle a grete angre and vnhap/that stynted not til the floure of chyualry of all the world was destroyed & slayn/and alle was long vpon two vnhappy knyghtes the whiche were named Agrauayne and sire Mordred that were bretheren vnto sir Gawayne/for this sir Agrauayne and sir mordred [sic] had euer a preuy hate vnto the Quene dame Gueneuer and to syr launcelot/ and dayly and nyghtly they euer watched vpon sir Launcelot/ Soo it myshapped . . . (sig. aa vi)

V

BALLAD AND POPULAR ROMANCE IN THE PERCY FOLIO

Raluca L. Radulescu

Medieval English popular romance has received increasing attention from academics in recent years, especially with the publication of a number of edited volumes: W. R. J. Barron's *Arthur of the English* in 1999, followed by Ad Putter's and Jane Gilbert's *Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance* in 2000 and Nicola McDonald's *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England* in 2004.[1] These group projects display the growth in critical interest in popular romance, an area that editors and contributors to these collections alike deplore as insufficiently explored or sometimes neglected altogether by modern scholarship. As a step towards opening up the debate regarding the future of critical engagement with less immediately appealing medieval texts, this essay proposes to extend the discussion about popular romance by including the complex relationship between popular romance and the ballad. It will also address the problematic nature of cultural cross-fertilisation between these two (previously considered distinct) genres, and will interrogate the classifications adopted by critics to date.[2] A related boundary, though one by no means easy to ascertain and always likely to spark off debate, is that between the target audiences for romances and ballads respectively,[3] a starting point for future research, especially in the context of modern approaches to popular culture.

The editors of the above collections have each summarised the debate over the usefulness of studying medieval popular romance, often stressing the detrimental effect of its reception among modern readerships through critical

1 *The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*, ed. W. R. J. Barron, Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, II (Cardiff, 1999), especially 'Folk Romance', pp. 197–224; *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, ed. A. D. Putter and J. Gilbert (Harlow, Essex, 2000); *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England: Essays in Popular Romance*, ed. N. McDonald (Manchester, 2004).

2 Versions of this essay have been presented at the 21st International Arthurian Congress, Utrecht (July 2005) and the Fifteenth Century Conference, Swansea (September 2005). I am grateful for the constructive criticism received at these conferences as well as Prof. P. J. C. Field's comments on an earlier draft of this article.

3 A starting point has been established in Putter and Gilbert, *Spirit*, Introduction, section on 'Audience', pp. 20–6, and McDonald, *Pulp Fictions*, 'A Polemical Introduction', passim.

approaches to this genre.[4] As a result most critics choose not to tackle what is perceived as a debased version of a more sophisticated traditional romance, but instead turn to more 'serious issues', like 'manuscripts, editorial issues, textual history', which are significantly more valued in terms of academic output.[5] In her provocative 'Polemical introduction' to *Pulp Fictions*, McDonald deals with literary assessments of the popular romance, and goes even further in denouncing modern tendencies to discard the study of such texts; she suggests that there is a 'thinly – if at all – veiled repugnance to the romances themselves, not only to the poetic form, but their subject matter and the medieval audience who is imagined to enjoy them'.[6] Thus, if we agree with McDonald and other critics who study popular romances, and furthermore decide to analyse the cross-fertilisation between late medieval romances and ballads, the motifs that circulated freely between these two genres should be analysed, since such a movement, I will argue, is likely to have helped to create a broader appeal for medieval romances.

The place where the questions outlined above are raised most often is Bishop Percy's folio manuscript, an artifact that has inhabited a very particular space in Arthurian criticism and literary criticism generally. For the purpose of discussing the suggestions made above, my essay will focus on this manuscript, and thus a brief summary of critical views of it will be helpful. Reviled for the incomplete and debased nature of the romances contained in it, and even more deplored for its poor state as a cultural object, with the added criticism to Percy's own agency in the reception of the texts (he published extracts in his volume of *Reliques*), the folio raises important questions not only about the transmission of popular romance from the medieval to the modern period, but also about the way literary critics tackle romances in collocation with other material.

The main stages in its discovery are well-known: in 1769 Thomas Percy found the seventeenth-century manuscript (dated *c.* 1650) in the house of a Shropshire acquaintance, Humphrey Pitt of Shifnal, where he noticed it under a desk, to all appearances in the process of being used by Mr Pitt's maids to light the fire.[7] The manuscript was thus already in a damaged state when Percy saved it and took it for rebinding. During the latter process the manuscript was cropped even further, to the extent that significant amounts of text were lost.[8] Many of the romances and ballads copied in the folio were affected by this process, and, as a result, modern editors' attempts to recuperate the original readings are in many cases hindered by the lack of other surviving

4 See Putter and Gilbert, *Spirit*, Introduction, p. vii.

5 Putter and Gilbert, *Spirit*, Introduction, p. vii; see also McDonald's use of this critical comment in her *Pulp Fictions*, Introduction, pp. 4, 9.

6 McDonald, *Pulp Fictions*, Introduction, p. 5.

7 For a reassessment of the manuscript and its cultural history, see G. Rogers, 'The Percy Folio Manuscript Revisited', in *Romance in Medieval England*, ed. M. Mills, J. Fellows and C. Meale (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 39–64.

8 See Rogers, 'The Percy Folio', pp. 39–40, and Groom, *The Making of Percy's Reliques*, pp. 6–7.

versions to be used for collation. The current, ongoing project of re-editing the Arthurian romances in the Percy folio is designed to answer some of the questions arising from the variety of older editions, and it is from this editorial work that the present questions have arisen.[9]

The history of Percy's decisions in editing and sometimes substantially reshaping the texts he found is well documented in Nick Groom's 1999 book *The Making of Percy's Reliques*.[10] Groom identifies the process through which Percy and his contemporaries disputed one another's view of a correct presentation and understanding of past literary works, the debates around editorial issues, and the cultural climate that surrounded the reception of romances among other pieces in this collection. As McDonald reminds us in her introduction, a modern reassessment of popular romance necessarily entails an analysis of the earliest responses to romance and the way certain assumptions about quality were shaped even by Percy and his generation, and only slightly modified ever since.[11] Another reviewer and critic of the history of the manuscript, Joseph Donatelli, had already pointed out in 1993 the danger in assessing texts individually rather than considering the whole manuscript as an artifact that spans several centuries. In his article Donatelli drew attention to the modern tendency of separating critical analyses of the different texts contained in the Percy folio by giving precedence to issues of period, genre and theme, rather than to the complexity of the artifact and the relationships between the texts.[12]

Even as early as the Victorian period, critics similarly deplored the heavy-handed treatment of medieval texts employed by Percy in his edition of the *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*.[13] However, the only surviving full edition of the texts found in the folio, by Hales and Furnivall, published between 1867 and 1868,[14] perpetuated certain preconceptions about what works were or were not literary enough to be edited, an approach which, in Donatelli's words, 'promoted a piece-meal appreciation of [the manuscript] contents'.[15] F. J. Child's volumes of *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* took this editing procedure further by selecting only those texts classified as ballads.[16] A direct result of Child's choice of project was that other genres

9 This project of editing the Arthurian romances in the Percy Folio is currently progressing towards publication under the general editorship of Dr Nick Groom, and will be published by the University of Exeter Press. For this project I am editing 'Boy and Mantle' and 'Sir Launcelot of DuLake'.

10 Groom, *The Making of Percy's Reliques* (Oxford, 1999), esp. Introduction, pp. 1–18.

11 McDonald, *Pulp Fictions*, Introduction, pp. 1–10.

12 J. Donatelli, 'The Percy Folio Manuscript: A Seventeenth-century Context for Medieval Poetry', in *English Manuscript Studies 1100–1700*, IV, ed. P. Beal and J. Griffiths (London and Toronto, 1993), pp. 114–3.

13 Percy's edition was published as *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry: Consisting of Old Heroic Ballads, Songs, and Other Pieces of Our Earlier Poets; together with Some Few of Later Date. By Thomas Percy, lord bishop of Dromore*, 3 vols. (London, 1765–7).

14 *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript: Ballads and Romances*, ed. J. W. Hales and F. J. Furnivall, 2 vols. (London, 1867–8). Hales and Furnivall made their own choices of 'good' and 'bad' readings of the texts and thus perpetuated a certain view of editing and literary value.

15 Donatelli, 'The Percy Folio', p. 115.

16 *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, ed. F. J. Child, 5 vols. (Boston, 1882–98).

represented in the Percy folio, such as seventeeth-century lyrics and medieval popular romances, were, in their turn, claimed by period and genre specialists and became their exclusive critical property, to the exclusion of comparative or holistic approaches. When romances in this manuscript have been re-edited at various stages, no serious attempt has been made by critics to revalue what has previously been dismissed by generations as 'hack-work', and thus 'mangled and modernized versions of medieval romances preserved in this seventeenth-century manuscript are [still] often viewed as embarrassments when set beside the earlier, and generally more reliable, versions'.[17]

If one looks back at Percy's practices, one has to acknowledge, therefore, that his editorial choices had far-reaching cultural consequences in their own period, so much so that Groom considers they promoted a 'mingled, confused promiscuity [in this area, which] became a principle of the Gothic'.[18] Given the Romantic cultural backdrop Percy's enterprise is usually read against, and his paradoxical interest in less than heroic or exemplary accounts of medieval romance characters, Groom is right to say that the 'contemplation of the past as an activity of nostalgic sentimentalism is therefore deeply embedded in memories of childhood', thus recommending Percy's *Reliques* as 'a grave and pedagogic companion to the young reader'. The issue of the transmission of values from medieval romance to its relatives, the popular romance and later the ballad, becomes ever more relevant here, and is all the more present in Percy's view and presentation of past literature. As Groom points out,

> . . . Percy's Gothic scalds and medieval bards may have been savage, but they were not barbarous cannibals or polygamists. Polite society was maintained as inherently civilized through its native poetic traditions. Ballads, with their cast of extraordinary everyday folk, *democratized the ideology of polite aesthetics*.[19]

The ballads were, therefore, at least for Percy's contemporaries (as much as, I am suggesting, for medieval and even more modern readers), a more palatable approach to the literary themes tackled through 'polite aesthetics' contained in their respectable models, the medieval romances. The common critical assumption about ballads is that they emerged at the end of the Middle Ages as a combination of ancient metrical romance and the mainstream of folksong, thus giving birth to what many have called the 'debased' versions of romances. Some critics have even suggested that the ballad was the only possible form of survival for what one of them, Thomas Garbáty, called the 'poetic dinosaurs [that] died in the fifteenth century'.[20]

In this context, can we continue to consider romances and ballads as distinct literary genres, or do we change our classifications in order to accom-

17 Donatelli, 'The Percy Folio', p. 115.
18 Groom, *The Making of Percy's Reliques*, p. 244.
19 Groom, *The Making of Percy's Reliques*, p. 240 (my italics).
20 Th. J. Garbáty, 'Rhyme, Romance, Ballad, Burlesque, and the Confluence of Form', in *Fifteenth-Century Studies: Recent Essays*, ed. Robert F. Yeager (Hamden, CT, 1984), pp. 283–301 (p. 285).

modate them as the equivalent of musical variations on the same theme, that is, valuable expressions of various degrees of sophistication in the interpreting process of Arthurian themes? If a direct relationship between romances and ballads, especially in terms of textual filiation and thematic development, has already been agreed on, and has been undertaken by a number of critics, from Child to Albert Friedman,[21] and David Fowler, whose book on the ballad remains influential,[22] why do they continue to be studied separately? A number of problems have resulted from these studies, mainly concerning the approach to genre and period. In his 1997 reassessment of the 'Ballad and the Middle Ages', for example, Richard Firth Green reveals the dangerous effect of concentrating on a specific genre, to the exclusion of contextual analyses, in the same way that Donatelli did in relation to the Percy Folio (see above, p. 70). Furthermore, he criticises the trend that favours an artificially imposed order (classification) in an otherwise complicated system (medieval culture), and states that '[t]he thrust of [Fowler]'s study was to uproot the ballad from the untidy profusion of medieval popular culture and transplant it into the more orderly garden of gothic antiquarianism, so that medievalists found themselves freed of responsibility for what had already begun to seem an uncomfortable, unruly genre'.[23]

Green proposes a few directions in which the study of ballads could be profitably developed, among which are the relationships with magic and witchcraft, reflections on the state and the Church, and moral values (for example, 'gentilesse' in Chaucer).[24] In doing this, he stresses the value of studying popular culture and its ramifications, and not least the importance of assessing the complicated issue of oral culture. Then he considers the extreme reaction to the 'uncomfortable, unruly genres' of ballad and popular romance from literary critics, who abandoned them altogether and then left them to folklorists and musicologists.[25] Indeed, with the exception of the three collections mentioned above, individual studies on the orality of the ballads and popular romances are published, with very few exceptions, in journals of folklore.[26] This trend falls under the category known as 'romantic' criticism of popular romances, characterised by Ad Putter and Jane Gilbert as the tendency to focus on minstrel agency in the transmission of these texts rather than adopting any of the approaches employed in mainstream literary analysis.[27] In other words, popular romances and ballads are not worth the effort

21 A. B. Friedman, *The Ballad Revival: Studies on the Influence of Popular on Sophisticated Poetry* (Chicago and London, 1961).
22 D. C. Fowler, *Literary History of the Popular Ballad* (Durham, NC, 1968).
23 R. Firth Green, 'The Ballad and the Middle Ages', in *The Long Fifteenth Century: Essays for Douglas Gray*, ed. Helen Cooper and Sally Mapstone (Oxford, 1997), pp. 163–84 (p. 165).
24 Green, 'The Ballad and the Middle Ages', pp. 179–84.
25 Green, 'The Ballad and the Middle Ages', p. 165.
26 For example, K. Reichl's 'Comparative Notes on the Performance of Middle English Popular Romance', *Western Folklore*, Winter/Spring 2003.
27 Putter and Gilbert, *Spirit*, Introduction, p. 3.

of the professional literary critic. Some critics, however, now argue that it is high time to reassess these assumptions.

What is, therefore, the current appeal of the popular romances, what values do they represent, what range of sentiment and social engagement do they project? Critical opinion has long agreed, generally speaking, that romance confirms and reinforces the values of an aristocratic elite even when it appears challenge or ridicule those values. Examples of these values abound in Middle English romance, which portrays a fictional world dominated by innate nobility and its display, and which is permeated by contempt for churlish behaviour. A conspicuous absence in romances is, of course, any social advancement from rags to riches: in most cases characters are destined to reveal their high birth or come into the heritage they deserve, from which they were alienated by an evil opponent. There are rare instances when the emphasis seems to lie more on the journey through which a hero achieves good reputation by means of displaying correct gentlemanly behaviour – from which a wider audience than the initially presumed aristocratic one would learn good manners. But these instances are few and the heroes in question are almost always revealed to be highly born.[28]

When the discussion turns to the audience for Middle English romances, it can be argued that an utilitarian view has come to the fore in recent decades. In her survey of 'Romance after 1400', Helen Cooper assesses the use of romance by a medieval audience, offering Thomas Hoccleve's made-up list of good reading matter for the knightly class as a typical summary:[29]

> Bewar, Oldcastel, and for Crystes sake
> Clymbe no more in holy writ so hie.
> Rede the storie of Lancelot de lake,
> Or Vegece of the aart of Chivalrie,
> The seege of Troie, or Thebes; thee applie
> To thyng that may to th'ordre of knyght longe![30]

This fragment is taken from Hoccleve's *Remonstrance against Oldcastle* (1415), in which the author, like others before and after him – William Worcester, for instance, deplored the state of knightly education decades later[31] – complains about the lack of attention given to proper education for aristocratic young men. Through the study of military manuals (here exemplified through Vegetius), romances (here those about Lancelot), and also the

28 An argument in favour of considering Thomas Malory's 'Tale of Sir Gareth', for example, as an educational model for the gentry was put forward by F. Riddy (*Sir Thomas Malory* (Leiden, 1987)) and further developed in my *Gentry Context for Malory's Morte Darthur* (Cambridge, 2003), Ch. 3. Karen Cherewatuk has also discovered similar connections between gentry culture and expectations and this story, original with Malory (see her 'Pledging Troth in Malory's "Tale of Sir Gareth" ', *JEGP* 101:1 (2002), 19–40).

29 H. Cooper, 'Romance after 1400', in *The New Cambridge History of Medieval Literature*, ed. D. Wallace (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 690–719 (p. 690).

30 *Hoccleve's Works*, ed. F. J. Furnivall, EETS ES 61, 72, 73 (London, 1892–1925), p. 14, ll. 193–8 (cited in Cooper).

great epics (of Troy and Thebes), an aristocratic elite would be exposed to the essence of appropriate class attributes: wise strategy, nobility and heroism. A broad definition of romance encompasses all of these themes: this is a genre concerned with events happening far away or long ago, whose characters pursue individual achievement for the enhancement of their status, and thus it gives precedence, in turn, to each of these aspects. Indeed, as Cooper points out,

> a closer look at romance at the end of the Middle Ages demonstrates that audiences and copyists valued the form more for its immediate topicality than for its escapism. Those earlier stories and long traditions are brought to bear on contemporary issues and concerns precisely because they are traditional, and with that stable and ideal.[32]

This statement implies, and critics have widely accepted, that the traditional aristocratic values depicted in romances are to be imitated; when it comes to their reception, any other group apart from the elite who is reading romances would necessarily use this literary material as a practical guide to better themselves or at least dream of doing so.

When we turn to the genre of popular romance, however, things are much more complicated. McDonald, in her introduction to *Pulp Fictions*, points out that popular romance is usually relegated to a lower level of aesthetic pleasure on the grounds that it is a poor imitation of a superior genre:

> . . . its [romance's] ideologies (of gender, social class, race, religion and so on) are assumed not to challenge but rather to mimic those of that same elite. [. . .] Popular romance, in other words, loses on both counts – degenerate in form and style it has none of the disruptive potential [of the higher genre] . . . Not all dominant ideologies, however, are equally opposed to the disparate interests of the popular audience: the audience of Middle English romance is at least as heterogeneous (in terms of age, gender, wealth, social rank, education and regional affiliation) as it is homogeneous. And indeed, the individual members of that audience are just as likely as we are to have complex wants and needs that they will seek to satisfy in different, and sometimes contradictory, ways. But more importantly, popular culture (and with it popular romance) is not simply, as its detractors would have us believe, an instrument of social control – popular romance is too diverse a genre to support such reductive analysis – and neither is its audience made up solely of dupes. Popular romance is rather a space, narrative as well as imaginary, *in which cultural norms and divergencies from those norms are negotiated and articulated*.[33]

My preliminary investigation suggests that McDonald is right to believe that popular romances (and I would add ballads here as well) constitute a space

31 William Worcester is credited with having written the tract *Boke of Noblesse* under the patronage of Sir John Fastolf in the 1470s: see *Boke of Noblesse*, ed. J. G. Nichols (London, 1860).

32 Cooper, 'Romance after 1400', p. 690.

33 McDonald, Introduction, p. 12 (my italics).

where cultural negotiations take place. I would also suggest that both popular romance and ballad function as a vertical channel of communication between what are traditionally seen as 'high' and 'low' classes and their values. For the purpose of the present analysis, the popular romances and ballads exemplify two trends that serve the interests of both elite and lower class audiences, though in different ways: one confirms the social hierarchy, by alleviating the anxieties of the upper classes, and the other is more subversive, subtly criticising the rigidity of the same hierarchy and its proposed models of behaviour. The first usually takes the form of the typical romance narrative, in which churls always remain churls, the low-born who cannot represent a real danger to the elite, as innate nobility will always prevail. The second trend reflects some form of conflict and criticism of received values (to various degrees), sometimes in the (acceptable) form of ridiculing the romance heroes and their chivalric deeds, criticism that can be supported either by the intended audience of the romance or ballad (which overlaps with that of traditional romances) or by a 'popular' audience (whether intended or not). The latter is predominant in ballads drawing on romances, where deviations from the traditional models of aristocratic behaviour become almost a norm. Thus, when ballads gleefully describe coarse, impolite, unchivalric and even cowardly behaviour, apart from the evident entertaining value of ballad performance, the unexpectedly twisted, negative presentation even of favourite Arthurian romance characters confirms the models of behaviour an elite audience would be familiar with. At the same time the performance space of the ballad provides a medium for exchange and negotiation – and here I am transferring McDonald's views of popular romance to the ballad – since irony permits the rigidity of received models to be discussed in ways that are not possible within the serious confines imposed by the romance genre. To some extent, it can even be said that the ballad fulfils the role of 'democratised aesthetics' (to use Groom's words) and interpretative dramatic space to traditional romance; the relationship between these two more or less mirrors that between medieval drama and biblical stories. Both ballads and medieval biblical plays presuppose knowledge of their respective narrative frame and characters, while both types of performance provide an opportunity for ironic manipulation of the received themes, a negotiation of cultural values and an articulation of negative views.[34] The enduring life of the ballad across centuries testifies to the versatility of theme and form, and its adaptability to circumstance.[35] From this perspective, I am arguing that medieval ballads and romances should be studied together, as different stages in modulating the same themes, albeit for different purposes, rather than as separate genres.

From the romances and ballads in the Percy folio, one can investigate the

34 A similar attempt has been made in the area of medieval drama: see Ruth Nisse's engaging study, *Defining Acts: Drama and the Politics of Interpretation in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, 2005).

35 For a history of the genre, see Fowler, *Literary History of the Popular Ballad.*

cross-fertilisation between these two genres and those characteristics that might have made them more appealing to an audience beyond aristocratic households. The first text to be considered is the ballad 'Boy and Mantle', which contains folk elements mainly concerned with the testing of wifely chastity in marriage;[36] this is a text that represents a typical example of the divergent critical views about the classification of such texts. On the one hand 'Boy and Mantle''s typical ballad form has led to a classification in this genre;[37] on the other, its Arthurian content helped to place it in the romance category, while the folktale element and the tone of the narrative, largely humorous and light-hearted, has produced yet another classification of this text as 'folk romance'.[38] Thus 'Boy and Mantle' offers a good example of cross-fertilisation between at least two genres, ballad and romance, and the difficulty critics have encountered in their efforts to classify this text stems from its very hybrid nature. The main attributes this ballad is valued for are its unique listing of the boar's head test[39] and the strong anti-feminist feelings in the female characters' vilification. The ballad can be summarised as follows:

> A boy arrives at King Arthur's court during a feast and proposes the test of the magical mantle, which changes colour if a lady unfaithful to her husband tries it on: as a result of this challenge the knights summon their wives who, in turn, are shamed through this test, being proven unchaste in marriage. The list includes Guenevere, on whom the mantle not only takes the colours of the rainbow, but also appears in shreds, as incriminating evidence of her unfaithfulness. Craddock's unnamed wife is the winner of this competition, whereas Guenevere is called a 'bitch and a witch' by the boy. Arthur's reaction to the insult is not registered at all. After this test are two further ones, entailing a magical horn and the carving of a boar's head, both also designed to reveal cuckolds. Craddock wins again in both cases.

Despite the humorous treatment of the serious issue of cuckoldry, the ballad is given a dark tone by its obvious satire of Arthur's queen and courtly models of behaviour:

> Then spake dame Gueneuer
> To Arthur our King,
> 'She hath tane yonder mantle
> Not with wright but with wronge!
>
> 'See you not yonder woman
> *That* maketh her selfe soe cleane?

36 The ballad is preserved in the Percy Folio (British Library, Additional MS 27879), fols. 284–7, and was edited in Hales and Furnivall, *The Percy Folio Manuscript*, II, 301–11, as well as in Child, *English and Scottish Ballads*, pp. 271–4.

37 See Child's views in *English and Scottish Ballads*, pp. 271–4 (with an extensive discussion of possible sources and relationships with similar ballads).

38 See chapter on 'Folk Romance', ed. G. Rogers, in *Arthur of the English*, pp. 219–23.

39 Rogers, 'Folk Romance', in *Arthur of the English*, p. 220.

I haue seene tane out of her bedd
Of men fiueteene,

'Preists, Clarkes & wedded men
From her by-deene,
Yett shee taketh the mantle
& maketh her-selfe cleane!'

Then spake the litle boy
That kept the mantle in hold;
Sayes, 'K*ing*, chasten thy wiffe
Of her words shee is to bold.

'Shee is a bitch & a witch
& a whore bold!
King, in thy owne hall
Thou art a Cuchold!'[40]

The ballad continues with the two extra tests, designed to shame even more knights, and further enhance the success of Craddock's wife. Child showed that in other versions of this test Arthur joins the group of cuckolds and they all start a merry dance, oblivious of the consequences of these revelations to their honour. Deprived of any detached or humorous, albeit verging on the rude, resolution, the present ballad displays attitudes that are, at least at first sight, incongruous with the Arthurian setting. In the absence of the traditional ideals of the romance genre, the female characters lose their idealised romance stature and descend into marketplace squabble. The vociferous Guenevere resembles more the Chaucerian Wife of Bath than a heroine of romance, and the test provides its author with the opportunity to show a catfight between Guenevere and Craddock's wife, which adds dramatic tension to the ballad performance.[41]

In this context, the tone of the ballad suggests a reassessment of the values present in traditional romances by their primary audiences, whether we think of them as aristocratic or gentle, in an entertaining performance, which would justify the lack of reaction to the irreverent address to Guenevere, Arthur's queen. The ballad form provides a cultural 'meeting space' for the members of the noble or gentle household, on occasions when the head of the household would entertain a travelling minstrel (if we support the idea of minstrel production) or a local versifier in the great hall. Thus the ridicule of King Arthur and Guenevere, in this case, would sound equally humorous to all

40 'Boy and Mantle', ll. 131–50, my edition.

41 There is a similar chastity test in Thomas Malory's Tristram story, where King Mark wants to execute the adulterous wives and the barons refuse to believe the test and therefore to allow their wives to be executed, because the test-object has been sent by Morgan le Fay and she is the malicious witch by definition. This episode provides, of course, an interesting contrasting resolution if compared with the test in 'Boy and Mantle', since arguably Malory's reader is asked to believe in the test results, disapprove of adultery in principle, yet approve of the barons' action and disapprove of King Mark (see Sir Thomas Malory, *Works*, ed. E. Vinaver, 3rd rev. edn, ed. P. J. C. Field (Oxford, 1990), II, 500. I owe this reference to Prof. P. J. C. Field.

those present, high and low, but for different reasons. In this sense I agree with Garbáty, whose view about the Robin Hood ballads, that they 'could not have developed without a mixed audience', I endorse; Garbáty was also right in stating that the 'evolution of *courtoisie* and gentilesse to a matter-of-factness, even a kind of prosaic view of things' was expressed in the new preference for simpler, 'condensed, fast-moving shorter narratives about folk heroes at home'.[42]

In addition to these elements, the surly demeanour of the boy is reminiscent of Arthurian romance heroes, such as Sir Kay, who function as a foil to a main character, usually a younger knight who will prove his worth. The boy's bold words contain hardly any humorous overtones, and might sound as a harsh, unexpected, critique of Guenevere, Arthur, and, by extension, of the romance as exemplum, unless the above mentioned 'mixed audience' is considered. His attitude thus brings the boy closer to the Green Knight of the eponymous romance, whose rude approach to Arthur's court and its values also represents a test to chivalry, but of a different, much more sophisticated nature. It is here that the two versions of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and other popular Gawain romances are worth mentioning as examples of the transition from traditional to popular romance, and from accepted forms (and norms) to lighter, but by no means less interesting, approaches to such models. In these romances Sir Gawain, Arthur's right hand in all matters and a staple of medieval English romance, is prominent. Typically an epitome of chivalric behaviour (in the insular tradition), gradually villified for his bad reputation with women and for not keeping knightly promises (in the French tradition), Gawain becomes the central character in a number of popular romances, including the 'Marriage of Sir Gawain', contained in the Percy folio. Gawain provides the unifying element between romance and ballad in the frequently discussed 'Marriage of Gawain', the debased Percy folio version of the 'Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell', and 'The Grene Knight', a version of the famous *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. These have been analysed by critics in terms of the surprising cowardice Arthur displays in his encounter with the violent knight in the 'Marriage' story and the oversimplified narrative structure of the 'Grene Knight'.[43]

Comparisons between the so-called good and bad versions have obviously highlighted the poverty of literary qualities exemplified by the 'folk' version, as Diane Speed has pointed out in her survey for the *Arthur of the English* volume. There Speed considers that our modern views about the literary sophistication of vernacular romances would not have been possible had the unique manuscript of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* perished in the fire in the Cotton library in 1731. 'The Grene Knight', interestingly found by Percy only decades later in the folio manuscript, would then have remained the only

42 Garbáty, 'Rhyme, Romance, Ballad', pp. 287 and 297.

43 See, among others, discussions by Garbáty, 'Rhyme, Romance, Ballad', pp. 293–6. One other assessment of the two versions is found in P. J. C. Field, 'Malory and The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell', in his *Malory: Texts and Sources* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 284–94.

surviving copy of this extraordinarily elaborated story. Speed points out the lack of sophistication, the easy explanations offered for each episode:

> Would it have been possible to imagine that so richly textured, inventive and memorable a poem lay behind the bald utilitarian recital of the bare bones of the story, where plot is foregrounded at the expense of theme, and moral significance becomes, for Gawain, as for the folk-tale hero, a matter of simple choices between right and wrong, unencumbered by any of the doubts and uncertainties that beset the Gawain of the alliterative romance on his painful journey towards self-knowledge?[44]

This debased version, however, may have been the one chosen by Sir John Paston for his collection, according to the entry in his book inventory of the later 1470s.[45] Similarly, an alliterative poem considered by R. H. Robbins to belong to a trend in reviving the Gawain-poet's tradition (a trend that produced texts of much lower literary status) was copied by Sir Humphrey Newton towards the end of the fifteenth century.[46] The presence of these rather unsophisticated texts in gentry books justifies the view that these readers enjoyed traditional romances alongside their more entertaining versions, the popular romances and the ballads.

Popular romances and ballads contain fewer real challenges to the social order and more escapist elements than traditional ones. This transformation can be seen as a result of the adaptation of both form and content to an audience who were less interested in being presented with traditional aristocratic values (establishing and maintaining lineages and emphasising the chivalric code of behaviour, to take just two examples) and educational models than in the entertainment value of literature. The issues of kingship and social structure are tackled in 'popular' romances by, among other techniques, ridiculing well-known characters line King Arthur, Guenevere and Lancelot. The movement from traditional to popular forms could be seen as the reflection of a preference for simplified and entertaining texts, which were more open to various interpretations and more adaptable to circumstance and place than their sophisticated counterparts.

As modern critics we tend to analyse romances in terms of values they confirm, yet to some extent our work merely confirms our own preconceptions about this genre. When we look at the number of romances preserved in manuscripts, we need to ask the question why certain ones, which we regard as accomplished, only survive in one copy, while others, of a lower status, are preserved in much larger numbers. If, as M. J. C. Hodgart once said, the Percy folio romances are 'half-way to becoming ballads',[47] we should still assess the

44 D. Speed, 'The Grene Knight', in *Arthur of the English*, p. 201.
45 See *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Norman Davis, I (Oxford, 1971), 516–18.
46 R. H. Robbins, in *Modern Language Notes*, 58 (1943), 361–6 (including a full transcription). I owe this reference to Dr Deborah Youngs, who is working on a book on Sir Humphrey Newton.
47 Cited in Donatelli, 'The Percy Folio', p. 130.

importance of the movement from one form to the other, and ask if these forms are sequential or simultaneous in the Middle Ages, so that we can further enhance the field of our investigation and make possible analyses of cultural development and popular agency in the creation of literary texts. I would, in this context, agree more with Green, who concludes his review of the ballad form thus:

> it is unwise to dismiss out of hand the possibility that any given traditional ballad might incorporate some detail of great antiquity. This insight will rarely be of much help to the medieval editor . . . but it can be of far greater significance to the student of medieval popular culture, who should always be prepared to recognize the traditional ballad's potential for preserving clues, however opaque and dispersed, to unofficial attitudes and beliefs that might otherwise have disappeared from view.[48]

Though there can be no proof for widespread production and consumption of ballads by either an elite or a lower-class audience as a way of discussing aristocratic themes, the medium of ballad and sometimes of popular romance could have functioned as a channel of communication – a democratised, common ground for negotiation, free of some rigid literary conventions, and where Arthurian themes, alongside the educational principles of the elites, could be ridiculed both by those trying to live out those high values and those lower in the social hierarchy. Popular romances, therefore, should be studied alongside (at least) ballads and other lyrics in order to establish their cultural impact on their primary audiences.

48 Green, 'The Ballad and the Middle Ages', p. 179.

VI

LOCAL HERO: GAWAIN AND THE POLITICS OF ARTHURIANISM[1]

Margaret Robson

Parallel Lives I: Owain Glyn Dŵr

On 21 July 1403 the army led by Henry Hotspur was defeated by Henry IV at the Battle of Shrewsbury. Hotspur's army consisted of Welsh lords, Scotsmen and disaffected English nobles, Hotspur himself and his uncle, Thomas Percy, earl of Worcester. Hotspur died in the aftermath of this battle and the Earl of Worcester was executed two days later. The Battle of Shrewsbury was one of a series of engagements and skirmishes that together comprised the Glyn Dŵr rebellion: between 1400, when he had himself declared Prince of Wales, and 1415, when he makes his final appearance in English records as a hunted guerrilla leader, Owain Glyn Dŵr was the leader of a Welsh revolt against English rule.[2] Yet the revolt was not, as is already indicated by the presence of Hotspur, a purely Welsh affair: it was supported by northern lords, the Percies as well as Scotsmen and Irishmen.[3] What is made clear by these alliances is the fragmented nature of the kingdom in the fifteenth century – and already, in saying that, one is confronted by problems: what kingdom? which fragments?

The late twelfth-century historian, Ralph, dean of St. Paul's, wrote that the kingdom was 'wide in extent, peacefully governed and contained within it

1 An early version of this essay, entitled 'England on The Edge: The Awntyrs of Arthur B', was given as a paper at the British branch of the International Arthurian Society meeting in St. Andrews in August 2003. As always, I have profited from rigorous questioning and engaged political discussions with my husband, Darryl Jones.

2 R. R. Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr* (Oxford, 1997), p. 112.

3 R. R. Davies, *Revolt*, p. 125 '. . . the defeat and death of the Earl of Northumberland at the Battle of Bramham Moor on 19th February 1408 extinguished the last hope, on which Glyn Dŵr had recurrently founded his ambitions, that disaffection with the new Lancastrian dynasty in England might prove to be the salvation of the Welshmen'. It could be argued plausibly that the Welsh revolt was a by-product of English political infighting, a piece of political opportunism on the part of Glyn Dŵr who perceived the English throne as 'empty' (to use Paul Strohm's formulation), following the deposition and murder of Richard II in 1399, a move in which the Percy family had been complicit along with Richard's cousin, Henry Bolingbroke (Henry IV). But to see the revolt in those terms is to subsume Glyn Dŵr's agenda into English political machinations, which I would suggest is very far from being its proper place.

some very barbarous inhabitants, the Scots and the Welsh'.[4] John Gillingham comments:

> Dean Ralph's view encapsulates two perceptions of fundamental importance for the history of the UK: the first that the King of England is the ruler of Britain; the second that some of his subjects are barbarians. Given that, for all its power then and in subsequent centuries, the English state never managed to introduce measures for the effective integration of the 'Celtic' parts of the British Isles which it controlled into its own, distinctively English, political community, this new assumption was to be of critical significance. It meant that those whose lands were taken often remained undervalued and alienated. If English powers tended to unite Britain and Ireland, English attitudes tended to divide; hence the long history of a disunited kingdom.[5]

James Campbell has remarked that the closest modern parallel to the Anglo-Welsh border is provided by the Indian north-west frontier or Afghanistan, both sites of constant renegotiation, division, faction and fundamentalism.[6] Campbell goes on to remark that the history of Wales, in particular, is the history of a people colonised and kept in subjection by an exceedingly strong military presence.[7] Even the name that the nation bears is emblematic of English domination – and English fear.[8]

We begin, then, with countries at war with ideas of themselves, for if the English thought that Wales belonged to them, the Welsh thought precisely the same thing.[9] When in 1536 union between England and Wales was finally enacted, this legal recognition saw the two states as, technically, at least, equal: *union*, not annexation or domination. Yet this idea of an amalgamation of two states is not reflected either in the rhetoric of the 1536 Act, or the subsequent Act of Union of 1542, which established English as the official language.[10] What is important for my purposes is to note that as with the Union with Scotland in 1707, the integration of the nations is predicated on dynastic movements that saw a Welsh dynasty take the (English) throne in 1485 and a Scottish dynasty do so in 1603. As Richard Weight comments: 'This did much to legitimise the process in the eyes of Welsh and Scottish

4 *The Historical Works of Master Ralph de Diceto*, ed. W. Stubbs (Rolls Series, 1876), ii, p. 8.

5 John Gillingham, 'Foundations of a disunited kingdom', in *Uniting The Kingdom: The Making of British History*, eds. Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer (London, 1995), pp. 48–64 (pp. 48–9). See also Michael Faletra 'Once and Future Britons: The Welsh in "Layamon's Brut" ', *Medievalia et Humanistica* 28 (2002), 1–24, esp. pp. 1–2.

6 James Campbell, 'The United Kingdom of England: The Anglo-Saxon Achievement', in *Uniting The Kingdom*, pp. 31–47 (p. 46).

7 Campbell, 'United Kingdom of England', p. 46.

8 In Anglo-Saxon 'se wealh' means 'the foreigner', hence Wales is the land of the foreigners. The colonialist habit of writing the name of the oppressor on to the landscape is a trope that is vital in examining the figure of Glyn Dŵr; because his name means 'river valley', it ties him, literally, to the landscape.

9 It is worth noting that the English crown 'owned' Welsh lands in a very literal way: they were paid by the Welsh lords for the land that the latter held. Henry IV and his son controlled more than half of the surface area of Wales and gained massive amounts of money through the exaction of subsidies, fines and taxes. See R. R. Davies, *Glyn Dŵr*, pp. 72–3.

10 Richard Weight, *Patriots* (Basingstoke and Oxford, 2002), p. 2.

patriots.'[11] This emphasizes the importance of maintaining a dynastic line, and a dynastic line necessarily includes a fiction, a legitimating narrative that can vouch for the ruling dynasty's antecedents.[12] This need to impose linear structure – dynastically, narratively, historically – presents a challenge to ruling elites and historians and it is, in terms of the English monarchy, one that has been met successfully: if a family fails over the centuries to reproduce itself in a direct line, then a narrative can *create* that line. This is also true, of course, where the lacuna is provided not by reproductive failure but by deposition or murder. However, in order to maintain a linear structure certain things have to be left out. What gets ignored is a whole complex of potentially derailing stories that move the narratives from the straight-and-narrow of legitimation to the – potentially – hazardous terrain surrounding them. What I want to examine now are the issues, both historical and literary (and in turn Arthurian), surrounding the Glyn Dŵr rebellion in the early years of the fifteenth century. Where there are breaks in linear traditions, competing forces or competing discourses are provided with the opportunity of refiguring the course of events. After the deposition and murder of Richard II in 1399 the dislocated political and narrative lines allowed each to be renegotiated. In the figure of Owain Glyn Dŵr we have a character who attempts to interject himself into (English) linear narrative but who himself comes from a society that is structured radically differently.

I shall begin by examining Glyn Dŵr's military campaign. In making his stand against Henry IV and his government, Glyn Dŵr proved adept at manipulating belief. In 1401 he wrote letters to his family in Ireland and Scotland begging for arms and men. There are two aspects of this that I want to comment on. Owain's need is for well-equipped fighters, yet what he writes is that he requires these in order to fulfil the prophecy that England will be divided and ruled by three beasts: the dragon, the wolf and the lion.[13] The use of prophecy as a political tool is a recurrent feature of rebellion, and was in this case a very successful feature, for in 1402 Henry proscribed any prophecies originating in Wales.[14] Prophecy is dangerous to rulers because it posits a future that disrupts linear narrative: if a ruling dynasty has a clear line of succession that gives it a *right* to rule (for they or their family have always done so) then one of the avenues open to the dispossessed is to lay claim to the future. The Christian myth of inheritance of the Kingdom of God provides the

11 Weight, *Patriots*, p. 2.

12 Michael Faletra, 'Narrating the Matter of Britain: Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Norman Colonisation of Wales', *The Chaucer Review* 35 (2000–1), 60–85 (p. 64). 'As Hannah Arendt notes, all lineally structured historical narratives posit a foundational point that legitimises the entirety of the following sequence, serving also to substantiate contemporary claims to power.'

13 Paul Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation* (New Haven and London, 1998), pp. 16–17. See also Lesley Coote and Tim Thornton. 'Merlin, Erceldoune, Nixon: A Tradition of Popular Political Prophecy', in *New Medieval Literatures*, IV, eds. Wendy Scase, David Lawton and Rita Copeland (Oxford, 2001), pp. 134–5.

14 Strohm ibid. p. 15. For a discussion of the use of prophecy in politics see Coote and Thornton, *Political Prophecy*. and M.J. Curley 'Fifteenth Century Glosses on "The Prophecy of John of Bridlington: A Text, Its Meaning and Its Purpose', *Medieval Studies* 46 (1984), pp. 321–339.

paradigm, but this is an ideology that can also be used by the ruling elite: while the disenfranchised can feel righteous, for they will inherit the earth, that will not happen in this life. Prophecies of 'the return of the leader' and 'dead men walking' type focus popular discontent, but also serve as political figureheads.[15] This type of prophetic narrative, though, is not a source of inspiration to all: when followers of the late King Richard arrived to fight the Battle of Shrewsbury wearing his livery, Hotspur is reported to have told them to give up their belief in his return as he knew that Richard had been deposed and murdered, an enterprise in which he had himself played a prominent part. Hotspur, for all his affiliation with Glyn Dŵr, was powerful, a realist and English – a man who neither wants nor needs prophecy because he is able to act, rationally, when his expectations are not met.

The other important aspect of Owain's letters is that they are written to his *family*. Family forms a key component in Glyn Dŵr's rebellion. R. R. Davies writes:

> The squires of Wales brought to his cause one other substantial advantage – a network of relationships through lineage and marriage which bound gentle society together across Wales [. . .] to a remarkable degree and thereby helped to override both the natural geographical and governmental fragmentation of the country and the lack of an obvious political and social centre [. . .] At one level the social history of late medieval Wales seems to dissolve into a tangled forest of family trees.[16]

Now this 'tangled forest of family trees' can easily be detected across the border in England: anyone attempting to make sense of the competing claims to the English throne that formed the backdrop to the Wars of the Roses could wish that Edward III and John of Gaunt had had fewer sons. But what is remarkable is that out of the shambles that was the regal succession between 1422 and 1485, where there is manifestly no clear line, each of the contenders stakes a narrative claim. Commenting on Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Brittaniae* (a text that resolutely narrates succession tales), Michael Faletra notes: 'The *Historia* maintains linearity despite the potential centrifugal force of many of its separate historical episodes.'[17] But English dynastic rule simply does not allow anything to pull it out of line – or at least not for long. It maintains its course almost against the laws of physics: the imposition of the line cuts across family and kinship relations; the loyalties are to the maintenance of power and ruthlessly excise matrimonial, filial or avuncular feelings.[18] By contrast, Glyn Dŵr's Welsh followers were, typically, affines. Davies writes:

15 Coote and Thornton, *Political Prophecy* p. 128.
16 R. R. Davies, *Glyn Dŵr*, p. 206.
17 Faletra, 'Narrating The Matter of Britain', p. 64.
18 Richard II was murdered by his cousin, Henry Bolingbroke, who took the throne in 1399 and was succeeded by his son, Henry V, whose death, in 1422, left his infant son to become Henry VI. Henry VI was murdered in 1471 (his son Edward, prince of Wales dying in battle that year). However, although

> [Wales] was an intensely proud and inward-looking society which, unlike its successors three or four generations hence, largely drew its marriage partners from within a restricted group of Welsh families, often in flagrant violation of canon law teaching on the prohibited degrees in marriage. The network of marriage and kinship links provided it with a pattern or relationship and contacts which not infrequently straddled the whole, or at least a good part of north or south Wales and indeed extended occasionally into both. Blood and marriage were in turn reinforced by shared values.[19]

Welsh society, then, may be conceived of as a series of interlocking or overlapping circles, rather than a set of parallel lines.

Parallel Lives II: Sir Gawain

Occupying the land contiguous to Glyn Dŵr's native territory is the literary figure of Sir Gawain. I want to turn now to discuss the literary texts from this region that figure Gawain as the hero. I am most particularly concerned to examine those that feature Inglewood forest, and I shall also be making reference to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which manifestly treads the same ground as Glyn Dŵr, though this tale necessitates different treatment, in part, because of its status. The texts that form the focus of my discussion are therefore: *The Awntyrs of Arther* and *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell*.[20]

If the history reflects these kinds of opposing structures, then so too do the texts with which I am concerned and, most importantly, the central figures of these oppositions. The central figure of the linear narrative is, of course, Arthur: he provides a national narrative focus and he is, for the English, the 'sleeping hero', the one who will return and restore order and prosperity and justice. He exists in this capacity for Malory, author of the 'ur-text' of Arthurianism for all modern narratives. There is, though, a figure who belongs to insular narratives and who never steps outside the bounds of family feuds and family loyalties for long enough to make it into history – past or future – and this figure is Gawain. Sir Gawain is a northerner; his father is Lot of Orkney, and Gawain is consistently associated with the border regions of

Henry's rule should have been between the death of his father in 1422 and his own murder in 1471, he was not monarch for the whole of that time. In 1461 Edward, the direct descendant of Lionel, duke of Clarence (d. 1368), the second son of Edward III, took the throne as Edward IV. The Bolingbrokes were descended from Edward III's third son, thus were further away from a legitimate, linear claim to the throne. Edward IV's sons, Edward and Richard, were murdered in 1383, by their uncle, who was briefly Richard III. These wars, which tore the kingdom apart, were not simply the result of family in-fighting (the terrible state of government finances due in part to the continuing war in France and the corruption and greed of those in positions of power, notably William de la Pole, duke of Suffolk played their part in the disintegration of rule); but the fact remains that murders and marriages were being played out in order to excise blood relatives from a linear claim.

19 R. R. Davies, *Glyn Dŵr*, p. 208.

20 *The Awntyrs of Arther at The Tern Wathelyn*, ed. Ralph Hanna III (Manchester, 1974). *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell* in *Middle English Verse Romances*, ed. D. B. Sands (Exeter, 1986).

Scotland, Galloway and Dumfries, or with the area that reaches from Carlisle down through Lancashire and Cheshire to the Wirral and North Wales; the area where Inglewood Forest is located. And Gawain is presented, most notably in John Boorman's film *Excalibur*, as a type of hairy Celtic side-kick (played by Liam Neeson) to Arthur's southern, civilized self, at home in Camelot and Winchester and London. What is most important about these narratives, though, is that Gawain *belongs* to these marginal areas and texts while Arthur does not.

In these tales, *The Awntyrs of Arther*, *The Avowing of Arthur* and *Sir Gawain and The Wedding of Dame Ragnell*, Arthur is, uniformly, a figure who is unable to control anything: he is at the mercy of green monsters (in *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight*); prophetic corpses (*The Awntyrs of Arther 'A'*); disaffected knights whose land has been colonized by Arthur (*The Awntyrs of Arther 'B'*) and ugly women (*The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell*).[21] Neither can Arthur control the weather, which is an important element in some of these texts (and indeed in relation to Glyn Dŵr's campaign). In each of these tales Arthur, continually defeated in his enterprises, is rescued by Sir Gawain. In each narrative, Gawain is demonstrably able to negotiate territories, both literal and figurative, that Arthur cannot, and these are the areas that I shall be focusing on.

Maureen Fries has remarked that Gawain is sometimes presented as 'Arthur's second self';[22] but Gawain is, significantly, a self who can negotiate the world of magic, nature, seasons, women. In fact the Gawain of these poems deals with all that centralized authority leaves behind: he engages with the repressed and dispossessed.

Gawain presents a genuine alternative to the nation-building figure of Arthur, but the texts themselves – with the exception of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which is resolutely canonical – have themselves been marginalized in various ways. While critics have been at a loss to know what to do with *The Awntyrs of Arther* generically, *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell* is generally categorized as risible, grotesque or burlesque.[23]

21 The dating of these texts is problematic. Hanna assigns the date *c.* 1440 to *The Awntyrs of Arther*, while J. E. Wells puts it at the mid to late fourteenth century. *The Avowing of Arthur* is judged by Wells to be a fifteenth-century text, as is *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell*, which, however, only survives in a sixteenth-century manuscript (MS Rawlinson). Hanna notes that the alliterative revival begins in the late 1350s, but he also comments that *The Alliterative Morte Arthur* has never been localized in terms of either date or place of composition. It is impossible to be precise on the dating, but I would argue that this vagueness feeds into the idea of localized dissatisfaction: rumour, stories and unidentified speculation form a key component in resistance to colonisation where to be named may mean to be punished. For the dating of the texts, see J. E. Wells, *A Manual of The Writings in Middle English* (Yale, 1916) and Hanna, *Awatyrs of Arther*, pp. 50–1.

22 Maureen Fries, 'The Poem in The Tradition of Arthurian Literature', in Karl Heiz Göller, ed., *The Alliterative Morte Arthure: A Reassessment of the Poem* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 39.

23 French and Hale do not include it at all, although they do have an Arthurian section that includes *The Avowing of Arthur*. See *The Middle English Metrical Romances*, eds. W. H. French and C. B. Hale (New York, 1964). The edition I am using for this text is in *Middle English Verse Romances*, ed. D. B. Sands (Exeter, 1986), where Sands has sections on 'The Matter of England' and 'Chivalry and Sentiment', but *The Wedding of Sir Gawain* is classed as 'Burlesque and Grotesquerie'. For a discussion of

But we could, equally, read these texts not as ludicrous, but rather as providing serious critiques of Arthur who, when faced with any challenge, is reduced to hiding behind the figure of Gawain. Arthur, clearly, is not presented in these texts as the kind of king whom one would *want* to return. We are then forced to confront the issue of Arthur's failure to engage with the threats that are manifest in these texts. In turn, we are prompted to examine why it is that this region should be the locus for a revival of the alliterative tradition which presents an alternative hero to Arthur. Rosalind Field remarks: 'opposition to the monarchy could be one reason for the scarcity of Arthurian literature in England', and she further comments that the focus was on Gawain, rather than Arthur, suggesting that this may have been a compromise 'between the conventions of Arthurian romance and those of insular romance'.[24] Although Field does note the way in which the figure of Gawain is lauded, most particularly in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *The Awntyrs of Arther*, her references to this are focused more fully on the fact of this contrast between Gawain (and the courts he visits) and the Arthurian court, rather than on Arthur himself. While this may work in the context of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, it does not hold true for *The Awntyrs of Arther* or *The Wedding of Sir Gawain*.

In *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell* Arthur is already isolated in the forest with the deer he has stalked and killed by line 50, when he is approached by a knight who accuses him of land-grabbing; furthermore, as in *The Awntyrs of Arther*, Gawain has been the recipient of these ill-gotten lands. Gromer says:

> Thou hast me done wrong many a yere
> And wofully I shalle quitte thee here.
> I hold thy life dayes nigh done;
> Thou hast gevin my landes in certain
> With great wrong unto Sir Gawen.
> What sayest thou, king alone? (ll. 55–60)

In both of these texts Gawain exists as the innocent beneficiary of Arthur's colonial spoils, while Arthur is set a challenge by Gromer Somer Joure that may itself be constructed as risible. The challenge posed to Arthur is not a monarchical one: it entails, not a matter of state and high seriousness, but is the quest to find out what women most desire, and should Arthur fail in this challenge he will be beheaded (ll. 90–100). This quest clearly links the tale to the analogous *The Wife of Bath's Tale* but also to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* with its problematics of female control, female desire and beheading. In *The Wedding of Sir Gawain* Arthur is presented as inadequate, unable to

the ways in which *The Awntyrs* has been received, see my essay 'From Beyond The Grave: Darkness at Noon in "The Awntyrs of Arther" ', in *The Spirit of Popular Medieval English Romance*, eds. Jane Gilbert and Ad Putter (London, 2000).

24 Rosalind Field, 'The Anglo-Norman Background to Alliterative Romance', in *Middle English Alliterative Poetry*, ed. David Lawton (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 64–5.

fight the challenger or to hide his discomfiture from his (own) knights (ll. 124–36) and in telling Gawain he is breaking his oath to Gromer, having sworn not to disclose the events that occurred in Inglewood Forest that day (l. 153). In every sense Arthur is craven – he himself tells Gawain that he agreed to accept the challenge because he did not want to die (ll. 165–6). This clearly reproduces Bercilak's comment to Gawain 'Bot for you lufed your lyf/ the lasse I yow blame' (l. 2368). There are two issues that I want to explore here. The first is the fact that Gawain and Arthur, at the former's instigation, agree to share the task:

> 'Ye, Sir, make good chere;
> Let make your hors redy
> To ride into straunge contrey; . . .
> And I shall also ride anoder waye. (ll. 182–4, 187)

It takes both Gawain and Arthur to save Arthur's life from a local nobleman, whom a king ought to be able to subdue himself. In fact, though, it takes only Gawain, because although it is Arthur who finds the 'loathly lady' (though significantly not before he has returned to Inglewood Forest, ll. 214–15, 226), the price she demands is marriage to Sir Gawain (ll. 280–6). Gawain is the key to everything that is wrong, on levels from the personal (he, after all, is the one who is able to satisfy women) to the political (Gromer's claim that Arthur has wrongfully taken his lands, ll. 58–9). The second issue is that in these texts, I want to argue, the personal *is* the political: the quest to find out what women want is a quest to understand the desires of the repressed, and of course what they want is to have some measure of control.[25]

Gawain, though, appears consistently in these regional tales as a hero, whereas outside them he isn't quite civilized, isn't quite courtly or cultured. In Malory he reaches his nadir, unable to find any adventures in his quest for the Grail, and the object of criticism even to his brother Gareth.[26] Gawain's loyal-

25 Women present a significant challenge to Arthur's rule, and that recurs throughout the texts, whichever tradition they come from; Arthur is most unencumbered in texts that belong to the chronicle tradition, but this, I would argue, is a simple reflection of the fact that history has ignored and marginalized women. Everywhere else Arthur's relations with women are beset with problems: his birth is not straightforward, his relations with his sister(s) are mixed up with incest, magic and threat, and his wife is adulterous. Even more problematic than the beautiful women, though, are the ugly ones (Dame Ragnell, the old Morgan in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the ghost of Guinevere's mother) because to be an ugly woman – and to have that ugliness articulated – is to be dissident. One of the most effective ways of devaluing dissidence is to laugh at it and Sands has commented on the 'delight in grotesque characterisation' that he sees the poet of the *Wedding of Sir Gawain* employing (Sands, *Wedding*, p. 323). While some may find the loathly lady of *The Wedding* laughable, the ugly women in *The Awntyrs* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* are ugly almost as a guarantor of their access to, or their articulation of, power. In fact each of the women is really a beautiful woman transformed, but it is the ugliness that is the source of the power; in *The Awntyrs* it is the fact of her death that gives her knowledge (in a hideous decomposing body); her monitory and prophetic speech is a medium for the disenfranchised, for alive she was beautiful and careless of the people. In *The Wedding of Sir Gawain* Ragnell has control over Gawain as long as she remains hideous, once the enchantment has been undone she hands over control to him (ll. 778–86).

26 Malory, *Works*, ed. Eugene Vinaver (Oxford, 1970), p. 224: 'For evir aftir sir Gareth had aspyed sir

ties are more tribal than courtly: while Gareth belongs – by choice – to Lancelot's following, Gawain's loyalty to his blood-brothers is crucial in destroying the courtly Arthurian world. Gawain has remained (even in Malory) at the edges of events, not the centre. But this is exactly where Glyn Dŵr and the Welsh, and the Scots and the Irish, belong. These areas that make up what is insultingly known as the 'Celtic fringe' are associated with magic, mysticism, creativity, the land, nature, the non-rational – again, that which is repressed by centralized authority and power in a cultural discourse we would now call Arnoldian.[27]

In Shakespeare's *Henry IV (Part 1)* the portrait of Glyn Dŵr reflects the contempt that the centre held for those at the edges; Malory and Shakespeare are both part of the process in which the nation is addressed – and in Malory's case often chided – as though a unified nation were a *fait accompli*, while in fact these imagined tales are part of the *creation* of national identity. What happens, then, to any of the dissenting voices, those that do not aspire to being part of a unionist endeavour? One way of marginalizing such voices is to laugh at them, make their heroes risible. This is precisely what Shakespeare, arguably the most powerful literary voice of English nationalism, does to Glyn Dŵr. In conversation with Hotspur, Glyn Dŵr is made to seem irrational, he emphasizes his own mystical status, the portents that appeared at the time of his birth, his ability to call spirits and command the devil, while the rational English Hotspur undercuts his every remark. It should be remembered that Hotspur joined the rebellion as a piece of political opportunism; for him it is a power struggle, not a desire to shake off the yoke of cultural oppression. Hotspur speaks the same language as Henry; Glyn Dŵr does not. Shakespeare goes on to show Hotspur taking control of nature in reality by the simple expedient of damming up a river in order to get himself more land. Hotspur embodies rationalist progress, and when Glyn Dŵr hears his plans to interfere with the course of the river he is horrified at this plan to alter nature, saying: 'Not wind? It shall, it must – you see it doth' (III, I, 102–3), and then affronted at the very idea of changing the landscape: 'I'll not have it altered,' he says. The intention to change the landscape is also a personal affront because 'Glyn Dŵr' means 'river valley'; his very name ties him to the landscape that Hotspur would alter. This situation images forth both the Celtic ties to the land, to nature, and at the same time it reminds us of the fact that the English have often modified the landscape in order to satisfy their own needs.[28]

Gawaynes conducions, he wythdrewe himself fro hys brother sir Gawaynes felyshyp, for he was evir vengeable, and where he hated he wolde be avenged with murther: and that hated sir Gareth.' See also p. 563, where the hermit, Nacien, tells Gawain that he will never achieve the Grail because he is 'an untrew knight and a grete murtherar'.

27 See Matthew Arnold, 'On The Study of Celtic Literature', in *Selected Criticism of Matthew Arnold*, ed. Christopher Ricks (New York, 1972), especially the following comment: 'Style is the most striking quality of their [the Celts'] poetry. Celtic poetry seems to make up to itself *for being unable to master the world*' (my emphasis), p. 123.

28 An example of this was the enforced flooding of the Tryweryn Valley in 1957 in rural North Wales in

However, in the early years of the fourteenth century Glyn Dŵr was a figurehead deeply troublesome to centralized authority and power. Indeed, he comes close to being a real-life embodiment of the literary figure of Sir Gawain. Gawain – and the tales in which he is the hero – provides a model for the marginalized Celtic leader. In the first part of *The Awntyrs of Arther* Gawain and the 'loathly lady' articulate the concerns of the dispossessed and predict Arthur's downfall, while in the second part of *The Awntyrs* the Scottish knight Galeron is satisfied of Gawain's claim after they have fought. Galeron yields to Gawain the part of Scotland that he claimed Arthur had unjustly taken from him: 'Here I make the relesch [renke] bi the rode/ Before this riall route resign the my righte' (ll. 640–1). This could suggest that Gawain does have a right to these lands: he is not the colonizer, he belongs. Arthur then sanctions the redivision of the lands, giving to Gawain most of Wales and some of Ireland and ordering that he return the Scottish lands to Galeron. So instead of there being one local hero, there are two. It is worth noting that between them, these two heroes control much of the territory from whence came those who sought to overthrow Henry IV, but this specific instance images forth divisions that are still in play and that always seem to have operated. These lands, which at the end of this text are controlled by Gawain and Galeron, are also the place from which Arthur himself came.

Arthur's antecedents place him as a resistance leader on the margins of society against the Saxons and the Romans, but as successive narratives endorse him as a national figure he himself becomes part of the establishment, providing a narrative link for any (and pretty well every) ruling monarch.[29] A monarchy needs to establish a narrative of succession, and Arthur proved supremely portable in this respect. Norman Davies notes:

> It could be argued, of course, that English Literature stole the most valuable treasure of the Celtic tradition by appropriating the Arthurian romances, and that the impenetrable wall between Germanic and Celtic was thereby breached. . . . King Arthur and Sir Galahad and the Knights of the Round Table have indeed been incorporated into the English sphere, *and have made their contribution to a shared sense of common modern Britishness.* (my emphasis)[30]

However when Arthur becomes a national figure, as he does in Geoffrey of Monmouth, he loses any power, any credibility, as a local hero, for national

order to provide water for the people of Liverpool, an event that became a touchstone for the Welsh Nationalist cause, but which was characteristically ignored by dominant English political and cultural concerns. Notably when Glyn Dŵr says a plain 'no' to Hotspur, Hotspur tells him to say it in Welsh, presumably on the grounds that what gets said in Welsh can be ignored, either because it is not understood or that it simply doesn't matter, not being underwritten by cultural power.

29 There is extensive discussion of these matters in *The Scots and Medieval Arthurian Legend,* eds. Rhiannon Purdie and Nicola Royan (Cambridge, 2005). Of particular interest to this debate are the essays by Juliette Wood, 'Where Does Britain End? The Reception of Geoffrey of Monmouth in Scotland and Wales', and Cory Rushton, ' "Of an uncouthe stede": The Scottish Knight in Middle English Arthurian Romances'. This publication is too recent for me to do more than acknowledge its similar interests.

30 Norman Davies, *The Isles: A History* (Basingstoke and Oxford, 1999), p. 185.

leaders simply don't have local issues at heart. And regions have to be assumed into a centralizing power, otherwise it simply wouldn't be powerful. These are issues that still tear at the heart of modern British polity.

The figuring of the marginal in centralized discourse is that which is discarded: nature as opposed to culture; the land, the seasons, 'authenticity' and magic. It is Gawain who, in these fifteenth-century regional romances, is able to engage with these forces, while Arthur can no longer do so. As I noted earlier, this is most evident in the texts that are located in and around Inglewood Forest. Centralizing authority characteristically seeks to impose its own order radiating outwards from a metropolitan centre. However, the Forest of Inglewood is uncharted, or at least not on any map that can be read by outsiders. So as soon as Arthur enters the forest he is immediately isolated, marginalized, defeated by the weather. These stories form a complex, which serves to relocate Arthur in a world that is pre-Christian, magical, enchanted, foreign, located outside normal civilization: the place from which he had come and to which he no longer belongs. The apocalyptic storm and darkness in the opening section of *The Awntyrs* is a resounding example of what Arthur can no longer do; he has lost the ability to deal with untamed nature, while Gawain, if he cannot actually call spirits from the vasty deep, can talk to them when they come. Here, in *The Awntyrs*, the spirit delivers a sermon on the excesses of the Arthurian court and predicts Arthur's doom. It is Gawain, though, who prompts her comments on the evils of colonialism; while Guinevere's questions are concerned with individual salvation (ll. 248–9), Gawain offers his own criticism of a colonialist and expansionist policy, which the spirit simply confirms.

This is a trope of prophetic narratives: what they do is to articulate dissatisfaction with national policies. Gawain, then, is able to deal with this spirit because, as I've argued, he is a local hero. He never loses his tribal family connections, which results in his being relegated in Malory (a nation-building text) to a position subordinate to the courtly Lancelot, whose loyalties are defined by culture, by a sophisticated code of love and service that is the antithesis of the anguish of family responsibilities: court as opposed to kin, culture rather than blood. Gawain is altogether too primitive, still associated with ideas of power connected to the strength of the sun.[31] It is worth remarking that the more closely he is identified with the Arthurian court, as he is in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the less adapted he is to the natural world, so that here, in this text, he can only negotiate the inhospitable landscape with much whingeing. It is also notable that Gawain's feelings about the landscape and weather in North Wales match, pretty well precisely, those of Henry IV's army. R. R. Davies writes:

[31] See Vinaver, *Malory, Works*, pp. 96, 706. See also Virginia Lowe, 'Folklore as A Unifying Factor in "The Awntyrs off Arthure" ', *Folklore Forum* 13 (1980), 215.

> The facts of [Welsh] climate did not admit of argument; but even these facts are assimilated into a web of other expectations and assumptions. For the English, Wales's weather only compounded the unattractiveness of the country and their suspicion of its people: when Henry IV's expedition into Wales in September 1402 was overwhelmed by a rainstorm and the king's life put in danger, it was not only nature which was blamed but the Welsh themselves who seemed indeed not only to cope with, *but also to command*, such weather. [my emphasis][32]

One might really have expected as much, in a country so scarcely civilized that there was no single unified law, no common focus; it was, as Davies remarks, no more than the sum of its parts, a world characterized by fragmentation. And wet to boot.

So, in the texts that are hostile to the Arthurian court, rather than simply to Arthur himself, Gawain is the one knight who can deal with magic, with enchanted women or 'dead men walking'. What he is unable to do is to negotiate the codes of chivalry, of courtly etiquette, of the civilized world, of artifice. At best he can be subjected to them and squirm out with diminished dignity, as he arguably does in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The courtly Lancelot remains courtly even with an arrow up his arse.[33] However in the texts that are critical of Arthur himself, Gawain emerges as the undisputed hero.

In *The Awntyrs of Arther* Galeron's challenge is to any member of the court who will accept it (ll. 430–1), and when Arthur calls his court together he asks his knights to decide between them which of them it shall be, but Gawain offers himself before there is any discussion (ll. 464–8). When Gawain puts himself forward, he does so saying that he undertakes the challenge in defence of his right, as he was lord of the lands taken by Arthur from Galeron and bequeathed to him. On one level, one might say that Gawain, far from acting as the local hero, undertakes the battle out of self-interest. In the end, though, Galeron says that Gawain can keep the lands, and this may be read as a recognition of Gawain's status as a hero who belongs to this marginal territory. At the end of the tale, Arthur redivides the lands and returns the southern lowlands of Scotland to Galeron and gives to Gawain Glamorgan, Wales, Ulster, Waterford and Wexford.[34]

32 R. R. Davies, *Glyn Dŵr*, p. 23.

33 In the scene in Malory where Lancelot receives this wound his manners remain courtly: 'When Sir Lancelot felt hym so hurte he whorled up woodly, and saw the lady that had smytten hym. And whan he knew she was a woman, he sayde thus: "Lady or damesell, whatsomever ye be, in an evyll tyme bare ye thys bowe: the devyll made you a shoter".' Vinaver, *Malory, Works*, p. 643.

34 The exact location of these places is disputed. Hanna suggests a number of possibilities but remarks that 'none of the places with suggestive names falls within an area one would want to ascribe to the "worship of Wales" ' (*The Awntyrs of Arther*, p. 140). Helen Phillips puts forward the Irish cities, Waterford and Wexford, which seems to me to be very likely as there is a link between these cities and Glamorgan. In 1442 John Talbot (1384–1453) the son of Richard, fourth Baron Talbot, was created earl of Shrewsbury. He served in campaigns in Wales between 1404 and 1413, and was lieutenant of Ireland between 1414 and 1419 and again from 1445 to 1447. In 1447 he was made Earl of Wexford and Waterford. Talbot,

As I noted earlier, these are regions that focus the 'disunited' aspect of 'the united kingdom', and from whence comes the threat to Henry's rule. However I do not want to argue that these texts are a *product* of the threat that the Glyn Dŵr rebellion posed for Henry: apart from any other reservations the dating of the texts is too imprecise for that. But what does seem to me to be interesting is that these tales belong quite so fixedly to a regional identity, and thus present ready patterns of affiliation with the history of Glyn Dŵr. It is often remarked that Chaucer had no use for Arthurian myth, his one Arthurian tale presents Gawain (though here unnamed) as at best a boor while Arthur belongs to fairy-tale. Neither of these figures has any place in the sophisticated, cultured world of the fourteenth-century London court. Such ideologies, either of primitivism or of legendary return, are redundant in the world of *realpolitik*, as pointed out to those hopeful of such at Shrewsbury.

The imagined communities of these texts are those that figure someone who can rescue – and has an interest in rescuing – the enchanted and the damned and the poor and the dispossessed from the oppression under which they suffer. It seems to me that the regional poems of the north-west midlands are deeply politicized in that they do offer an alternative to the narratives of cohesion. Everything about them from the form, harking back as it does to an older style, through the locus of an England that is a benighted forest, to the alternative hero who still belongs to the regions suggests dissatisfaction with central government. The unionizing textual tradition, passed on from Geoffrey of Monmouth, to Malory and in turn Shakespeare, offers a single version of history, synchronizing events in order to produce a fiction of a stable centre that has narrative continuity. The community is imagined, then the narrative made to fit the idea, or ideal. And dissatisfaction with central government means dissatisfaction with the present. Refuge from the present is available either in myths of the future (but even that has been colonized by Arthur – he'll be back) or in myths of the past; get rid of progress and return to nature. This is – unequivocally – the agenda of modern refigurings of Celticism. Norman Davies writes:

> For the last 10 or 20 years, 'Celticity' has been increasingly promoted as an antidote both to the stresses of contemporary life and to the dominant interests of the UK cultural establishment. It combines a romantic attachment to a perceived Celtic heritage with a fascination for the mysticism and animist spirituality that are taken to form its essential adjunct. It is linked to the reinvigorated nationalist movements, to the ecological movement, which

whose family home is at Malahide Castle in north County Dublin, belongs also in Wales; Port Talbot in Glamorgan is named for this family, whose ancestral seat, Margam Abbey, is located there. I would suggest that it is at least serendipitous that a man linked to the Glyn Dŵr campaign should receive as earldoms the lands listed as being given to Gawain in *The Awntyrs of Arther*. What makes the argument for the Irish connection conclusive, to my mind, is the previous reference, which is to 'Ulster Hall' (l. 668) See Maldwyn Mills's edition of *The Awntyrs*, p. 204. for a note on the identification of the lands. See also Hanna, *The Awntyrs of Arther*, p. 140; Helen Phillips, *The Awntyrs of Arthure at* the *Terne Wathelyn* (Lancaster, 1988). While for my purpose it would be better had Talbot been associated with the rebellion, the fact remains that there is a link between these lands.

> shares a similar empathy for the spirits of nature, and also to the rise of 'New Age' paganism. In short, it appeals to all those who feel the strain of modern civilisation, and who seek, however impractically, to recover the benefits of the world before civilisation. In The Isles, the world before civilisation was the world of the ancient Celts.[35]

Gawain is indeed Arthur's second self. He's the man who Arthur *was*; he's the man who Arthur left behind, to be the local hero.

[35] N. Davies, *The Isles*, p. 81.

VII

PROMISE-POSTPONEMENT DEVICE IN *THE AWNTYRS OFF ARTHURE*: A POSSIBLE NARRATIVE MODEL*

Martin Connolly

Introduction

Readers and critics of the late medieval Arthurian poem *The Awntyrs Off Arthure* will inevitably find themselves taking sides in the debate over the success or failure of the poem's narrative structure. For most of the twentieth century, the poem was widely perceived as something of a failed literary experiment, its moral and secular episodes seen as artlessly juxtaposed rather than linked in any meaningful way.[1] A vigorous debate, beginning properly in the 1970s, has since turned perceptions around, making the present climate much more accepting of the poem's design.[2] Curiously, though, while much has been written on the poem as a finished literary entity, and much on the source of elements or sections of the poem, no one has extensively investigated possible structural analogues for the poem as a whole. This has tended to make the task of understanding the poet's design, or gauging the relative success or failure of the poem, all the more challenging.

Thankfully, however, we do not have to look very far for indications of a

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1 Unfavourable comparisons with *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, or simple dissatisfaction with the poem's structure, can be found in works such as the following: G. Kane, *Middle English Literature* (London, 1951), pp. 52–3; J. Speirs, '*The Awntyrs Off Arthure At The Terne Wathelyn* – First Episode', in *Medieval English Poetry* (London, 1957), pp. 252–62 (p. 252).

2 Ralph Hanna, in his edition of the poem, *The Awntyrs Off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyn* (Manchester, 1974), splits the poem into two, the *Awntyrs* A and B, ostensibly on the grounds of prosodic difference. In many ways, this bold editorial decision acted as a spur to others, to prove him wrong. Among notable challenges: A. C. Spearing, '*The Awntyrs Off Arthure*', in *The Alliterative Tradition in the Fourteenth Century*, eds. B. S. Levy and P. E. Szarmach (Ohio, 1981), pp. 183–202, a colourful and imaginative analysis; H. Phillips, '*The Awntyrs Off Arthure*: Structure and Meaning. A Reassessment', *Arthurian Literature* 12 (Cambridge, 1993), 63–89, which is a direct, and highly technical, rebuff of Hanna's thesis.

pre-existing narrative model that may have influenced the *Awntyrs* poet. *The Trentals of St Gregory* is a work consistently cited as a likely source of the *Awntyrs*' first episode, the ghostly encounter in the Forest of Inglewood.[3] The *Trentals* story pre-dates the *Awntyrs* and possesses many of the most important elements of that first episode: the appearance of the spirit of a deceased mother in a state of terrible decay owing to undisclosed sinfulness, and the extraction of a promise from the offspring to have Trental masses said as a means to cleanse and atone. This, however, is really only half the story, as *The Trentals of St Gregory* is properly represented by *two* distinct versions. While the 'A' version is the one cited exclusively by *Awntyrs* criticism to date, I will demonstrate that its lesser-known 'B' version also deserves to be taken into account in any consideration of the *Awntyrs*' possible source debt.[4] The main distinguishing element between the *Trentals* A and B is the latter's inclusion of a passage between the decision by the pope to carry out the promise to his mother's spirit and the actual completion or fulfilment of that promise.[5] The passage recounts the actions of a series of devils who repeatedly attempt to thwart the pope from completing his mission to say the thirty trental masses in aid of his mother's spirit. This passage, I will argue, can be seen as a literary device playing a somewhat similar role to that which the Sir Galeron episode plays in the *Awntyrs*: in both works, the fulfilment of a promise is postponed by an interrupting action. This interrupting action is necessarily and purposefully different, in terms of tone and style, from the foregoing narrative and helps to explain the perceived clash of narratives within the one poem. I will further trace this 'promise-postponement' narrative device back to its apparent literary origins, proposing that enough of a convention existed for us to be able to say that the poet of *The Awntyrs Off Arthure* may at least have been aware of it, and possibly had it in mind in the construction of his poem.

At the outset, also, it must be noted that the exclusion of the B version of *The Trentals of St Gregory* from the discussion of *Awntyrs* sources seems to be attributable to a largely unexamined, and ultimately untenable, perception that it is a late, post-*Awntyrs* text.[6] The three published texts of B come exclu-

3 First reference was made by Frederic Madden, in the notes to his edition of the *Awntyrs* in his *Syr Gawayne: a Collection of Ancient Romance-Poems*, Bannatyne Club 61 (London, 1839; facsimile: New York, 1971), pp. 328–9. For a recent example, see S. H. A. Shepherd, introduction to *The Awntyrs Off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne*, in his *Middle English Romances* (New York, 1995), pp. 365–75.

4 This early division, A and B, was instigated by Albert Kaufmann, in his introduction to his dual-text edition: *Trentalle Sanctii Gregorii: Eine Mittelenglische Legende in Zwei Texten*, Erlangen Beiträge 3 (Erlangen, 1889; modern reprint, Amsterdam, 1970).

5 This is true of two of the three published *Trentals* B texts: the texts in Cambridge University Library, Kk. i.6, fols. 242v–245v, and London, British Library, Harley 3810, fols. 76v–84v (or 75v–86v, if we include the clearly linked Latin instructions before and after the poem, and the final ten-line appendix in English) contain this interloping passage. The text in Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates 19.3.1, fols. 213r–216r does not. These texts are published respectively as follows: from CUL Kk i.6 in Kaufmann, *Trentalle*, cited above; from Harley 3810, in R. Jordan, '*Das Trentalle Gregorii* in der Handschrift Harley 3810', *Englische Studien* 40 (1909), 351–71; and from Advocates 19.3.1, in K. D. Bülbring, '*Das Trentalle Sancti Gregorii*', *Anglia* 13 (1891), 303–8.

6 It would require an essay unto itself to explain the process by which the B version of the *Trentals* has become neglected, and may form the basis of a separate study at a later date.

sively from fifteenth-century manuscripts, while at least one of the nine published *Trentals* A texts comes from a late fourteenth century manuscript, the Vernon.[7] There is, however, a cogent case that has never been effectively challenged that both A and B versions derive from the same source, making it likely that A and B are in fact coeval.[8] Certainly, it would be a very unwise critical move to accept that because B can only be found in fifteenth-century manuscripts it must therefore be of fifteenth-century provenance: on such reasoning, the whole Alliterative Revival could also be determined as representing a purely fifteenth-century literary phenomenon. We will address this question of the poem's likely provenance later, when we look into the literary genesis of the poem, but for now, the reader should feel open to the possibility at least that the *Trentals* B may, like the *Trentals* A, have existed before the *Awntyrs* was penned.

How different are A and B versions of The Trentals of St Gregory?

Discussion of the *Trentals* can best begin with a reminder of the basic details and plots of the two versions. John Wells' description, in his *Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050–1400*, published in 1916, was a distillation of more than a half century's research, much of it in German, and soon became the handiest introduction for scholars involved in *Awntyrs*-source work. However, it would be prudent to note that the description suffers from an inherent favouritism toward the A version, one that may have influenced subsequent scholarship. Wells' ascription of the versions A and B to 'first' and 'second', and by the way he simply tacks on a line or two (italicized in the extract that follows) about the B version, paved the way for subsequent critics to see the A version as superior:

> According to the first version, Pope Gregory's mother was regarded as of pure life, and as sure of residence in Heaven. But secretly she had borne a child out of wedlock, and had murdered it. Not confessing, she was sent to torment. She appeared at night to Gregory in monstrous form, confessed her case and its cause, and declared she could be freed only if three masses were said for her on each of the ten feasts of the year. Gregory said the masses, and at the end of the

7 Oxford, Bodleian Library, English poetry A.i 3938 (often referred to as the Vernon Manuscript). The poem actually appears twice within the one manuscript, and is published as follows: C. Horstmann, *Englische Studien* 8 (Heilbronn, 1884), 275–7 for the first-occurring of the two *Trentals of St Gregory* texts, fols. 230r–v, and *The Minor Poems of the Vernon Manuscript*, ed. C. Horstmann, EETS OS 98 (London, 1892), Part 1, pp. 260–8, based on the second-occurring text, fols. 303v–304r. The latter text has the advantage of a full critical apparatus and side-notes written by F. J. Furnivall.

8 See Kaufmann, *Trentalle*, p. 25. 'Von den beiden Versionen A und B ist offenbar keine aus der andern geflossen, vielmehrsind dieselben als von einander unabhängige Bearbeitungen einer und derselben Vorlage anzusehen. Die letztere ist nicht bekannt, wohl aber existieren verwandte Erzählungen. 'Regarding versions A and B, it seems quite clear that one is not derived from the other, but rather, that they are independent treatments of the same common source. The latter is not known, but its existence is suggested by the related narratives [of A and B].'

> year the mother appeared to him in such lovely form that he took her for the Virgin. An angel bore her to Heaven. The piece ends with exhortation and instruction as to masses. – *The second version has not the concluding exhortation and instruction. MSS. Kk and Harley introduce several supernatural attempts to draw Gregory away from the final masses on the Nativity of Mary*.[9]

Wells' approach presents the outline plots, and focuses on the most prominent difference, a passage in B telling of 'several supernatural attempts to draw Gregory away from the final masses', yet this is really just the most noticeable feature among what amounts to a pattern of differences, indicating a considerable difference in style and approach between the versions. The B version poet, it will be seen, consistently veers away from the blunt, sensual alliteration and emphasis on the grotesque to be found in A, and instead approaches the story with the focus squarely on his characters' reactions to events. A simple example of this is provided by comparison of passages in respective poems on the appearance of the ghost – in A, there is much alliteration and emphasis on the grotesque nature of the apparition:

And in þat derknesse a myst among,	
Al stoneyd he was, such stunch þer stong;	[astonished / stench / stank]
Þer-of so grislich he was a-gast	[horribly / frightened]
Þat al swounyng he was al-mast.	[fainting]
Þeo-syde he loked vndur his leor:	[looked down, under his cheek]
A-Midde þe derknesse þer drouȝ on ner	
A wonder grisli creature,	
Riht aftur a fend ferde hire feture;	[just like a fiend's were her features]
So Ragget, so Rent, so elyng, so vuel,	[ragged / torn / ailing / vile]
As hidous to bi-holden as helle-deuel;	
Mouþ and Neose, Eres and Eȝes	
fflaumed al ful furi liȝes.[10]	[aflame, full of fiery lights]

In B, however, the poet underplays the grotesqueries, eschewing the 'special effects' of alliteration and instead focuses more on the pope's reaction:

It come ayeyne than the thrid nyght	
To the popes chaumbre with a rufull syght.	
As blak hym thoȝt as eny pyche,	
There-fore he durst nott quyche.	[move]
A gret fyre was the pope al-abowte,	
What thyng it was, he was in dowte.	
All the chaumbre stank also,	
That his breith was nygh ago.	

9 J. E. Wells, *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050–1400* (New Haven, 1916; third printing 1923), pp. 172–3.

10 *Minor Poems*, Horstmann, pp. 262–3, ll. 55–66.

There he had an evill fytt,
Lost he had nygh his wytt.[11]

The emphasis is less on the ugliness of the apparition (As hidous to bi-holden as helle-deuel;/Mouþ and Neose, Eres and Eʒes/fflaumed al ful furi liʒes) as it was in A and more on the reaction to it by the pope. We see the terrible vision from his perspective: 'What thyng it was, he was in dowte' and 'Lost he had nygh his wytt.' The desire to dwell upon the grotesque is avoided – in A, such is the product of a poet who wishes to shock his audience with the horror of it all, first and foremost. Of course, one might suggest, the B poet might simply not have been very good at alliteration. The difference, however, extends beyond the kind of language used, to a radically different approach in the underlying narrative. In A, the ghost appears out-of-the-blue, so to speak, without any warning, and strikes the pope as a purely terrifying vision; by contrast, in B, while the ghost appears suddenly and causes shock, the narrative has carefully prepared both pope and reader for the appearance.

The manner in which the mother's sinfulness is disclosed acts as an important distinguishing feature between the poems. In A, the narrator bluntly tells the reader of the mother's sins almost at the outset, emphasizing the callous nature of the crime:

And for no wiht schulde wite hire cas,	[so no one should know her situation]
Anon as hire child I-boren was,	[As soon as]
Þe Nekke heo nom, þe child heo woriede,	[the neck she seized / strangled]
And a-non þe child heo buriede.[12]	

In B, however, the reader is not told anything at the outset about the mother's secret sinfulness; the narrator is not the discloser, but rather the mother herself, in a remarkable death-bed confession scene. The third-person account of the barbaric and ugly crime in A is replaced by a first-person confession in B, delivered with a well-communicated sense of personal shame and fear:

'Sho seide: "I am in gret care,	
Where-fore me lyst no longer lyuene;	[desire no longer to live]
Butt to the I will me shryuen."	
"Alas" he seide, "alas for synne,	[she]
God with-ovte, the devyll inne!	
I haue be synfull many a day,	
A seruaunte to the devyll-pay.	
Thre childre I haue had borne	
Fful preuyly, they be for-lorne.	[secretly]
I am culled preuely;	[doomed]
That knew no man butt god and I.	
Thrugh commerans of the devill of hell	[destructive influence]
That syn walde I neuer tell.	

[11] Jordan, '*Das Trentalle*', p. 356, ll. 59–68.
[12] *Minor Poems*, Horstmann, p. 261, ll. 17–20.

Alas how shulde I saved be?
My dere son, coumforde me!" '[13]

The mother goes on from here to agree to the son's request to return after her death, if she can, in order to tell him of her condition: 'If god vouc[h]esafe þat I come agayne,/ To tell my state I wolde full fayne.'[14] This is a reversal of what most critics might think an essential element of the plot of *The Trentals of St Gregory*: the mother's spirit enters not as a completely unknown and terrifying being which must explain itself, but more as an invited guest, whose general predicament is already known. It also allows the B poet to keep within the bounds of sacramental orthodoxy, allowing him to avoid the misrepresentation of doctrine in A which suggests that the unrepentant and unshriven sinner can obtain redemption through another's prayers.

Through these examples, the differences between the poems can already be gauged as fairly substantial in approach: the B poet attentive to doctrine and his characters' perspectives, the A poet more concerned with taking his readers/listeners on a tour-de-force of alliterative shock and horror, in which even the worst-case scenario, the unshriven death of a terrible sinner, can be alleviated, and the soul redeemed, by the saying of prayers. For A, the potency of the prayers is the real focus of interest – in B, as we will see, it is the person who says them, not the prayers, that interests the poet and occupies the reader.

The promise-postponement device and implications for the Awntyrs

The passage alluded to above as the most outstanding feature of difference, coming between the son's decision to pray and the completion of those prayers, basically relates a kind of battle of wills between the pope and intruding devils intent on thwarting the completion of the prayer-mission. At stake is the soul of the pope's mother – if the devils can simply distract the pope long enough they will have prevented him from gaining her redemption through prayer, and of course won possession of her soul. Interestingly, however, although the entire episode may be ultimately described as 'a battle of wills', initially the pope is entirely unaware that he is involved in any such battle. It starts like this: a group of men hurry in to the pope at prayers in his chapel and request him to follow them urgently, as the pope's palace is apparently on fire. We later learn that no such fire is in progress and that those 'men' were in fact devils in disguise. It is the poet's skill to be able to relate these events in a manner that puts the reader at the same disadvantage as the pope in the story: the reader learns of the true nature of the 'distractors' at the same time as the pope, by degrees of suspicion, which only become confirmed as they try twice more to thwart the pope's mission. The poet,

[13] Jordan, '*Das Trentalle*', p.355, ll. 20–34.
[14] Jordan, '*Das Trentalle*', p. 356, ll. 53–4.

however, has managed this transition from the rather intense and intimate narrative events between the pope and his mother/mother's spirit occupying the first section of his poem, to this somewhat action-packed, fast and furious narrative of the distractions-passage, by the very subtlest of means. He prefaces the *new* narrative, as we might now see it, with a phrase recognizable as the opening of a typical romance: 'A wonder thyng the mene tyme befell /Off gregory, as I shall yow tell.'[15] The poet is preparing the reader for a romance-style new narrative in apposition to the one that has come before. The events in this passage correspondingly do indeed contain many of the elements of a typical romance: a battle, albeit offstage and imaginary (the second distraction), squires, knights in armour (the third disguise), and a whole host of kings, again offstage and imaginary (the third distraction). Furthermore, the action is dynamic and large-scale, in great contrast to the intimacy of the pope-mother/mother's spirit meeting that occupied the earlier section of the poem. In all this, an *Awntyrs* reader may begin to see something very familiar indeed.

The sense of a clash or juxtaposition of contrasting narratives is at the heart of the debate over the *Awntyrs*' artistic worth. For many, there can be no reconciliation: the first episode, the appearance of the ghost in the Forest of Inglewood, is the ultimate non-sequitur.[16] After allowing the ghoul to berate and condemn Arthurian society for its lack of moral probity, and then predict its downfall as a consequence of their leader's greed, how could the poet then simply change the scenery round and entertain the reader with a little romance-style action unconnected in any noticeable way to the criticisms just voiced? The ghost's attack, it can be argued, is not merely an attack on Arthurian society, but on the romance genre itself, together with its essentially secular concerns.

Yet, if there is an underlying narrative mechanism at play, one akin to the promise-postponement device at work in the *Trentals* B, things might look a little different. Indeed, what the narrative structure of the *Trentals* B contributes is a working model of how such contrasting narratives might be successfully conjoined. The passage of distractions in B can be seen as a distraction from, and an interruption of, the main storyline, a passage of action and colourful surface features designed to distract both the characters *in* the story and the readers *of* the story. In the *Trentals* B, the pope's steadfastness and moral determination is being tested, and being tested by the essentially secular concerns of his office – his responsibility to manage his estate, see to the well-being of his people, and to attend to state affairs (the apparent arrival of a large host of kings being the last of the contrived distractions). Likewise,

15 Jordan, '*Das Trentalle*', p. 359, ll. 147–8.

16 See in particular, J. O. Fichte, '*The Awntyrs Off Arthure*: An Unconscious Change of the Paradigm of Adventure', in *The Living Middle Ages: Studies in Medieval English Literature and its Tradition – a Festschift for Karl Heinz Göller*, eds. Uwe Böker, Manfred Markus and Rainer Schöwerling (Stuttgart, 1989), pp. 129–36. Fichte's argument is a powerful antidote to critics who see the first and second episodes related as moral and exemplum.

in the *Awntyrs*, Guenevere, it can be argued, is also being tested in a strikingly similar way. The queen is being tested by the essentially secular concerns of her position – her responsibility to attend the court (after the hunt), to oversee the battle of Gawain and Galeron, and, importantly, to take a back seat in affairs, and not, for example, suddenly take up where the ghost left off and lecture those around her on morality. She has been requested, by her mother's spirit in the first episode, to carry out a promise to say trental masses for her redemption from purgatory, yet, the entrance of Sir Galeron, after everyone has returned to court following the hunt, essentially postpones the fulfilment of that promise. Similar in structure and function to the intrusion of the devils into the pope's presence, Galeron's intrusion into Arthur's court defers Guenevere's fulfilment of her promise to her mother's spirit to the very final stanza of the poem. In both *Trentals* B and the *Awntyrs*, it is the secular concerns, real or imaginary, that threaten to occlude the moral imperatives set by respective apparitions.

Having noted this striking parallel between the *Trentals* B and the Arthurian poem, we must nevertheless consider the number of dissimilarities, which complicate the sense of echo between the works, in a variety of ways. Three areas in particular need to be mentioned: (a) The passage of distractions in the *Trentals* B comprises less than a third of the entire narrative, while the Galeron episode is more or less equal in length to the ghost episode: this makes the latter less of an interruption and more of a major narrative element.[17] (b) The events that occur in the interloping passage of the *Trentals* B are explicitly discovered to be linked to the deliverance-of-the-mother's soul plot: conscious attempts by devilish forces to distract the pope from his duty. In *The Awntyrs Off Arthure*, however, there is no explicit linking of the promise-postponement passage with the main, or initially established, narrative. For many modern readers, therefore, the poem reads as two not very well conjoined halves, which have nothing in common with each other. (c) Both versions of *The Trentals of St Gregory* end with the reappearance of the mother's spirit in purified form, demonstrating the effectiveness of the prayers and the son's efforts. In the *Awntyrs*, however, there is no vision of any recovered spirit: indeed, the poem ends before the hard task of praying has even begun.

Arguments to counter the above stem from the basic principle of any poetic enterprise that actively trawls other works for base material (a particularly medieval method), that the *Awntyrs* poet adapts, not merely adopts, his source material. To address the dissimilarities point by point: (a) The length of the interloping passage is ultimately of minor importance, the main point being that its existence, whatever the length, constitutes a combination of two shorter narratives, essentially different in either style or tone, or both, within a governing frame. (b) The lack of an explicit link between the two main

17 *The Awntyrs Off Arthure* is 715 lines long; the Galeron episode can be said to begin at line 339 and end at 702, accounting for 363 lines, about 51 percent of the total narrative.

episodes of the *Awntyrs* may indicate a difference in approach, but not a difference in underlying narrative meaning. The pope in the *Trentals* B is being actively tested in terms of his character and moral steadfastness: although initially unaware of what is happening, he eventually realizes the truth behind the repeated interruptions and the agents of those interruptions.[18] The enterprise of praying therefore becomes effectively and explicitly dramatized, as failure to fulfil the promise to his mother's spirit, he realizes, will result in the loss of her soul. On the other hand, Guenevere is not actively or explicitly tested by the Galeron episode: it is more immediately Gawain who suffers at least physical trial as a result of Galeron's intrusion into Arthur's court. One suspects that the outcome of the fight is ultimately irrelevant: no matter who wins the battle, Guenevere must still fulfil the promise set by her ghostly mother, to have the Trental masses said. The danger – and the source of some tension for readers familiar with the Trentals narrative – is really whether she will remember to do so after all the fighting has stopped. In a way, we could say that the poet is being immensely more subtle than the *Trentals*-poet in *not* explicitly linking the first and the second episodes: it reflects the manner in which the concerns of the secular world simply tend to occlude the moral sense, without drama, by degrees, or by the sudden intrusion of secular-bound affairs of state. (c) The real break with the *Trentals*, both A and B versions, concerns the absence in the *Awntyrs* of any final reappearance of the mother's spirit in purified form. Readers familiar with *The Trentals of St Gregory* would have been well attuned to this basic requirement of the plot: the mother has to come back and show us the efficacy of the prayers, or else what is all this fire and brimstone about? The fact that such a scene does not occur in the *Awntyrs*, which most critics agree to be modelled at least in part on *The Trentals of St Gregory*, may have struck medieval readers as an important twist. Of course, the *Awntyrs* poet was not writing an advertisement for Trental prayers; his purpose was to depict, on the simplest level at least, Arthurian society. By ending with a vision of glorious renewal he would have been lessening the impact of the initial scene, and cheapening the ghostly mother's words. The poet was using that expectation of spiritual purification that occurs in *The Trentals of St Gregory* to end with a feeling of disappointment in the *Awntyrs*, or a sense of uncertainty more in keeping with the vision he wanted to project. It is likely also that the sense of the promise as being not yet fulfilled finds a disturbing echo in the realization that the mother's prophecies of doom are not yet fulfilled either. *The Awntyrs Off Arthure* ends with a suggestion that the most important things, the fulfilment of Christian duty, the fall of Arthur, and inevitable death, have been put off, but cannot be put off interminably.

[18] See Jordan, '*Das Trentalle*', p. 360, ll. 195–204 – the poet captures well the pope's slowly dawning realization that there may be some diabolical nature behind the interruptions.

Genesis of the Trentals literary story and a tradition behind the promise-postponement device

The attraction of this reading of the *Awntyrs*' ostensibly wayward narrative structure is increased dramatically when it is realized that the promise-postponement device does not begin with the *Trentals*, but is really a much earlier literary invention. Concerns that the theory cannot be sustained on grounds of priority of date, especially when we consider that the *Trentals* B exists, as mentioned at the outset, only in fifteenth-century manuscripts, may be alleviated to a large degree when we explore the literary origins of the device. What is also interesting is that the device appears to belong to works believed to be among the very sources of *The Trentals of St Gregory*, versions B *and* A.

In his 1974 paper, 'The English Devotion of *St Gregory's Trental*',[19] which draws on extensive knowledge of the ecclesiastical practice of Trental masses as well as the literary story that no doubt acted as a vehicle for its advertisement, Richard Pfaff traces the literary origins of the *Trentals* poem. According to his research, *The Trentals of St Gregory* story was constructed by the joining of two separate tales, which both date to the thirteenth century. The first narrative element concerns the secret wickedness of a pope's mother, and is found in a manuscript 'written at the end of the 13th century and beginning of the 14th'[20] and found in a manuscript of Odo of Cheriton's tales, but possibly by another writer.

> This MS (BM Harl. 219) contains some twenty-five interpolated fables, of which one, 'De muliere adulterine mortua, filio suo sacerdoti apparenti,' provides most of the first half of the St Gregory's Trental story: the woman with one legitimate son, who becomes a priest, and two illegitimate ones; the priest-son, who has prayed to know her eternal fate, confronted by a horrid apparition (described in grotesque detail); confession by the mother that these torments are the penalty for her sins. At this point the fable ends, with no mention of the trental.[21]

There is also a version of this in the *Gesta Romanorum*, dated to the first half of the fourteenth century. The ending shows the blunt realism, and adherence to orthodoxy, of the pre-trental addition: after detailing the terrible torments being suffered by the mother (prefiguring *The Trentals of St Gregory* A's emphasis on such), the son asks despairingly: ' "a! modre," ' he seide, "mowe [might] ye not be sauyd [saved]?" "no," she saide; and wente a-way from his sight.'[22]

19 R. W. Pfaff, 'The English Devotion of St Gregory's Trental', *Speculum* 49 (1974), 75–90.
20 Pfaff, 'English Devotion', p. 77, n. 7.
21 Pfaff, 'English Devotion', pp. 77–8.
22 *Gesta Romanorum*, ed. S. Herrtage (London, 1879), [LXVII] ('How a Woman, who was Damned, Appeared to her Son'), p. 384.

The second narrative element – one accepted as such, or as certainly the best candidate for such, by Pfaff and others[23] – providing the reference to trental masses and the idea that prayer can effect deliverance of souls from Purgatory, can be found in at least three manuscripts, and *is* attributed to Odo. The earliest English version is dated provisionally to the thirteenth century, followed by one in the fourteenth and one to the beginning of the fifteenth, contemporaneous with the composition of *The Awntyrs Off Arthure*.[24] The plotline I have chosen to retell below, however, is derived from a French text of the first half of the thirteenth century, which may be the earliest version known in a modern romance language.[25] The story concerns a little adventure by a certain Bishop Theodosius, who, one fine autumn day, comes down to the edge of the River Rhône to observe his fishermen. At one point, to everyone's surprise, the fishermen haul up not fish but a huge block of ice. The bishop, suffering from a case of gouty feet, is very pleased to place his aching feet on this. It soon turns out, however, that this block of ice contains a soul, trapped within, as though in purgatory, whose deliverance can only be accomplished through the saying of trental masses. (In comparison to the grotesqueness of *The Trentals of St Gregory* A and the melodrama of the earlier sections of *The Trentals of St Gregory* B, this is more like comedy.) The bishop then embarks upon his promise to say these thirty masses (to be said on thirty consecutive days and not over the course of a year as is the case with *The Trentals of St Gregory*). He is, however, interrupted three times by what he deems to be false messengers, resuming his efforts on each occasion.

These 'distractions' do not exactly match those in the *Trentals* B, but a German critic from the nineteenth century has suggested that the *Trentals* B poet may have derived his poem from a transcription of an old Latin source analogue of the Odo tale, from a text presumably at least as early as the fourteenth century.[26] Either way, we can see that the promise-postponement device has quite a history. In this reading, we have to accept that the promise-postponement device not only pre-dates the composition of both versions of *The Trentals of St Gregory*, but actually forms part of the compositional model-kit, so to speak, of *both* versions of *The Trentals of St Gregory*. In light of this, concerns over the supposed lateness of the *Trentals* B may well be mitigated. The likelihood is that the *Trentals* B contains an

23 Notably, Kaufmann, *Trentalle*, p. 28; J. R. Hulbert, 'The Sources of *St. Erkenwald* and *The Trental of Gregory*', *Modern Philology* 16 (1919), 485–93 [also paginated 149–57] (pp. 492–3 [also paginated 156–7]); H. Varnhagen, *Anglia* 13 (Tübingen, 1891), 104–5.

24 To be found, respectively, in Berlin, Meerman, lat. 147, see Pfaff, 'English Devotion', p. 78, n. 8; in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 98, fol. 48, see Pfaff, p. 78, n. 8; and, in London, British Library, Harley 4196, fol. 186. For the latter, see *A Catalogue of the Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, ed. H. D. L. Ward, vol. 3, by J. A. Herbert (London, 1883–1910 edn), description of MS on pp. 327–30. Reference is made to this tale by Kaufmann, *Trentalle*, p. 28, from the text in C. Horstmann's *Altenglische Legenden* (Heilbronn, 1881; reprint, Hildesheim/New York, 1969).

25 In P. Meyer, 'Notice d'un MS de la Bibliothèque Phillipps contenant Une Ancienne Version Francaise des Fables d'eude de Cherrington (ou Cheriton)', *Romania* 14 (1885), 381–97, and pp. 395–6 for text of story itself.

26 Varnhagen, *Anglia*, pp. 105–6.

element of the original source material – the promise-postponement device – because its antiquity at least matches the A version. To see the promise-postponement device as a later innovation or variation is to disregard the facts of the poem's compositional history. Furthermore, we can now say that this device is very definitely pre-*Awntyrs* and therefore may have been known to the *Awntyrs* poet. This finding also widens the net, so to speak, that the *Awntyrs* poet may have cast in order to find tractable material for his narrative: he may well have found the device in other works, drawing it directly from the Theodosius tale, for example.

We can be pretty certain that the Theodosius tale, while surviving in only two of the many manuscripts of Odo de Cheriton's works, was relatively well known in medieval England.[27] The main organ of distribution within Europe seems to be Jacobo de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*, a huge collection of religious tales and fables. This work, compositionally dated to about 1260, survives in about 1,000 manuscripts and, in the Middle Ages, was rivalled only by the Bible in terms of popularity.[28] Chapter 163 is entitled The Commemoration of All Souls and contains Odo de Cheriton's Theodosius tale, although the name has been altered to Theobald. A number of English translations of this tale, and others, began to appear in England from the fourteenth century. It appears in John Mirk's Festial, dated tentatively to about 1380.[29] The tale also reappears in the (early?) fifteenth-century collection of sermons and exempla, the *Speculum Sacerdotale*,[30] and in the important collection of 'homilies on the Gospel-lessons', London, British Library, Harley 4196 (early fifteenth century),[31] testifying to the tale's relative popularity. Echoes of elements of the tale are also present in works like the fifteenth-century *ABC of Tales*, with chapters on devils attempting to obstruct a saint's prayers for the salvation of a soul,[32] and a sinner's confession;[33] various diabolical tempters;[34] and pieces on devils in the likeness of angels,

27 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 98, fol. 48, and Berlin, Meerman, lat. 147.

28 See introduction to W. G. Ryan's translation of Jacobo de Voragine's The Golden Legend: *Readings on the Saints* (New Jersey, 1993), vol. 1, pp. xiii–xviii.

29 For text, see *Mirk's Festial: A Collection of Homilies*, Part I, ed. T. Erbe, EETS ES 96 (London, 1905), chap. 65, 'In Die Animarum etc.', p. 271, ll. 12–34. For dating, see S. Powell, 'A New Dating of *John Mirk's Festial*', *Notes and Queries* 29 (1982), 487–9. 'I would suggest, therefore, that the *Festial* may now fairly confidently be dated between 1350 and 1390, probably towards the later end of that time scale' (pp. 488–9).

30 For text, see *Speculum Sacerdotale*, ed. E. H. Weatherly, EETS OS 200 (London, 1936), chap. 61, 'All Souls', p. 226. Interestingly, Weatherly employs the tale of Theobalde in his introduction to illustrate differences in language between *Speculum Sacerdotale* and *John Mirk's Festial*, and the fact that both works drew on the *Legenda Aurea*: the versions are displayed in parallel columns, pp. xlii–xliii.

31 For text, see Horstmann, *Altenglische Legenden*, chap. 30, 'Commemoracio fidelium defunctorum', pp. 147–8. For information on manuscript, see *Catalogue of Romances in the British Museum*, vol. 3, J. A. Herbert, pp. 327–30.

32 *An Alphabet of Tales*, ed. M. Macleod Banks, parts I and II (reprinted as one vol.), EETS OS 126 and 127 (London, 1904/5), chap. 248, 'St Mary of Oegniez prays for a soul'.

33 *Alphabet of Tales*, chap. 255, 'Devil hinders Confession'.

34 *Alphabet of Tales*, for example, chap. 469, 'The Fiend tempts an Anchoress'.

people and even knights.[35] Interestingly, a thematic echo of the promise-postponement device can be found in the *Legenda Aurea* in the chapter on St Gregory. Jacobo de Voragine goes to the heart of the problem in his account of Gregory's life, in which, like the pope in the *Trentals* story, and to an extent Guenevere in the *Awntyrs*, the concerns of the secular are the real distractions from the spiritual, or the important:

> [Gregory] was also exceedingly wealthy, yet, he considered leaving all behind him and committing himself to a religious way of life. For a long time, however, he put off this conversion. He thought that he might more safely put himself in the service of Christ by appearing to remain in the world as an urban magistrate; but the demands of secular affairs soon weighed on him so heavily that he was snared in them not only in appearance but in his mind.[36]

The idea behind the promise-postponement, that worldly affairs are merely a distraction from the spiritual, is an emblematically medieval one. For a medieval audience in particular any tale involving diabolical temptations or distractions from the spiritual would have resonance with the biblical story of the devil's efforts to tempt Jesus in the desert. As we can see, the theme existed in concept and gave rise to a literary device, the prevalence of which is attested by the apparent popularity of the Theodosius/Theobald tale,[37] and the B version of *The Trentals of St Gregory*.

Conclusions

Any acceptance of the promise-postponement narrative structure as a model by which to read *The Awntyrs Off Arthure* must also be an admission that much remains to be discovered. I have, for example, passed over the actual details of the Sir Galeron episode, giving the impression perhaps that any romance-style episode involving intrusion and disruption of ritual could be fitted in just as easily. Much work remains to be done to see whether such is really true, or whether that particular episode is particularly suited to the poem and whether it is amenable to sustained explication in the light of the *Trentals* parallel. The indications are that the Galeron episode's foundations are rather political and contemporary, and may have struck the medieval reader with greater force than a modern one divorced from the ethos, and without in-depth knowledge of contemporary events.[38] Certainly, as the fore-

35 *Alphabet of Tales*, chap. 469; chap. 247, 'Demons in human Form'; chap. 490, 'A Fiend in a Knight's Garment' etc.

36 Ryan, *The Golden Legend*, vol. 1, pp. 163–4, 'The Commemoration of All Souls'.

37 For a modern take on the promise-postponement device, see Joseph Roth's 1939 *Legend of the Holy Drinker*. The main protagonist is lent money at the beginning of the tale, promising to pay it back. Various events distract him before the fulfilment of the promise.

38 See especially, B. Schmolke-Hasselmann's *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance – the Verse Tradition from Chretien to Froissart* (Cambridge, 1998; trans. by M. & R. Middleton, from the 1980 original German publication). See pp. 287–8 in particular, for a discussion of *The Awntyrs Off Arthure*, and

going account attempts to show, once this literary parallel and the contemporary audience's likely knowledge of it are glimpsed, the case for the structural coherence of *The Awntyrs of Arthure* becomes much more tenable.

Approaching the poem from the perspective offered by the theory above, the *Awntyrs* reads as a sophisticated take on an available kind of narrative. Whether or not we accept that the model for that narrative derived directly from *The Trentals of St Gregory* Version B, or from the Theodosius/Theobald tale, it is clear that a structure combining two thematically and stylistically opposed narratives within a governing thematic frame did exist prior to the composition of *The Awntyrs Off Arthure*. It is also clear that this narrative model is represented in a number of works in English manuscripts from the fourteenth century, and chimes with a particularly medieval preoccupation concerning the conflict between secular and spiritual matters. The translation of this conflict into dramatic form may be the lasting legacy of *The Awntyrs Off Arthure*.

Golagrus and Gawain as literary embodiments of contemporary Scottish grievances over land appropriation by the English crown. Also, C. Chism, *Alliterative Revivals*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, 2002), pp. 253–4.

VIII

L'ATRE PERILLEUX AND THE ERASURE OF IDENTITY

Norris J. Lacy

One of the central preoccupations of most authors of Arthurian romance is the exploration of their protagonists' chivalric and, in some cases, moral identity. In narrating a knight's successes and failures, his opportunities and challenges, his adventures and encounters – whether with other knights, with women, or with the Grail – the author is inevitably exploring issues of identity.[1] To a considerable degree, however, that observation is tautological, since the very act of fiction writing, medieval or modern, is virtually synonymous with exploration, in one way or another, of identity. The specificity of the subject in Arthurian terms derives generally from the close relation of chivalric identity either to a knight's strict conformity to the code of chivalry promulgated at court or, since that code is often more honored in the breach than in the observance, to his rejection of it, whether irresponsibly or by espousing alternative social or moral causes including the Grail Quest. A closely related and equally prominent aspect of Arthurian identity is its usual, indeed nearly invariable, association with names and epithets.

Within this general framework, Arthurian authors treat matters of identity in a variety of complicated and convoluted ways. To the extent that we can roughly categorize the permutations of a subject of this complexity, we may suggest that there are two relatively common trends in the treatment of chivalric identity. The first is to trace the development of a character's identity from a cipher to a knight of considerable or even great distinction. Another is to present a character whose identity, already established, is compromised by a crisis and must be painstakingly remade. As both of these approaches are thoroughly familiar to readers of Arthurian romance, they require only the most cursory illustration here.

However, there is a third approach that is less frequently taken and in many ways more striking. That is the entire *erasure* of a character's identity, and it

[1] Here we are dealing mostly with males: with a number of obvious exceptions (e.g., Silence), female characters have an identity that is fixed, even though it is often only adumbrated, or that is thoroughly undeveloped (as in the case of nameless female messengers, who often discharge their duties and promptly disappear).

may be accomplished in exceedingly curious ways. That phenomenon will be the principal focus of this essay, which, after offering very brief examples of the first two methods, will center on the thirteenth-century French romance *L'Atre perilleux*.

Identity construction 'from scratch', as it were, is most often the subject of romances of the Fair Unknown tale type. The best-known if not the purest example[2] in French is Perceval, the naive young man who, in Chrétien's last romance, is ignorant of chivalry, of the entire world outside his mother's forest, and even of his own name. Perceval is however a quick study, easily acquiring chivalric skills and even making an inspired if surprising guess when asked his name. However, moral and spiritual maturity comes only much later.

At the beginning, Perceval's mother had given him advice that could have served as the epigraph for this essay: *Par le sornon connoist on l'ome*: 'by the name you know the person' (Busby, ed., vs. 562). That is, *nomen est omen*. One's name is one's destiny. The notion that names are generally conterminous with identity inevitably brings us to Gauvain. First, his character and reputation are remarkable: he is regularly the most celebrated but often – especially in the French tradition, though not necessarily in others – one of the most predictably flawed of knights, his flaws being not infrequently related to his inability to keep his hands, as well as certain other body parts, to himself in the presence of women. Those predilections are by no means his only problem. In a number of romances, Gauvain's name is explicitly prominent, either for what it conveys or, no less often, for the fact that it is not known. Specifically, Gauvain is often depicted as a knight who never reveals his name until he is asked, and this practice, as we shall see, can bring him a good deal of trouble.

Another striking example of identity construction and its reflection in naming is offered by *Li chevaliers as deus espees* (The Knight with Two Swords), a complex and important thirteenth-century romance that has received less attention than it merits.[3] The hero, another Fair Unknown, has no name at the beginning of the story and is known to all simply as *Biaux Vallés*, 'handsome youth'. Becoming a knight, he distinguishes himself and is soon known, for reasons that are crucial to the story but that do not require discussion here, as the Knight with Two Swords. Then he shifts his focus from fighting to serving women and identifies himself as the Knight of

2 Not the purest because, at court, he is not recognized as particularly 'fair', nor is his potential for greatness recognized immediately by inhabitants of the court, with the single exception of the damsel who predicts that there will be no greater knight than he. Nonetheless, his trajectory corresponds generally to the Fair Unknown pattern. See Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Roman de Perceval ou le conte du Graal*, ed. Keith Busby (Tübingen, 1993); the damsel's prediction occurs at vss. 1039–44.

3 The brief information concerning this romance is expanded considerably in my article 'Naming and the Construction of Identity in *Li chevaliers as deus espees*', *Romance Philology* 56 (2003), 203–16. The edition of the text is that of Wendelin Foerster: *Li chevaliers as deus espees* (Halle, 1877; repr. Amsterdam, 1996). A new edition, by Paul V. Rockwell, is forthcoming, with facing translation, in the Arthurian Archives series of D. S. Brewer (Cambridge).

Ladies. Only near the end of this long text, when his ascension and maturation are complete, is his identity represented by a proper name (Meriadeuc) rather than an epithet.[4]

The necessity to remake identities after a moral failure has disrupted them needs only the briefest mention here, particularly since, being central to most of Chrétien's works, it is familiar to all readers of romance. Yvain, an accomplished and able knight from the outset of the romance of which he is the hero,[5] suffers a crisis of identity after he betrays his wife by failing to return to her when promised. Having lost his wife's love, Yvain consequently loses his senses but also his identity: he becomes effectively 'non-Yvain', without memory or name. Beginning his recovery of both sanity and responsibility, he is a different person, requiring therefore a different name, the Knight with the Lion. Only when his rehabilitation is complete can he again become Yvain. The name is both a reflection and an extension of the identity.[6]

Turning now to *L'Atre perilleux* ('The Perilous Cemetery'), another of the under-appreciated French verse romances – the so-called epigonal romances – of the thirteenth century, we find one of the most remarkable explorations of identity and naming in the literature of the period.[7] Here both the anonymous author and Gauvain (the primary hero) often appear to be as concerned, if not obsessed, with names as is any narrator or character of romance. But the connection of name with identity is especially close and problematic here. Because Gauvain was traditionally a figure whose identity (again, speaking in particular of the French tradition) was fixed and familiar to the audience,[8] we may expect that any exploration of his character will likely take an unconven-

4 A fascinating subplot (vss. 4312ff.) further develops the connection of name to identity and, moreover, to reputation. Gauvain, a secondary hero in this romance, is at one point preparing to relieve a young woman of the burden of her virginity, with her consent (and that of her mother!), when she suddenly changes her mind. She explains that she is saving herself for Gauvain, whom she loves because of his repute but whom she has never seen. She has neglected to ask the name of the man who happens to be in bed with her. Now, though, she does, and when Gauvain – who never reveals his name unless asked – identifies himself, she does not believe him. Much later, she explains to him that she knew Gauvain's reputation, and because he did not rape her, he could not possibly have been Gauvain. A curious paradox: had he raped her, he would have established his identity and would then have deserved to claim the virginity that, of course, she would no longer have.

5 Chrétien de Troyes, *Le chevalier au lion (Yvain)*, ed. and trans. David F. Hult, in Chrétien de Troyes, *Romans*, genl ed. Michel Zink (Paris, 1994), pp. 705–936. In vs. 2805 Yvain 'forsenne' ('loses his mind'), and a long and arduous expiation ensues.

6 Chrétien's Lancelot offers an interesting permutation of this situation. Although he is an Arthurian knight, apparently well respected, from the beginning, he is not named (by author or any character) until the middle of the romance, being described until then only as 'the knight who rode in the cart', and since the cart is the kind used to transport criminals, he is presented and accepted as shameful by all who know of him. After the mid-point of the romance, he can 'become' Lancelot and be the knight he presumably was – or should have been – from the first. (This quick description, of course, ignores profound ambiguities in the presentation of Lancelot, but those are not our subject here.)

7 See Nancy B. Black, ed. and trans., *The Perilous Cemetery (L'Atre périlleux)* (New York, 1994). Line references are to this edition.

8 Including his flaws. For example, when a woman who is under Gauvain's protection is abducted from court, Gauvain is in a quandary: he is in the process of dining and is unable to decide whether he should leave the table, discourteously, in order to stop the abduction or whether he must wait until the meal is finished. He chooses the latter course and remains seated until he is insulted and ridiculed by Kay.

tional form. We will not be disappointed. Since Gauvain is already established as the consummate knight, further development is unlikely or impossible, and moreover he appears immune to the kind of personal crisis that would necessitate an arduous renewal. Therefore, with nothing to construct or reconstruct, the author chooses instead to *deconstruct* his identity, and he does so in very curious fashion.[9] That identity is at one point entirely erased and his name 'mislaid', as Gauvain will indicate, and to regain both he must embark, not on a quest to expiate an offense or to perfect himself, but on a straightforward search to locate them.

Very early in *L'Atre perilleux* (vss. 456–579), three knights kill a fourth one, after which they gouge out the eyes of a young man who tries to come to the victim's aid. The crucial fact here is that the knight who is killed is thought to be Gauvain. In fact, Gauvain himself soon arrives on the scene, and three grieving women who witnessed the event explain to him the reason for their reaction: the great Gauvain is no more. He, without identifying himself, reassures them that Gauvain is still alive; he knows because he has seen him at court (vss. 602–3). But the young man contradicts him, assuring him that the corpse was definitely Gauvain (and that he was 'mors a extrox', vs. 607). Unfortunately, the question cannot be settled in the obvious way because the cadaver has been decapitated and dismembered, the body parts carried away and dispersed.

Because he is thought dead, Gauvain will be identified only as 'Cil sans non' ('he who has no name', see vss. 4064, 4143, 4178, and passim).[10] For all practical purposes, his apparent death completely erases his identity. He is now no one; dead, he has no name – other than Cil sans nom. We might argue that 'Nameless' *is* a name, but in the context of this romance it is at best a name that signifies negatively, denoting his non-identity, even his non-existence. A name designates and represents a single person,[11] and thus a name attached, even in error, to the dead stranger cannot belong to the knight we know as Gauvain.

This sequence and later developments raise several questions about medieval 'identity theft'. Foremost among them is this: why is Gauvain limited to the assertion that he knows that Gauvain is alive? Why can he not simply identify himself as Gauvain? The short answer is that he cannot do so because no one has asked. The author of *L'Atre perilleux*, perhaps curiously, does not explicitly offer that or any other explanation. However, a standard feature of a good number of French romances is Gauvain's willingness to reveal his name

9 It should be noted from the outset that the erasure of identity is entirely distinct from the simple concealment of identity, a common phenomenon in a great many romances.

10 Another character refers to him directly as 'Vous qui n'avés pas vostre nom' ('You who do not have *your* name'; vs. 3503, my emphasis).

11 This observation holds despite the proliferation of similar or identical names in Arthurian romance. There are numerous duplications of names from text to text or even in a single one; an example is Yvain, Yvain the Bastard, Yvain the Tall, etc. Most often, as in this example, they are distinguished by epithets, but even when they are not, confusion is rare if not non-existent, except when a knight deliberately misidentifies himself.

whenever asked, but never otherwise. Given the highly conventionalized nature of romance, it is reasonable to assume, even in the absence of direct authorial confirmation, that the customary 'rules' concerning Gauvain's nature and habits, known from other romances, must apply to this situation. Gauvain, as is his wont, is remaining true to a tradition that was undoubtedly familiar to the author's public. Were he not observing those rules, he could surely state, not that he has seen Gauvain, but that he *is* Gauvain – and he could easily enough find corroboration at court or elsewhere.[12]

Convention, though, cannot provide a name for the nameless. There comes a time when another knight does ask his name (v. 3440), but whereas custom would ordinarily require him to reveal it, he is now powerless to do so, because *he has no name*. Instead, he can only reply (vss. 3450–2) that ' "Je ne vous puis le mien non dire, / . . . que je l'ai perdu, / Si ne sai ki le m'a tolu" ' ('I can't tell you my name, because I have lost it and do not know who took it from me').[13] He explains, as if his name were a lost object, that he must go seek it but that he does not know where it might be found (vss. 3452–4). Inviting the knight to accompany him as he searches, he promises that if they succeed in locating and recovering his name, he will reveal it immediately (vss. 3464–5). And they set off, as if on a grail quest – but in search, not of a grail, but of a misplaced name.

An additional question, suggested by Gauvain's statements, concerns the agent of his identity theft, and here things become more complicated yet. The killers are, in Gauvain's mind and thus necessarily in ours, responsible for taking away his name, but they themselves appear never to have attributed that name to the dismembered corpse.[14] That identification is made only by the young man – the blind eye-witness – and the women with him, and it is eventually known to others (see vss. 6189–91). There is thus an act of unintentional collusion between the witnesses and the killers; the latter committed the offense, but the loss of Gauvain's name and identity – and ostensibly of his life as well – is the result of the witnesses' misperception.

He has been unable to reveal his identity because he has none to reveal. If someone thinks him dead, then he is dead: his death, for the people in question and consequently for him, has already been established. The name 'Gauvain' remains attached to the disarticulated members of a body, merely because

12 It may also be true that, proud of his chivalric distinction, he wishes to demonstrate it, not merely establish his identity by stating it. These two explanations are not incompatible.

13 Note that when he defeats the 'devil' at the Perilous Cemetery, the cemetery itself 'loses its name'; see vs. 1182.

14 Once Gauvain avenges in battle the dismembered knight's death, he recounts to the principal villain (a magician known as the Orguelleus Faé, now transformed by force into Gauvain's ally) the events of the murder. In the process he quotes one of the knights as threatening 'Gauvain' by name (vss. 5798–9). This suggests that the killers knew – or thought they knew – whom they were killing. In fact, however, that suggestion is disproved in two ways. First, when Gauvain is first informed that he is dead, no reference is made to the killers' words; and second, the magician corrects him, stating that it all happened differently and that the story should not be told so badly (vss. 5826, 5830).

others think so. Public opinion, even when reflecting a factual error, reshapes and determines reality.

Chivalric identity is a social, sometimes moral, and certainly reputational construct. Moreover, in this romance the connection between a name and the identity of its (present or former) bearer is absolute. In previous instances, the name designated or reflected one's identity, and the lack of a name (or the use of a descriptive epithet such as 'Biax Fix', the future Perceval, or 'Biaux Vallés', who will eventually be Meriadeuc) provides a blank canvas on which identity is to be painted. But in *L'Atre perilleux*, the name does not merely identify or even signify the person; it *is* the person. And as I noted, the assumption by others that Gauvain is dead suffices, for practical purposes, to *make* him dead. So the name is co-extensive not only with the person, but also with public perceptions of him. Moreover, it is not his change of identity (or his incognito) that provokes public assumptions about him; on the contrary, it is those assumptions that determine or control his identity, of which he can be deprived, not by arms or by shame, but instead by the perceptions of others, correct or not.

The fact that the assumption about Gauvain's death robs him of identity, which requires the erasure of his name – or that conversely, the deprivation of a name simply erases identity – is a complex and fascinating phenomenon, and it produces some peculiar and amusing consequences, such as when Gauvain speaks to others of the great love he has for . . . Gauvain:

> J'amai tant monsegnor Gavain
> Ke je feroie que vilain
> Se je soufroie qu'il eüst
> Reproce la u mes cors fust,
> Ne se il a mort u a vie
> Estoit retés de vilenie. (vss. 3371–6)
>
> [I loved Sir Gawain so much that it would be disgraceful of me to allow him to be reproached in my presence or to be accused of villainy, whether he is dead or alive.]

It is a question of his being led, as subject, to speak of himself as object: the two are now functionally distinct.

Perhaps the least difficult question, and a key to the others I raised, is why his finding the killers and prevailing in battle will restore his name and prove his identity. The answer is surely related to Gauvain's chivalric distinction and to his reputation as the best of knights. His eventual victory in battle not only avenges cowardly acts (the murder of an unarmed knight and the blinding of an unarmed youth), but also serves to demonstrate that he – Gauvain, by whatever name or non-name – *could not* have been killed by these men. And subsequent events prove it. Soon after the battle, he is again asked his name, and now he readily replies, 'je sui Gavains. / Ja mon non ne vous ert celé / Puis que j'ai par armes prouvé / Ke je sui delivres et sains' ('I

am Gauvain. My name will not be concealed from you, since I have proven by force of arms that I am alive and well'; vss. 5734–7). He has thus become once again the Gauvain that he knows and dearly loves.

There is one further complication that requires particular comment, and it is here that *L'Atre perilleux* becomes, to my mind, especially fascinating in its manipulation of the issues of identity. When he first encountered the three women and the sightless young man, Gauvain was on a quest to recover a damsel abducted from Arthur's court. After discovering that he is 'dead', as it were, he naturally enough wishes to pursue his 'killers' and, through battle, resurrect himself, regain his name, and avenge their acts of violence. However, his initial quest – the rescue of the kidnapped woman – preoccupies him and takes precedence. Demonstrating a singleness of purpose that is less than characteristic of the gallic Gauvain, he is determined to complete that task first: 'la premeraine / Doit il premierement furnir' (roughly, 'first things first', vss. 642–3).

What is most striking about subsequent events, however, is that, although his life and identity, and his name as well, have been ostensibly taken from him, he does not immediately abandon that name. He is dead and transformed into 'non-Gauvain' – but *only* in regard to the search for the murderous knights. Having possessed a name when he began the quest to rescue the young woman, he is paradoxically able to retain it throughout that sequence even though the 'murder' of Gauvain has already, supposedly, deprived him of it. Thus, he has the ability to defer his nameless status until he completes the initial quest. In fact, both the narrator and the hero himself freely continue to use the name Gauvain (see 'Je sui Gavains', vs. 787). The name is intimately related to identity; the lack of one, to non-identity. But Gauvain's initial quest has no connection to the erroneous identification of a corpse and thus no implications for his name until he has succeeded in rescuing the kidnapped woman.

However, as soon as that sequence is completed and he can turn his attention to the agents of his own 'demise', he sheds his name and becomes 'Cil sans nom', the knight whose name was stolen much earlier. He will then remain nameless until he has located the guilty knights and, by punishing them appropriately, regained his lost identity. Only then can he again refer freely to himself as Gauvain. Only then *is* he once again Gauvain.

Thus, each social or moral enterprise, each context, retains, attached to it, the identity that is active at its inception. The striking result is that Gauvain's identity is fragmented, just as the cadaver thought to be his body is fragmented. However, this formulation of the problem represents an oversimplification. Gauvain's situation suggests that, in this romance, a knight can both exist and not exist, be alive and dead, be named and unnamed. He can possess an identity and simultaneously possess none.

This paradox offers the author of the romance an opportunity, in which he obviously delights, to play, often humorously, on his hero's situation. At one point, for example, Gauvain forcibly takes food and drink from a castle in

order to feed a hungry woman, and the lady of the castle exclaims angrily that if Gauvain were alive, He Who Has No Name would never get away with this outrage (vss. 4217–19; see also 4286–91). Here and elsewhere there is an odd irony and an amusing confirmation of the romance's thematic complexity: Gauvain's temporary non-existence can also be translated as a dual existence, a doubling of character: we are dealing simultaneously with both Gauvain and non-Gauvain.

Although the text is often playful, as the preceding example illustrates, the theme of *L'Atre perilleux* is at the same time entirely serious in the elaboration and dissection of the theme. The author deals in complicated and intriguing ways with the most fundamental questions of chivalric identity and of the association of name with character. We know Gauvain because he is what his name signifies. But if his name is mislaid or taken from him, he cannot be known as Gauvain – or even known to exist – until he succeeds in a quest to locate it and affix it to himself anew, thus becoming once more the person he had been.

This author takes the exploration of identity about as far as we can imagine it going. Identity is fragmented or doubled or, in the central sequence, simply erased. Assuredly, and more dramatically than in most romances of the period, *nomen est omen*, but clearly, to characters and readers alike, the *lack* of a name is no less portentous.

IX

THE THEME OF THE HANDSOME COWARD IN THE POST-VULGATE *QUESTE DEL SAINT GRAAL*

Fanni Bogdanow

The Post-Vulgate *Queste del Saint Graal*, which together with the Post-Vulgate version of the *Mort Artu* forms the third part of the Post-Vulgate *Roman du Graal*, was composed between 1230 and 1240, that is, shortly after the Vulgate Cycle of Arthurian romances and the First Version of the prose *Tristan (Tr. I)* but before the Second Version of the prose *Tristan (Tr. II)* and the *Palamède*.[1] Unlike the Vulgate Cycle, the Post-Vulgate has not been preserved in its original French form in any one manuscript, but it has been possible to reconstruct the narrative with the aid of the Portuguese and Spanish translations, the *Demanda do Santo Graal* and the *Demanda del Sancto Grial*, from various fragments, including those preserved in manuscripts of the Second Version of the prose *Tristan*. For through good fortune shortly after its composition, the Post-Vulgate was not only translated first into Portuguese and then from the Portuguese into Spanish,[2] but large

1 On the Post-Vulgate, see Pere Bohigas Balaguer, *Los Textos españoles y gallego-portugueses de la Demanda del Santo Grial*, in *Revista de Filologia Española*, Anejo VII (Madrid, 1925); F. Bogdanow, 'The *Suite du Merlin* and the *Post-Vulgate Roman du Graal*', in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History*, ed. Roger Loomis (Oxford, 1959), pp. 325–35; F. Bogdanow *The Romance of the Grail, A Study of the Structure and Genesis of a Thirteenth-Century Arthurian Prose Romance* (Manchester and New York, 1966) [an updated Portuguese translation by Silvio de Alemeida Toledo Neto is in preparation]; F. Bogdanow, ed., *La Version Post-Vulgate de la Queste del Saint Graal et de la Mort Artu, Troisième partie du Roman du Graal*, vols. I, II and IV.1 (Paris, 1991) [vols. III (Paris, 2000) and IV.2 (Paris, 2001), contain the remainder of the text, together with an updated bibliography]; F. Bogdanow, 'The Vulgate Cycle and the Post-Vulgate *Roman du Graal*', in *A Companion to the Lancelot-Grail Cycle*, ed. Carol Dover (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 33–51; Roger Lathuillere, 'Le *Roman du Graal* postérieur à la Vulgate (Cycle du Pseudo-Robert de Boron)', in *Grundriss der Romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters*, ed. Jean Frappier and Reinhold R. Grimm (Heidelberg, 1978), vols. IV.1, pp. 615–22 and IV.2 (1984), pp. 166–7; Heitor Megale, O *Jogo dos Anteparos, A Demanda do Santo Graal: a estrutura ideológica e a construçao da narrativa* (Sao Paulo, 1992).

On the relationship of the Post-Vulgate to the prose *Tristan*, see F. Bogdanow, 'Un nouvel examen des rapports entre la *Queste Post-Vulgate* et la *Queste* incorporée dans la deuxième version du *Tristan en prose*', *Romania*, 118 (2000), 1–32. The *Palamède* was in existence by 1240 (Bogdanow, the *Romance of the Grail*, pp. 13, 222–4.

2 For editions of the Portuguese and Spanish versions, see Augusto Magne, ed., *A Demanda do Santo Graal*, 3 vols. (Rio de Janeiro, 1944) [first complete edition of the Portuguese *Demanda*]; Augusto

portions of the *Queste* were incorporated into the Second Version of the prose *Tristan*.[3]

Although in the middle section of the Post-Vulgate *Roman du Graal*, the so-called *Suite du Merlin*,[4] the young knight Baudemagus refers to himself as *biaus et mauvais* when King Pellinor choses Tor and not him to occupy one of the seats at the Round Table that had become vacant on the death of eight of the companions who had lost their lives in the war against the five rebel kings (*Merlin*, ed. G. Paris, II, 170), the character to whom in the Post-Vulgate is assigned the role of the 'Handsome Coward' is the Grail hero himself, the virgin knight Galaad who in one of the incidents in the *Queste* section had refused at first to engage in combat with Agravain, one of King Arthur's nephews.[5] The author of the Post-Vulgate, however, did not himself invent the theme of the handsome coward. While the theme ultimately goes back to Chrétien de Troyes' *Erec* where the fifth of the most valiant of Arthur's knights bore the name *Li Biax Coarz*[6] and Benoit de Sainte-Maure's *Chronique des ducs de Normandie* dating from the year 1170 where the writer attributes the term *Beau Mauvais* not to any one knight in particular, but to all those who while handsome, lack valour,[7] the immediate sources of the Post-Vulgate were the Vulgate Cycle and the First Version of the prose

Magne, ed. *A Demanda do Santo Graal, reproducão fac-similar e transcrição critica do codice 2594 da Biblioteca Nacional de Viena* (Rio de Janeiro, 1, 1955; II, 1970; Glossary, 1, 1967) [second complete edition]; Bonilla, Adolfo y San Martin, *La Demanda del Sancto Grial*, vol. I: *El Baladro del Sabio Merlin*; vol. II: *La Demanda del Sancto Grial con los maravillosos fechos de Lanzarote y de Galaz su hijo. Libros de Caballerias*. 1: *Ciclo arturico*, Nueva Biblioteca de Autores Españoles 6 (Madrid, 1907), pp. 163–338 [reprinted edition of the 1535 *Baladro* and *Demanda*].

3 For an edition of the prose *Tristan Queste* published under the direction of Phillippe Ménard, see *Le Roman de Tristan en prose*, 9 vols. (Geneva, 1987–97), vols. VI, Emmanuele Baumgartner and Michele Szkilnik, eds., *Du séjour des amants* à *la Joyeuse Garde jusqu'aux premieres aventures de la Queste du Graal*, 1993; VII: Danielle Queruel and Monique Santucci, eds., *De l'appel d'Yseut jusqu'au depart de Tristan de la Joyeuse Garde*. 1994; VIII: Bernard Guidot and Jean Subrenat, eds., *De la quête de Galaad à la destruction du château de la lépreuse*, 1995; IX, Laurence Harf-Lancner, ed., *La fin des aventures de Tristan et de Galaad*, 1997.

4 Gaston Paris and Jacob Ulrich, eds., *Merlin, roman en prose du XIIIe siecle, publié . . . d'après le manuscrit appartenant* a *M. Alfred H. Huth*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1886); Gilles Roussineau, ed., *La Suite du Roman de Merlin*, 2 vols. (Geneva, 1996); Patrick Coogan Smith, ed., *Les enchantemenz de Bretaigne, an extract from a thirteenth century prose romance, 'La Suite du Merlin'*, North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures 146 (Chapel Hill, 1977); M. D. Legge, ed., *Le roman de Balain*, with an introduction by Eugène Vinaver (Manchester, 1942); H. O. Sommer, *Die Abenteuer Gawains, Ywains and Le Morholts mit den drei Jungfrauen . . . Die Fortsetzung des Huth-Merlin nach der allein bekannten* HS. Nr. 112 *der Pariser National Bibliothek* (Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie, Beiheft XLVII, 1913); F. Bogdanow, ed., *La Folie Lancelot, a hitherto unidentified portion of the Suite du Merlin contained in MSS. B.N, fr. 112 and 12599* (Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie, Beiheft 109, 1965).

5 F. Bogdanow, ed., *Queste P–V*, III, pp. 153–7, § 486–8.

6 Mario Roques, ed., *Les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes, I, Erec et Enide* (Paris, 1953): 'et li quinz fu *Li Biax Coarz*' (v. 1676).

7 Francisque Michel, ed., Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *Chronique des ducs de Normandie* (Paris, 1838); Carin Fahlin, ed., B. de Sainte-Maure, *Chronique . . .* (Uppsala, 1951): 'de cc sunt peri li plusor, / Qu'en eus n'en a pris ne valor; / *Beau Mauvais sont cist apelé*' (ed. F. Michel, II, vv. 18458–60; ed. C. Fahlin, I, vv. 20639–41).

It should be mentioned that Renaut de Beaujcau in his *Bel Inconnu* (1185–90) also mentions among the knights present at Arthur's coronation a certain *Biaus Coars: 'A* Carlion, qui siet sor mer, / Se faisoit

Tristan. In the former, in the incident where in the tournament held at the Chastel de la Marche Boors is the victor, but refuses the prize awarded to him, namely the hand of King Brangoire's daughter, the damsels present curse the hour that Boors was born and say that he ought to be called the *Biaus Mauvais*, for although handsome, he is cowardly:

> Et dient les damoiseles entr'euls que bien doit li chevaliers avoir a non *li Biaus Mauvais* quant il a son oés n'a prise la plus bele riens qui soit nee. Et mal dehé ait ore l'eure que il onques fu nés si biaus ne si preus quant il est si malvais.[8]
>
> [And the damsels say that his name should be 'the Handsome Coward' since he has refused the hand of the most beautiful damsel. Cursed be the hour that he was ever born when he is so handsome and valiant and yet so cowardly.]

In the prose *Tristan*, it is not only in the Second Version of that compilation, in the list of the knights who participated in the Quest of the Grail taken over from the Post-Vulgate *Queste*, that we find a character called *li Biaus Couars*,[9] absent however from the corresponding lists in both the Portuguese and Spanish *Demandas*.[10] Already in an earlier part of the narrative, in a section common to both the First and Second Version of the prose *Tristan*, Tristan's companion, the newly knighted Dinadan, is reminded by Tristan himself that he would never be honoured again in Arthur's court if he is guilty of cowardice. This occurred when he and Tristan arrived at a certain castle where it was the custom that all those who wished to lodge there would first have to engage in combat with one of the two knights who are the lords of the castle. Dinadan who at first attempted to evade this custom, finally consented to enter into a joust, but not until Tristan reminded him that on their return to Arthur's court he, Dinadan himself, would have to relate the circumstances of this *grant couardise*.[11] Nor is this all, the actual title, the *Biaus Mauvais*, intended here, as in the prose *Lancelot*, to be uncomplimentary, is given to Tristan himself before it is given to Galaad. This occurred, again in a portion of the prose *Tristan* common to both the First and Second Versions, but prior to the Dinadan adventure, in the days before Tristan left Cornwall for Arthur's kingdom. In the incident in question, Tristan, at King Marc's

Ii rois coroner / A une cort qu'il ot mandee. / . . . / Et si i fu li *Biaus Coars*' (ed. G. Perrie Williams (Paris, 1929), pp. 1–2, ll. 11–48.

8 H. Oskar Sommer, ed., *The Vulgate Version of Arthurian Romances*, IV (1911; rpt New York, 1969), p. 266, ll. 7–10; cf. A. Micha, ed., *Lancelot, Roman en prose du XIIIe siècle* (Geneva, 1978), II, p. 189, ch. XLVIII, § 4; *Lancelot du Lac*, vol. V, ed. Yvan G. Lepage, trans. Marie-Louise Ollier, *Lettres Gothiques* (Paris, 1999), p. 396.

9 F. Bogdanow, ed., *Queste P–V*, IV.1, p. 88, character no. 53: 'Apres jura li *Biaus Couars*'. Cf. *Le Roman de Tristan en prose*, eds., E. Baumgartner and M. Szkilnik (Geneva, 1993), VI, p. 273, § 112, l. 57; Eilert Löseth, *Le roman en prose de Tristan. . . . Analyse critique d'après les manuscrits de Paris*, Bibl. de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes, fasc. 82 (Paris, 1891), p. 283, § 395a.

10 For the list of knights in the Portuguese *Demanda*, see F. Bogdanow, ed., *Queste P–V*, II, pp. 53–5, § 39; for the corresponding list in the Spanish *Demanda*, see *La Demanda del Sancto Grial*, ed. Bonilla, Adolfo y San Martin, p. 175.

11 Marie-Louise Chênerie and Thierry Delcourt, eds., *Le Roman de Tristan en prose*, II (Geneva, 1990), pp. 129–30, § 40, ll. 41–9; Löseth, *Analyse*, p. 91, § 109.

request, had engaged in battle with two of King Pellinor's sons, Lamorat and Drian. The latter two, after vanquishing two of Marc's knights, had been pursued by some fifty of Marc's other knights. Of these Lamorat and Drian vanquished ten, the rest fleeing. Thereupon, at Marc's request, Tristan had regretfully engaged in combat with the two brothers, but when after unhorsing Lamorat, Tristan refused to continue the combat with Lamorat, the latter, assuming that Tristan had turned into a coward, referred to him insultingly as a *Biaus Mauvais*:

> – Tristan, *li Biax Mauvais* a refusee la bataille. Honiz soie se je jamés le tieg a si preudome com je fesoie devant. Je sai bien que tot ce a il fait par coardise.[12]
>
> [– Tristan, the Handsome Coward has refused battle. May I suffer shame if I consider him as valiant as I used to do. I know well that he is doing this out of cowardice.]

However, what Lamorat had failed to realize, as Drian himself pointed out to him, and as will be the case when subsequently in somewhat different circumstances, Galaad will refuse to fight, is that Tristan had refused to fight not out of cowardice, but out of courtesy:

> – Non a, certes, fait Dryanz, enz le lesse por ce qu'il li semble que a vilenie li devroit estre torné s'il a nos se combatoit aprés ce que nos avons tant fait d'armes, et il est toz fres et reposez. Ce a esté la soe pensee et *sa cortoisie*.[13]
>
> [– No indeed, said Dryan. He is refraining from battle because it seems to him that it would be considered villainy if he were to fight with us when we have already exerted ourselves so much while he is fresh and rested. This is what he thinks and it is an act of courtesy on his part.]

Yet this is not all. Even more importantly as an immediate source of the Galaad 'Handsome Coward' episode in the Post-Vulgate is an incident preserved in two of the extant manuscripts of the First Version of the prose *Tristan* (BNF, f. fr. 757 and 1628), but absent from the Second Version, in which a character called Eugène plays a significant role.[14] Just as in the Post-Vulgate incident Galaad is accompanied by a young companion, Frolle's son Samaliel, who as yet is still a squire, so in the prose *Tristan* Galaad is accompanied by Eugène, a young knight from Gaule whom Galaad had encountered by chance asleep by a fountain. On awakening Eugène had offered to accompany Galaad, and together they enjoyed that evening the hospitality of an old man whose two sons hated Arthur's knights on account of an act of treachery Gauvain had committed. That day a squire brought the news that five knights hated by the two brothers would arrive shortly. It is

12 Renee L. Curtis, ed., *Le roman de Tristan en prose* (Leiden, 1976), II. § 525, p. 128, ll. 47–9; Löseth, *Analyse*, § 47, pp. 38–9.

13 R. L. Curtis, ed., *Tristan*, II, § 525, p. 128, ll. 49–52.

14 For a transcription of the BNF, f. fr. 757–1628 account, see F. Bogdanow, ed., *Queste P–V*, IV, pp. 238–54. For a summary of the account, see Löseth, *Analyse*, pp. 300–1, § 437–8.

from the account of the events that follow the arrival of these five hostile knights that the Post-Vulgate has adapted with significant modifications certain details for its treatment of 'Galaad the Handsome Coward' theme. In both narratives Galaad and his companion, Samaliel in the Post-Vulgate, Eugène and the host's two sons in the prose *Tristan*, are challenged to combats on their journey: in the prose *Tristan* they are challenged by the five hostile knights who were pursuing the two brothers, in the Post-Vulgate by two of Gauvain's brothers, Agravain and Mordred, with the third one, Gaheriet, standing back.

It is the respective writers' portrayal of Galaad's reaction to the challenge that is most revealing. In both versions, Galaad refrains from taking up arms against the aggressors. In the prose *Tristan*, Galaad's reason for standing back is simply that he wished to see part of Eugène's prowess and how skilful he was in battle, willing however, if Eugène and his host's two sons were defeated, then to take on himself the five enemy knights.[15] In the Post-Vulgate, where it is on two successive occasions in the course of this incident that Galaad refrains from taking up arms, Galaad's reasons for refusing to enter into combat are hinted at though not spelled out directly by Galaad himself. On the first occasion, on being challenged to a combat by Agravain, Galaad seemingly realising that the knight is Agravain, refuses to take up the challenge without however explaining himself to Samaliel:

> – Sire, fet li escuiers a Galaad, gardez vous. Cil chevaliers, qui ci vient, vous veut mal. Prenez vostre escu et vostre glaive, si vous deffendez.
> – Ne place Dieu, que je preigne armes contre lui!
> – Comment? fet cil, n'avez vous mie hardement de vostre cors deffendre?
> – Nanil, fet Galaad, contre lui. (*Queste P–V*, III, p. 151, § 485)

> [– Sir, said the squire to Galaad, take care. The knight who is approaching has ill intentions. Take your shield and your spear, and defend yourself.
> – So please God, I shall not take up arms against him.
> – How come, do you not have the courage to defend yourself?
> – No, said Galaad, not against him.]

The second occasion follows on shortly. Galaad, now accompanied by Gauvain's three brothers, arrives at a castle where they are approached by four knights who tell them that anyone who wishes to enter must first joust with them. Gaheriet, Agravain and Mordred immediately take up the challenge and so severely wound their opponents that these collapse in a faint. Galaad, assuming that they are dead, is distressed, but prepares to joust with the fourth opponent, pointing out to him however the fate of his companions and urging him to forgo their joust, to which the latter agrees (*Queste P–V*, III, p. 153, § 486).

In the event, in the Galaad–Eugène incident in the prose *Tristan* the hostile knights were vanquished without Galaad's help. But not only had the host's

[15] F. Bogdanow, ed., *Queste P–V*, IV, p. 240, § 2.

two sons assumed that Galaad had refrained from taking part in the combat out of fear – *por paur et por doutance* (*Queste P-V*, IV, 2, p. 242, § 5). The people in the host's castle to which the two sons returned, together with Galaad and Eugène were also of the same opinion, for they had been informed by their squires how Galaad had sat beneath a tree while Eugène and the two sons were engaged in their combats:

> Li vallez de leienz qi toute la besoigne avoient veue dient qe trop le fist bien Eugenes, *mes l'autre chevalier qi de la meson le roi Artus estoit n'i feri oncquez cop, ne hardement n'ot oncquez q'il s'i meist, ainz se mist desoz .i. arbre dusquez atant qe toute la besoigne fu achevee*. (*Queste P–V*, IV, 2, p. 243, § 8)
>
> [The squires in the castle who had seen everything remarked that Eugène had done very well, *but that the other knight who was from king Arthur's household had not struck a single blow, nor had he given any indication of courage, but had sat beneath a tree until the whole matter was over*.]

And the people, after looking at Galaad, comment that it is a great pity that he was ever a knight since he is so cowardly:

> Il viennent tuit devant lui et le regardent a merveilles et *dient qe domage fu trop grant quant il oncques fu chevalier et est cohart si durement*
> (*Queste P–V*, IV, 2, pp. 243–4, § 9)
>
> [They all came forward towards him, and looking at him in wonder, said it was a very great pity that he was ever a knight since he is such a coward.]

One may well ask the question why the author of the Post-Vulgate chose to develop a scene in which Galaad is presented as a 'Handsome Coward'. The answer may well lie in the fact that our writer was most probably, like his immediate predecessor, the author of the Vulgate *Queste*, acquainted with the mystical writings of St Bernard of Clairvaux and wished to underline some of a knight's qualities vital in St Bernard's view. Not only in his Treatise *The Steps of Humility and Pride*, but also in some of his letters and in his sermons on the *Song of Songs*, St Bernard stresses the essential need for humility. In his words, 'the path of humility is a good path'.[16] For 'Humility is a virtue by which a man has a low opinion of himself because he knows himself well. This is the virtue that belongs to those who have set their hearts to the climb and have gone from virtue to virtue, from step to step, until they have reached the highest point of humility'.[17] Thus, 'if a man wants to know the full truth about himself he will have to get rid of the beam of pride which blocks out the

16 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Treatises*, II: *The Steps of Humility and Pride*, introduction by M. Basil Pennington, text translated by M. Ambrose Conway, Cistercian Fathers Series 13 (Kalamazoo, 1980), ch. II, p. 34, § 5; J. Leclercq and H. M. Rochais, *S. Bernardi Opera*, vol. III (Rome, 1963), pp. 20.2–3: 'Bona tamen via humilitatis, qua veritas inquiritur.'

17 *The Steps of Humility*, *Treatises*, II, ch. 1, p. 30, § 2; J. Leclercq and H. M. Rochais, eds., *S. Bernardi Opera*, vol. III, p. 17, § 2, 21–4: 'Humilitas est virtus, qua homo verissima sui cognitione sibi ipse vilescit. Haec autem convenit his, qui ascensionibus in corde suo dispositis, de virtute in virtutem, id est de gradu in gradum proficiunt, donec ad culmen humilitatis perveniant.'

light from his eye'.[18] And quoting in one of his sermons on the *Song of Songs* Proverbs 15. 18 and 25. 15, St Bernard reminds his audience that 'A peaceful tongue appeases strife'.[19] For, as he stresses in one of his letters, patience, the consequence of humility, makes us willing to suffer what displeases us: 'La vraie patience est de subir ou d'agir a l'encontre de ce qui [nous] plaît, et non au-delà de ce qui est permis.'[20]

These virtues are evident in Galaad's demeanour both in the First Version of the prose *Tristan* (BNF, f. fr. 757 and 1628) and especially in the Post-Vulgate when fun is made of him for his refusal to engage in combats. In both versions Galaad remains calm and composed, refusing to be irritated when he is insulted. Thus when in the prose *Tristan* his host's two sons, after defeating their enemies, not only remind Galaad that they do not owe him anything '*mes a vous n'en devons nous savoir ne gré ne graces*',[21] but insult him, Galaad does not reply: he simply laughs it off:

> Il dient maintes paroles laides et vilaines et enniouses, *et il s'en rit tot adés qe autre chose n'en fet*.[22]
>
> [They said many ugly and villainous and annoying things about him, *but he just laughed and did nothing else*.]

In the Post-Vulgate, likewise, Galaad remains calm in a similar situation. In the scene where knights have to joust before being admitted to a certain castle, Galaad, after the defeat of the three brothers who had jousted respectively with Gaheriet, Agravain and Mordred, accepts the offer of the fourth brother to forgo his turn to joust. In return for his readiness not to fight, the brothers mock Galaad as do also Agravain and Mordred when, on entering the castle, they all had to give their names and they could not believe that Galaad was in fact the genuine Galaad. But Galaad although displeased remained silent:

> Mes Galaad, sanz faille, n'estoit mie liez, ainz les tenoient touz a enuieus de ce qu'il l'escharnissoient (*Queste P–V*, III, p. 155, § 487)
>
> [But Galaad, without doubt, was not happy about it, but considered them all annoying because they mocked him.]

18 *The Steps of Humility, Treatises*, II, ch. IV, p. 43, § 15; J. Leclercq and H. M. Rochais, *S. Bernardi Opera*, vol. III, p. 27, § 15, 21–2: 'Qui ergo plene veritatem in se cognescere curat, necesse est ut, semota trabe superbiae, quae oculum arcet a lute.'

19 Bernard of Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs*, II, trans. by Kilian Walsh, introduction by J. Leclercd, Cistercian Fathers Series 7 (Kalamazoo, London and Oxford, 1976), Sermon 25, p. 51, § 2; *S. Bernardi Opera, Sermones super Cantica Canticorum*, ed. J. Leclercq, C. H. Talbot and H. M. Rochais, (Rome, 1957), vol. I, p. 164.4: 'Scriptum est enim: Lingua pacifica compescit lites.'

20 *Bernard de Clairvaux, Lettres, Oeuvres completes*, II, 1997 (Sources Chrétiennes 425), Texte latin de S. *Bernardi Opera* par J. Leclercq, H. Rochais et Ch. H. Talbot, Introduction et notes par Monique Duchet-Suchaux, Traduction par Henri Rochais, Letter 7, § II, p. 176.11–13: 'Vera patientia est pati vel agere contra quod libeat, sed non praeter quod liceat'; p. 177: 'La vraie patience est de subir ou d'agir a l'encontre de ce qui plaît, et non au-delà de ce qui est permis.'

21 F. Bogdanow, ed., *Queste P–V*, IV.2, p. 242, § 5 (cf. above n. 14).

22 *Queste P–V*, IV.2, p. 244, § 10–11.

And when subsequently, that same evening, a damsel approached Galaad in the castle and after looking at him intently for a while slandered him, saying that 'cursed be the handsomeness in such a cowardly body', Galaad, though annoyed, just smiled and told her that she had no good reason for making such a remark since she did not know anything about him:

> – Ha! Chevaliers, con vous devriez estre dolenz, qui tant estes biax. Maudite soit la biauté qui en si mauvés cors se mist.
>
> Galaad commence a souzrire auques corrouciez, et dit toutes voies:
>
> – Damoiselle, il m'est avis que vous n'avez mie bone reson de ce dire, car vous n'avez encore couneu en moi chose pour coi vous me deussiez si blasmer.
>
> (*Queste P–V*, III, p. 155, § 487)

> [– Ah! sir knight, how grieved you ought to be, since you are so handsome. Cursed be the beauty lodged in such a cowardly body.
>
> Galaad began to smile although somewhat annoyed. But he said nevertheless:
>
> – My good lady, it seems to me you have no good reason for saying this since you have not yet seen anything for which you ought to blame me like this.]

Nor is this all. The Post-Vulgate, in order to underline Galaad's humility deliberately changes the reaction of Galaad's companion, Frole's son, Samaliel, as compared to Eugène's in the prose *Tristan*. In the latter, in the scene already mentioned, Galaad, anxious to see how Eugène would conduct himself, had not taken part in the combat against the five knights who had pursued his host's two sons. Consequently on his return with Eugène to his host's castle, while Eugène is praised for his valour, Galaad is criticized for his 'cowardice'. Thereupon Eugène speaks up for Galaad, telling their host that they should only remember that the Lord helped them to vanquish their enemies and that they should not say anything that would displease his companion:

> '. . . laissiez mon conpaignon, qe je ne voudroie mie qe vous li deissiez chose qi li despleust'. (*Queste P–V*, IV, 2, p. 243, § 6)

> ['. . . leave be my companion, for I would not wish that you say anything that would displease him.']

Neverthless, the people in the castle continue quietly to speak ill of Galaad, but Eugène honours Galaad as much as he could telling him not to be concerned by what they are saying about him.[23] And when their hosts dishonour Galaad's shield by turning it upside down, Eugène and Galaad's other squires tell them that they will yet repent of what they are doing.[24]

The author of the Post-Vulgate, in contrast, evidently wishing to underline Galaad's humility, presents Galaad's companion, Frole's son Samaliel, in a

23 *Queste P–V*, IV.2, p. 245, § 17.
24 *Queste P–V*, IV.2, pp. 246–7, § 20–1.

different light. Here, when Galaad, on being challenged to a combat by Agravain in the scene already mentioned, refuses to fight, Samaliel not only tells Galaad that on account of his great cowardice he no longer desires his company, but throws to the ground Galaad's armour, which he had been carrying:

> – Et pour la grant mauvestié que je voi en vous, refus je vous et vostre compagnie et me repent de tant con g'en ai fet . . .
>
> Lors gete a terre l'escu et le glaive et la lance qu'il tenoit et dist assez iriez:
> – Danz chevaliers, or vous servez se vous poez, car si mauvés chevalier con vous estes ne servirai ja mes, se Dieu plest.
>
> (*Queste, P–N*, III, p. 151, § 485)

> [– And on account of the great cowardice I see in you, I refuse your company and I regret that I have been your companion for so long . . .
>
> Thereupon he threw to the ground the shield, the spear and the lance he was holding and said very irritated:
> – Sir knight, now serve yourself if you can, for, so please God, I shall never again serve so cowardly a knight as you are.]

Galaad, in his humility, does not respond to Samaliel's comments. But not only does our author in underlining Galaad's humility seek to convey that he was more peaceful and moderate than any other knight ('plus pesibles et amesurez que nus autres chevaliers' – *Queste P–V*, III, p. 156, § 488). In presenting him as unwilling to engage in unnecessary combats, our writer had perhaps also in mind another of St Bernard's precepts. In his Treatise *In the Praise of the New Knighthood*, where St Bernard condemned worldly knighthood, he argues that for the victor the outcome is nothing else than 'mortal sin', while for the vanquished it is 'eternal death':

> What, then is the end or fruit of this worldly knighthood, or rather knavery . . .? What if not mortal sin of the victor and the eternal death of the vanquished? . . . What then, O knights, is this monstrous error and what this unbearable urge which bids you fight with such pomp and labor, and all to no purpose except death and sin?[25]

Only just wars, in St Bernard's view, are justified. In St Bernard's time, these were the wars against the infidels. In Arthurian times, these were the wars against King Arthur's enemies. Hence in the 'Handsome Coward' episode, Galaad does not react when various knights speak badly of him, for he did not wish to become involved in any strife with them as they were, like himself, companions of the Round Table and if he knowingly fought with

[25] *Bernard of Clairvaux: Treatises*, III, In Praise of the New Knighthood, trans. by Conrad Greenia, introduction by R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, Cistercian Fathers Series 19 (Kalamazoo, 1977), ch. II p. 132; J. Leclercq and H. M. Rochais, *S. Bernardi Opera*, vol. III (Rome, 1963), p. 216, § 3, ll. 1–5: 'Quis igitur finis fructusve saecularis huius, non dico, militiae, sed malitiae, si et occisor letaliter peccat, et occisus aeternaliter perit? . . . Quis ergo, o milites, hie tam stupendus error, quis furor hic tam non ferendus, tantis sumptibus ac laboribus militare, stipendiis vero nullis, nisi aut mortis, aut criminis?'

them he would perjure himself.[26] And it was for the same reason that in the prose *Tristan* account Galaad had promised Eugène that in future he would not refuse to accept a challenge to joust unless the knights were companions of the Round Table: 'A cex ne josterroie je mie, por qoi ge les coneusse, car je me mesferoie.'[27]

The actual epithet *'li Biaus Mauvais'* given to Galaad in the Post-Vulgate does not occur in the prose *Tristan* Galaad episode where Galaad is simply referred to as a coward. But just as the First Version of the prose *Tristan*, though an important source of the Post-Vulgate, was not its only source, so the writer of the First Version of the prose *Tristan* clearly drew on the earlier verse romances for his conception of Galaad 'the Handsome Coward'. Among his predecessors, who of course do not mention Galaad, were, in addition to Chrétien de Troyes and Benoît de Sainte-Maure already mentioned above, the anonymous writers of the First and Second Continuations of Chrétien's *Conte du Graal* and of the prose *Didot Perceval*, and possibly Manessier whose work, like the *Perlesvaus*,[28] post-dates the Vulgate Cycle.

In the Second Continuation (1190–1200), the *Biau Mauvais* is the son of the count of Gauvoie and is presented like the *Biau Mauvais* in Chrétien's *Erec*, as a valiant knight. When after his combat with Perceval he reveals his name, Perceval tells him that only half is name is appropriate, for he is handsome, but not a coward.[29] In the *Didot Perceval* where there are no indications as to the *Biau Mauvais*'s lineage, Perceval tells him, as in the Second Continuation, that only part of his name is correct, as he is *buens et biaus*.[30]

But perhaps the most important of these earlier works, which was possibly not only a source of the account in the First Version of the prose *Tristan*, but also of the Post-Vulgate, was Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon*, written before the Second Continuation, between 1174 and 1191. The hero here is presented as a knight who in his youth pretended to be a *coward* and for this reason was mocked and given the name *le Bel Malveis*.[31] As in the First Version of the prose *Tristan* and in Chrétien's First Continuation,[32] as well as in the Post-Vulgate, people regret in *Ipomedon*[33] that so handsome a knight should not also be valiant. However, the links are particularly close between

26 *Queste P–V*, III, p. 156, § 488: 'Et il souffroit con cil qui plus ert pesibles et amesurez que nus autres chevaliers. *Meesmement il ne vousist contr'eus coumencier estrif, pour ce que compaignon estoient de la Table Roonde ausi coume il [estoit], et s'il le feist a son escient, il se parjurast.*'

27 *Queste P–V*, IV.2, p. 254, § 40.

28 *On* the date of the *Perlesvaus*, see F. Bogdanow, *'Le Perlesvaus'*, in *Grundrsiss der Romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters*, ed. Reinhold R. Grimm (Heidelberg, 1984), vol. IV, part 2, pp. 44–67, 177–84.

29 *The Continuations of the Old French Perceval of Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. W. Roach (Philadelphia, 1971), vol. IV, *The Second Continuation* (1971), pp. 165–6, ll. 23328–34).

30 *The Didot Perceval according to the Manuscripts of Modena and Paris*, ed. W. Roach (Philadelphia, 1941; rpt Geneva, 1977), p. 190, ll. 874–6.

31 *Ipomedon*, poème de Hue de Rotelande, ed. A. T. Holden (Paris, 1979), p. 211, ll. 3267–9).

32 *The Continuations of the Old French Perceval of Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. W. Roach, vol. I, *The First Continuation. Redaction of Mss TVD* (Philadelphia, 1949; rpt 1965), p. 402, ll. 14784–5.

33 *Ipomedon*, pp. 211–12, ll. 3271–5; pp. 221–2, ll. 3491–4.

Ipomedon and the First Version of the prose *Tristan*. It is striking, for example, that in both these texts, as also in the Post-Vulgate, the heroes Galaad and Ipomedon do not become irritated when they are mocked for their apparent 'cowardice':

> E se sunt mut de lui gabé.
> Ipomedon le saveit ben,
> *Mes il ne li chaleit de ren*. (ll. 3124–6)
>
> Il n'i ad dame ne meschine
> Ke de lui ne s'en voist gabant,
> *Mes il n'en fist unkes semblant*. (ll. 3262–4)
>
> Mut s'en gabent e mut s'en rient,
> *Ipomedon n'en tent nul plet*. (ll. 4474–5)
>
> Unkes mes jur ne nuit devant
> Ne fut gabez ne escharniz tant,
> Mes il l'at mut bien entendu,
> *Semblant fist ben ke poi l'en fu*. (ll. 6527–30)
>
> [And they mocked him greatly.
> Ipomedon was well aware of this,
> *But he did not care about it at all*.
>
> There was no lady or damsel
> Who did not make fun of him,
> *But he never gave any indication of it*.
>
> They made great fun of him and laughed greatly
> *Ipomedon made no comment about it*.
>
> Never a day or night previously
> Was anyone made fun of or mocked so much,
> He heard it very clearly,
> *But he gave no indication that he cared at all*].

Similarly, it is unlikely to be fortuitous that, just as in the prose *Tristan*, Galaad's companion Eugène is unhappy when Galaad is being mocked, so in *Ipomedon*, Capaneus is grieved when his companion, Ipomedon, is mocked:

> Li reis s'en rist mut e gaba,
> *A Capaneus mut pesa*. (ll. 4467–8)
>
> [The king laughed greatly and made fun of him,
> *This hurt Capaneus greatly*.]

It is unlikely, however, that the First Version of the prose *Tristan* and the earlier verse romances were the only sources for the Post-Vulgate treatment of the 'Handsome Coward' theme. There is some evidence that the Post-Vulgate also knew the *Perlesvaus*, which was written after the Vulgate Cycle but before the Post-Vulgate. The author of the *Perlesvaus* had

evidently read the Third Continuation of Chretien's *Conte del Graal* (known also as Manessier's continuation), for both he and Manessier present the 'Handsome Coward', on his first appearance in the narrative, as wearing his armour upside down:

> Desconseillié et sanz confort
> Ou fox, ne sai lou quel estoit
> Li chevaliers, car il portoit
> Et son haubert et son escu
> Et son hiaume a son col pendu;
> Et li traïnoient aval
> Sus la croupe de son cheval,
> Et sa lance estaichiee estoit
> Dou lunc dou cheval.[34]
>
> [He was disconsolate and distraught,
> Or foolish, I do not know which the
> knight was, for he was carrying
> His coat-of-mail and his shield
> And his helmet which were hanging from his neck;
> These dragged him down on to the hindquarters of his horse,
> And his lance was attached along the side of the horse.]

> . . . e [Gauvain] voit venir un chevalier la voie que il aloit, en molt sauvage maniere; car il chevauchoit ce devant derriere, e avoit les resnes de son frain tres parmi son piz, e portoit le pié de son escu desus e le chief desoz, e son claive ce devant derriere, e son hauberc e ses chances de fer trossees a son col . . .[35]
>
> [And Gauvain saw a knight coming in a very strange manner along the road where he was going. He was not only riding backwards and had the rains of his bridle round his chest, but he was carrying his shield upside down, and wore round his neck the coat-of-mail and armour intended for feet and legs . . .]

The Post-Vulgate writer does not adopt this description, but what suggests that he knew the *Perlesvaus* is the striking verbal similarity with the latter, as compared with the corresponding sentence in the First Version of the prose *Tristan*, where all three texts mention that it is a great pity that so handsome a knight should be such a coward:

> car c'est granz domages que *cowardie est herbergiee en si bel cors de chevalier*. (*Perlesvaus, I*, p. 241, ll. 5552–3)
>
> [For it is a great pity that cowardice is lodged in the body of such a handsome knight.]

34 *The Continuations of the Old French Perceval*, ed. W. Roach, vol. V, *The Third Continuation* by Manessier (Philadelphia, 1983), p. 245, ll. 39582–90).

35 *Le Haut Livre du Graal, Perlesvaus*, ed. W. A. Nitze and T. Atkinson Jenkins, vol. I (New York, 1972), p. 78, ll. 1352–7.

> Il distrent que pechié avoit fet Dieus quant *en si bel cors d'oume avoit fet herbergier couardie*. (*Queste P–V*, III, p. 154, § 486)
>
> [They said that God had committed a sin when he had lodged cowardice in the body of such a handsome man.]
>
> et dient que l[i] domage fu trop grant quant il oncques fu chevalier et est cohart si durement. (Prose *Tristan, Queste P–V, IV*, 2, pp. 243–4, § 9)
>
> [And they said it was a very great pity that he ever was a knight when he is so cowardly.]

The reasons why the authors of the *Perlesvaus* and the Post-Vulgate both included in their narratives the 'Handsome Coward' theme are, however, quite different. Chrétien de Troyes, as we know, in the words of one of the knights in the *Conte du Graal*, advocated genocide, saying that 'the false Jews ought to be exterminated like dogs' ('Li faus juif . . . *Con devroit tuer come chiens* . . .')[36] The writer of the *Perlesvaus*, although he did not follow Chrétien de Troyes in this respect, nevertheless like a number of the Grail romance writers, sought to denigrate the Old Law.[37] Hence he attached a symbolic meaning to the appearance of the 'Handsome Coward' absent from Manessier's account. He explains the fact that the 'Coward knight' before he became a valiant knight wore his armour upside down as meaning that before the time of the Crucifixion the law as exemplified by the Old Testament was unacceptable: 'la loi estoit bestornee [upside down] devant le crucefiement Nostre Saignor, et tantost comme il fu crucefiez si fu remi[s]e a droit'.[38] The Post-Vulgate, in contrast, as we have already mentioned, wished above all to underline what should be the prime qualities of a knight, humility as advocated by St Bernard and exemplified in Galahad's conduct.

36 W. Roach, ed., Chrétien de Troyes, *Le roman de Perceval on Le Conte du Graal* (Geneva, 1956), p. 185, ll. 6292–4.

37 On anti-semitism in certain Grail romances, see F. Bogdanow, 'The Grail Romances and the Old Law', in *Arthurian Studies in Honour of P. J. C. Field,* ed. Bonnie Wheeler (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 1–13.

38 W. A. Nitze, ed. *Perlesvaus*, I, p. 111, ll. 2217–18.

X

A TIME OF GIFTS? JEAN DE NESLE, WILLIAM A. NITZE AND THE *PERLESVAUS*

Tony Grand

Ernst Brügger, writing in 1939,[1] noted that *Le Haut Livre du Graal, Perlesvaus*[2] had for long been the *Aschenbrödel* [Cinderella] among Grail texts, until William A. Nitze commenced his studies of the romance. The work did not become a princess overnight, but Nitze's studies and edition have provided a basis for more informed study. Since the edition's publication, there has been a steady stream of critical studies of the romance. Examination of the indices of the *Bibliographical Bulletin of the International Arthurian Society* since the Society's formation in 1948 shows that only a very few years have seen no entry under the title *Perlesvaus*. However, few of the works concerned have considered the dating or relative chronology of the work. Scholars have been largely content to rely upon the dates and relationships suggested by Nitze.[3]

A number of scholars have commented on the need for a new edition of the *Perlesvaus*. For example, Busby, in his article concerning the new fragment of ***P***, which he had discovered, notes, referring to Nitze's classification of the manuscripts: 'How distinct the two redactions established by Nitze and Jenkins actually are must await further investigation, but the superiority of *O* (which the editors use as a base) is far from sure, and a new edition is certainly a desider-

1 E. Brügger, review of Nitze and Jenkins's edition of the *Perlesvaus*, *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie* 59 (1939), 576.

2 W.A. Nitze and T.A. Jenkins, eds., *Le Haut Livre du Graal, Perlesvaus*, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1932 and 1937): hereafter ***P***, when referring to the romance and, when followed by line numbers, the lines in the text. The following conventions are used to refer to editorial comments by Nitze in the two volumes of the edition: Nitze I + page no. = reference to comment in vol. I; Nitze II + page no. = reference to comment in vol. II.

3 The dating suggested by Professor Fanni Bogdanow's argument, though not made explicit by her, in her article on ***P*** in the *GRLMA* (F. Bogdanow, *Le Perlesvaus, Supplément à la partie D (Le roman en prose en France au XIIIe* siècle) du Vol. IV.1 du *Grundriss des Romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters*, eds. H. R. Jauss and E. Köhler (Heidelberg, 1984), pp. 43–67) has begun to be quoted. See F. Dubost, 'Le Perlesvaus, livre de haute violence', in *La violence dans le monde médiéval* (Aix-en-Provence, 1994), p. 181, n. 1: 'La datation du Perlesvaus reste incertaine. On admettra ici, avec Fanni Bogdanow, qu'il a pu être composé autour des années 1230' ['The date of the *Perlesvaus* remains uncertain. We will allow here, following Fanni Bogdanow, that it could have been written around the 1230s.']

atum.'[4] Earlier, T. E. Kelly had reported[5] that in 1968, during a private conversation, Professor Frappier had criticized 'the theory of a second redaction as an invention on the part of Nitze for the purpose of defending his choice of the Oxford manuscript as the basis for his edition' (p. 32); and that '[Frappier] had long considered MS *P* (Bib. Nat., f. fr. 1428) the best of the *Perlesvaus* manuscripts', and that 'this manuscript should be used as the basis for a sorely needed new edition of the romance'. Finally, I understand from Professor Busby (letter, 7 August 1992) that, had ill-health not prevented it, Professor Kelly himself would have produced a new edition of ***P***. Clearly, consideration of the dating and relative chronology of ***P*** would be essential for any new edition. It is in that light that the present study is written, for although this essay is essentially historical rather than literary, we have to answer the arguments of Nitze, the sole editor to date, on their own terms, at length and with due and detailed reference to primary sources. This should be regarded, therefore, as a ground-clearing exercise.

We are fortunate that one surviving manuscript of ***P***, *Br*,[6] bears a colophon additional to that borne by the other complete MSS, and that it also contains a dedication to an individual known to history. The relevant section of the colophon reads as follows:

> Por le seingnor de neele fist li seingnor de cambrein cest liure escrire q'onques mes ne fu troitiez que une seule foiz auec cestui en roumenz et cil qui auant cestui fu fez e[s]t si anteus qu'a grant poine an peust lan choissir la lestre[7] et sache bien misires johan de neele que lan doit tenir cest contes cheir ne lan ne doit mie dire a ient malantendable quar bone chosse qui ert espendue outre mauueses gens nest onques en bien recordee par cels.[8]
>
> [The lord of Cambrein had this book written for the lord of Neele. It has only once been written down in the vernacular and that copy is so ancient that the letters can only be read with great difficulty. And let my lord Johan de Neele know that this tale should be cherished and should not be told to men of little understanding, for a good word spread amongst bad people is never properly remembered and passed on by them.[9]]

On the basis of this dedication, Nitze sought to establish a *terminus ad quem* for ***P***. His arguments for such a *terminus*, based essentially, as we shall see, on

4 K. Busby, 'A New Fragment of the Perlesvaus', *ZRPh 99* (1983), 1–12, pp. 2–3.

5 T. E. Kelly, *Le Haut Livre du Graal: Perlesvaus. A Structural Study* (Geneva, 1974), p. 10 and p. 32, n. 9.

6 MS 11145 of the Bibliothèque Royale Albert 1er, Brussels (second half of the thirteenth century).

7 I believe the reference to the poor state of the manuscript from which Jean's copy was made is either a pseudo-historiographical appeal to authority or just possibly an indication that the original manuscript was very worn. Literary considerations preclude this manuscript from being of any great age at the time it was copied. J. Frappier (*Colloquium on Arthurian Prose Romance*, held at the Institut Français du Royaume-Uni, London (25–27 Jan. 1963), mimeographed report, p. 8), suggested that the text of the *Br* colophon 'veut dire simplement que l'ancien manuscrit est difficile à lire'.

8 ***P***, p. 409, note to l. 10192.

9 Translation by Nigel Bryant, *The High Book of the Grail. A translation of the thirteenth-century romance* Perlesvaus (Woodbridge, 1978; quotation from paperback edn, Cambridge, 1996, p. 265). All subsequent translations in the text are by the present author.

an interpretation of the career of the dedicatee of the original of MS *Br* have been very influential.

In his article in *Modern Philology* XVII (1919), Nitze seeks to establish *termini* for the production of the original of ***P*** as follows:

(a) a *terminus a quo* by virtue of references in ***P*** to the burial of Arthur and Guenevere at a site that apparently is Glastonbury,[10] this being, by inference, a reference to the supposed exhumation of the royal couple at the Abbey in 1191;

(b) a *terminus ad quem* for the romance earlier rather than later in the first forty years of the thirteenth century, by reference to the career of Jean II de Nesle.[11]

Of these two points, in my view, only point (b) has weight, since the alleged exhumation would, we may suppose, have been common knowledge on the Continent as well as in the British Isles by the earliest date at which a work taking (literally) as read the *Conte du Graal of* Chrétien de Troyes could have been written.[12] In his study of 1919, after establishing satisfactorily that the 'seingnor de Neele . . . misires Johan de Neele' of the additional colophon to MS *Br* is Jean II de Nesle and after a summary biography of Jean, Nitze states:

> If then we ask ourselves at what period in his career the *Perlesvaus* could have been most fittingly presented to him, the answer undoubtedly is before he began to sever his Flemish connections in 1212. In view of the call to religious service voiced in the *Perlesvaus* . . . we might be more precise and say between 1200 and 1212, which covers the period of Jean de Nesle's crusading activities and of his Flemish connections.[13]

Note here that, apart from drawing our attention to the apparent reference to ***P*** in the *Chevalier as Deus Espees*,[14] which would provide a clear *terminus ad quem* (of 1250) on a literary basis, Nitze's *terminus ad quem* for ***P*** is based,

10 'On the Chronology of the Grail Romances, I: The Date of the *Perlesvaus*', *Modern Philology* XVII (1919–20), 151–6 and 605–18, 160ff.

11 Nitze, 'Chronology', p. 611.

12 I believe that there is no suggestion in any criticism of ***P*** at least since the appearance of Nitze's edition that Chrétien's romance (hereafter *CP*) was not known by the author of that romance. For an indication of the extent of the intertextuality between the two romances, see N. J. Lacy, 'Perlesvaus and the Perceval Palimpsest', *PQ* 69 (1990), 236–71 and M. Faure, 'À propos des voix dans Le Haut Livre du Graal', in C. Lachet, ed., *L'Oeuvre de Chrétien de Troyes dans la Littérature Française*: *Réminiscences, Résurgences et Réécritures* (Lyon, 1997), pp. 99–105. Jean-Marie Fritz, in his article on Chrétien in the *Dictionnaire des Lettres Françaises: Le Moyen Age*, ed. G. Hasenohr and M. Zink (Paris, 1992), writing on the basis of a wide range of literature on the subject, suggests (p. 267) dates of *c.* 1181–5 for *CP*.

The argument for knowledge of the 'exhumation' having reached the Continent before the earliest reference to it in a written source, I have set out in my unpublished M. Phil. thesis (University of Manchester, 1998), 'A Work in Context: Towards a Relative Chronology and Dating for the Thirteenth Century Old French Prose Romance Le Haut Livre du Graal: *Perlesvaus*'. This is significant because one of Nitze's arguments for a Glastonbury provenance for ***P*** rests on the absence of any reference to the exhumation in continental sources before the 'fourth decade of the thirteenth century' (Nitze II, 71).

13 Nitze, 'Chronology', p. 166.

14 Nitze, 'Chronology', p. 166.

in the 1919 article, on suppositions about the career and the spiritual response of the dedicatee. Further, in the edition of ***P***, Nitze's other arguments in favour of an early date for ***P*** are dependent on or peripheral to the 'Jean de Nesle' argument. For example, his consideration of the relationship between ***P*** and Gerbert's *Continuation* of Chrétien's *Conte du Graal*, which share two episodes at least, appeals finally to his argument about Jean.[15] I shall endeavour, in this essay, to carry out a rather full consideration of Nitze's point (b), essentially his assumptions concerning an 'appropriate period'[16] for the dedication of a copy of ***P*** to Jean II. It will be instructive first to set out in more detail Nitze's position and then to discuss the critical response to date to this.

Nitze, Manuscript Br *and its dedicatee*

In the critical study accompanying the edition of 1932–7, Nitze repeated his assertions of 1919, in his Chapter III, 'Date of the *Perlesvaus* and the Second Redaction',[17] again basing his main argument for the date of composition of ***P*** on the career of Jean II de Nesle, expanding and recasting the material a little.

The grouping of the manuscripts

Nitze's approach to the problem of dating *P* is based on the hypothesis that there are 'two general groups' of the manuscripts of ***P***,[18] which represent two redactions[19] of the archetype of the romance:

> . . . the Perlesvaus has come down to us in two distinct redactions: that best represented by our text, Hatton 82 (*O*), and the other represented by the Potvin text (*Br*). This grouping is based on (1) agreements in readings and (2) omissions or additions common to each group. Moreover, in the second addition to the colophon found in *Br*, [. . .] the categorical statement is made: *Cest livre onques mes ne fu troitiez que une seule foiz avec cestui en roumenz. Et cil qui* AVANT[20] *cestui fust fez e[s]t si anteus q'a grant poine an peust l'an choissir la lestre.* This passage substantiates our conclusion that *Br* represents a 'second' redaction of the romance, made for Jean de Nesle; [. . .].

Having to his satisfaction established that there are indeed two 'redactions' of ***P***, in then attempting to ascertain when X' (the second redaction) appeared,

15 Nitze II, 151.
16 Nitze II, 73–81 for the assumptions and p. 81 for this specific phrase.
17 Nitze II, 73–89.
18 Nitze II, 24.
19 Modified in 1959 as follows, in Nitze's article on ***P*** in: *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History* (hereafter *ALMA*), ed. R. S. Loomis (Oxford, 1959), p. 264: '. . . the eight manuscripts of *Perlesvaus* fall into two distinct families, one of which must have antedated the other'. Nitze indicates a few lines later on the same page that his base MS *O* '. . . represents the first redaction . . .'.
20 Nitze's italics and capitals.

Nitze considers the external evidence he believes is furnished by another part of the additional colophon of MS *Br*, namely the dedication to Jean II de Nesle. After a rather brief consideration of Jean II's career and other external matters related to the dating,[21] Nitze states:

> Until new documents are discovered, we conclude that *P* was composed after 1191 and before 1212, presumably soon after 1200, and that the second redaction (X') was made after Jean de Nesle's return from the Fourth Crusade, subsequent to 1206 and around 1212.[22]

Thus Nitze in 1937. We should note here the significance of the dates 1206 and 1212. The former is the year in which Nitze assumed Jean had returned to Flanders from Outremer.[23] The latter is the year Jean was driven from Flanders.[24]

In 1959, Nitze was a little less categorical, stating:[25]

> No reason exists for not placing the second redaction between 1212 and 1225 and thus setting 1191–1212 as the date of the original – provided always *Perlesvaus* preceded, as Gaston Paris thought, the *Queste del Saint Graal*.

The kernel of this 'revised' argument of 1959, the assumption on which he suggests a date of completion of the 'second redaction' to 1225 at the latest, remains, however, the following, stated in 1937:

> . . . while it is impossible to identify positively the Seigneur de Cambrin [who dedicated the copy of *P* to Jean] it appears certain that as a Fleming he dedicated the *Perlesvaus* to his patron because the latter, Jean de Nesle, held a stake in Flanders – of one sort or another. In that case, the appropriate period to make such a dedication was before, and not after, Jean II had begun to sever his Flemish connections. That would date the composition of the second redaction (X') earlier than 1222 and perhaps as early as 1212, since the latter is the year in

21 Nitze II, 74–89.

22 Nitze II, 89.

23 Probably following G. G. Dept, *Les Influences anglaise et française dans le Comté de Flandre au début du XIIIe siècle* (Gand and Paris, 1928), p. 82. We know now in fact that Jean had returned by the spring of 1205, as I shall demonstrate below.

24 Holger Petersen Dyggve (*Trouvères et protecteurs de trouvères dans les cours seigneuriales de France: Vieux*-Maisons, *Membrolles, Mauvoisin, Trie, L'Isle-Adam, Nesle, Harnes* (Helsinki, 1942), p. 213) says: 'Occupant en tant que châtelain de Bruges une haute charge dans la maison du comte de Flandre et étant en même temps, grâce à ses possessions en Vermandois, vassal du roi de France, Jehan II eut . . ., au cours de cette . . . année 1212, à se décider pour ou contre l'un de ses puissants suzerains, les relations entre ceux-ci allant de mal en pis. Jehan choisit de se ranger du parti de Philippe Auguste.' ['Occupying as he did, as castelain of Bruges high status in the house of the count of Flanders and being at the same time, by virtue of his possessions in the Vermandois, a vassal of the king of France, Jehan II had . . ., during the course of that year 1212, to decide for or against one of these powerful overlords, relations between them going from bad to worse. Jehan chose the side of Philippe Auguste.'] Dept puts this matter more strongly, saying that, as English influence reached a peak there, Jean and other partisans of the French 'commençaient à faire figure d'espions de Philippe Auguste' ['started to look like spies of Philippe Auguste'] (Dept, *Les Influences*, p. 119).

25 *ALMA*, p. 268.

which Jean entered into an open alliance with the French. It follows, then, that the date of the first redaction (X) must fall before either of the foregoing dates.[26]

Nitze's position and the critics

I now wish to give a *tour d'horizon* of critical comment on the matter since (with one exception) 1937.

That exception is J. D. Bruce, who, after the appearance of Nitze's study in 1919, offered this simple counter to his argument:

> Nothing is said about the crusade in the passage and one nobleman might present a copy of a romance to another in one period of the latter's life as well as another, barring early childhood and, possibly, extreme old age [and] even after he entered into closer relations with France, it is not reasonable to suppose that he threw overboard all the friendships of his previous life. Then, too, it is always possible that this lord of Cambrein [*sic*] sided likewise with the French.[27]

After 1937, we should first note Brügger, who, in the review referred to above, judged Nitze's argument concerning Jean 'logisch, aber doch nicht zwingend' [logical but yet not compelling].[28] Marx[29] fell in with Nitze's argument and Payen[30] cautiously agreed with it.

Marx states that:

> Il y a donc probabilité, sur le terrain strictement historique, pour l'antériorité du *Perlesvaus* par rapport à la *Queste*.
>
> [It is therefore probable, on strictly historical grounds, that the *Perlesvaus* predates the *Queste*.]

By 'historique', he means assumptions based on the 'Jean de Nesle' colophon of MS *Br*. What Marx says is evidently based on the deductions of Nitze (and his student J. N. Carman), though this is not stated. Nothing new is added to the arguments of these two scholars, and of the dates Marx mentions, two are erroneous, namely that of Jean de Nesle's departure on the Fourth Crusade and that of his return.

Payen's views on the date of ***P*** are similar to those of Marx, but he is very cautious. In *Le Motif du repentir*, he says:

> Ce roman trop longtemps méconnu, dont la date est très controversée, ne saurait, pensons-nous, être postérieur à 1220; nous croyons, en effet, avec Jean

26 Nitze II, 80–1.
27 J. D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance From the Beginnings Down to the Year 1300*, 2 vols. (Göttingen, 1923), II, 156, n. 24. We shall return to this below.
28 Brügger, review, *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie*, p. 565.
29 J. Marx, *Nouvelles recherches sur la littérature arthurienne* (Paris, 1965), p. 231.
30 J.-C. Payen, *Le motif du repentir dans la littérature française des origines à 1230* (Geneva, 1968), p. 419.

> Marx, qu'il faut prendre au sérieux le colophon du manuscrit de Bruxelles dédiant à Jean de Nesles [*sic*] la seconde 'édition' de l'ouvrage . . .
>
> [This romance, too long unrecognised, the date of which is very controversial, cannot be, we believe, later than 1220; we believe, in fact, with Jean Marx, that we must take seriously the colophon of the Brussels manuscript, dedicating the second 'edition' of the work to Jean de Nesles . . .]

Whitehead, in 1970, commented:[31]

> Since Jean de Nesle was very active in 1226 and may not have died much before 1241, one can only agree with Bruce that the colophon does not positively rule out arguments from the literary evidence in favour of a late date for the *Perlesvaus*. I cannot find, either in the second volume of the edition of the *Perlesvaus* nor in the article in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* any attempt by Nitze to dispose of Bruce's arguments about Jehan [*sic*] de Nesle.

T. E. Kelly, next to comment,[32] came down in favour of Nitze's dating, without reviewing his argument in detail:

> . . . [P]hilological studies of this kind [i.e., those carried out on a limited scale by L. Foulet and P. Imbs] will have to take account of one of the most convincing arguments derived from external criteria, the reference in the colophon of MS. Br to Jean de Nesle. The relevant dates of this Flemish nobleman's life offer a persuasive case for considering the years 1206–1212 as the probable date of composition, as Nitze, Carman, and Marx have all claimed.

In 1980 Busby stated that: 'It is now generally accepted that [***P***] is earlier than the Vulgate *Queste del Saint Graal* and the real question is exactly how early it should be placed',[33] then quoted Kelly's conclusion that ***P*** is 'an early prose text, composed probably in the first decade of the thirteenth century' and ended by stating that 'the extreme limits of the dating range are 1191–1212'. Busby's position was, therefore, at that time, essentially that of Nitze.

Writing in 1984, Bogdanow offered a fuller critique of Nitze's position. In her major study of ***P***,[34] turning to the dedication colophon, she first considers the assertion of a number of critics, including particularly Nitze himself and Jean Marx, that the 'appropriate' time for the original of MS *Br* to have been presented to Jean II de Nesle was 1206–12. She agrees with critics such as Bruce and Lot that nothing in the colophon necessitates that conclusion and goes on to state that 'seule la date de la mort de Jean de Nesle (décédé après 1232 et probablement avant 1240) peut fournir un *teminus ad quem* pour le

31 F. E. Whitehead, 'Observations on the Perlesvaus', in *Mélanges de langue et de littérature du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance offerts à Jean Frappier*, 2 vols. (Geneva, 1970), 2, 1120, n. 7.

32 T. E. Kelly, *Le Haut Livre du Graal*. We should note here Kelly's judicious argumentation concerning the dating and comparative chronology of ***P***.

33 K. Busby, *Gauvain in Old French Literature* (Amsterdam, 1980), p. 217.

34 F. Bogdanow, *Le Perlesvaus*, pp. 43–67. Note here that Professor Bogdanow gives incorrect dates for Jean's return to Flanders (1208, rather than 1205) and the date he was forced out of Flanders (1211, rather than 1212), Bogdanow, p. 43.

colophon' (and hence of course for the original of *Br*).[35] She notes in particular the weakness in the position of Marx (and by association Nitze) who:

(1) makes the judgement that the 'seigneur de Cambrein' must have presented the original of Br to Jean II de Nesle before the rupture of the latter's relations with Flanders (i.e., pre-1225) and
(2) makes the further, even more conjectural, judgement that the presentation was made when Jean II de Nesle was still a confirmed crusader, i.e., no later than 1206.

Bogdanow points out that the absence of any reference to Bruges makes it difficult to sustain argument (1)[36] with any certainty, since Jean sold the castellany in 1225, and we have seen above her views on the 'appropriate date'. We should note that Bogdanow did not at that time seem to be aware of the work of W. M. Newman, which we shall draw on throughout this piece and which indeed has assisted us in establishing an absolute *terminus ad quem* for the romance.

Revisiting the evidence: Jean II de Nesle and the terminus ad quem

A number of critics have therefore pointed out the major weakness in Nitze's argument: a critique most succinctly put by Bruce. There is no evidence in the colophon for the gift of the manuscript reflecting either Jean's spiritual state or his political affiliations. To that extent, it might seem otiose to look further at Jean. However, since Nitze says of the possibility of Jean's part in the Fourth Crusade having some bearing on the date of the presentation that: '[c]onjectural as such an opinion is, it deserves attention',[37] I shall attempt to analyse the relatively extensive historical material relating to Jean II de Nesle (in particular, the primary sources relating to him and the Fourth Crusade, which I believe to be of especial interest), in order to test Nitze's argument, with the prime aim of determining whether there really was an 'appropriate' time, in terms of Jean's allegiances and attitudes, for him to be presented with a copy of ***P***.

The date of the death of Jean II de Nesle

Paradoxically, this account of Jean's life begins by establishing the date of his death.[38] In 1992, I drew attention to the work of W. M. Newman, who, by reference to the dates of the last document known to mention the living Jean

35 Bogdanow, *Le Perlesvaus*, p. 46.
36 Bogdanow, *Le Perlesvaus*, p. 46.
37 Nitze II, 75. He is commenting on Potvin's voicing of this opinion.
38 Since the chronology of Jean II and his father, Jean I de Nesle, was clarified (Nitze, 'Chronology', pp. 605–10), there has been no suggestion that the dedication was to Jean I. The dedication of a copy of ***P*** to a man who clearly died before 1200 would set the cat among the literary pigeons.

and a document issued by his executors,[39] was able to date Jean's death to within three months. Since the appearance of my article, it has come to my attention that Warlop[40] had established that Jean II died on 22 December 1239. This date clearly stands as the *terminus ad quem* for the romance and with this precise date for Jean's death, we know, from contemporary references and the records of his acts, that he was a major figure in the affairs of Flanders and France from at least 1200 to 1239.

Jean II: the period before the Fourth Crusade

It is established[41] that Jean had succeeded his father, Jean I, as Seigneur de Nesle and castellan of Bruges, by 1200. Jean was a generous benefactor of the churches and monasteries of his native region, one of his first recorded acts[42] being the foundation of a nunnery to the north of Noyon, La Franche Abbaye près Beaulieu. This Cistercian foundation continued to be richly endowed by Jean and he chose it for his own resting place.[43] The date of the foundation, 'pro remedio animarum' [for the health of the souls] of himself and his family, we may note, is immediately before Jean's departure on the Fourth Crusade. In sum, Jean was, in his public acts of piety, very much of his time.

Jean II and the Fourth Crusade[44]

In considering Jean's role in this crusade we enter deep waters, for its history – its diversion to Constantinople, the motives of those who made direct for Outremer and other matters – is complex.[45] But even given the limited extent to which we will be able to go into the matter here, it will be possible to give a good account of Jean's actions. He took the cross on 23 February 1200.[46] He then spent most of the remainder of the year 1200 with the other *croisés* in the 'parlament' or great council at Soissons, deciding on a plan of action for the crusade.[47] Jean was made joint captain of the Flemish fleet (with Thierry, son of Philip of Flanders, and Nicolas de Mailly), by his overlord Baldwin IX of

39 A. C. Grand, 'Le Haut Livre du Graal, Perlesvaus: Jean de Nesle and the terminus ad quem', *Bibliographical Bulletin of the International Arthurian Society*, XIV (1992), 233–5; drawing on the work of W. M. Newman, *Les Seigneurs de Nesle en Picardie (XIIe–XIIIe Siècle): Leur Chartes et leur Histoire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1971).

40 E. Warlop, *The Flemish Nobility before 1300*, 4 vols. (Kortrijk, 1976), Part II, Annexes, vol. 1 [vol. 3 of the work as a whole], p. 726, referring to an entry in the Archives Départementales du Pas-de-Calais at Arras, Collection Rodière, no. 106, p. 36.

41 Newman, *Les Seigneurs de Nesle*, I, 71.

42 Newman, *Les Seigneurs de Nesle*, II, 187, act dated April 1202.

43 Newman, *Les Seigneurs de Nesle*, I, 44.

44 First preached by Innocent III in 1198, culminating in the sack of Constantinople and foundation of the Latin Empire in 1204.

45 For the fullest available discussion, I refer the reader to D. E. Queller and Thomas F. Madden, *The Fourth Crusade: The Conquest of Constantinople* (2nd edn, Philadelphia, 1997).

46 Villehardouin, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, ed. and trans. E. Faral, 2 vols. (Paris, 1961) [hereafter, *Villehardouin*, followed by section no.], [8].

47 *Villehardouin*, [11].

Flanders.[48] We could suppose Jean at this time to be somewhere between twenty-five and thirty years old: an appropriate age to be granted such a command.[49] The fleet set sail in June or July 1202:

> et cil [the captains] promistrent le conte Baudoin et jurerent sor sains que il iroient par le detroiz de Maroc et assembleroient a l'ost de Venise et a lui, en quelque leu que il oroient dire que il torneroit. . . . Mult fu bele cele estoire et riche, et mult i avoit grant fiance li quens de Flandre et li perelin, por ce que la plus granz plentez de lor bons serjanz s'en alerent en cele estoire. Mais malvaisement tindrent covent a lor seignor, et tuit li autre, por ce que cist et maint autre douterent le grant peril que cil de Venise avoient enpris. . . . Ensi lor failli li evesques d'Ostun, Guighes li cuens de Forois, et Pierres Bromonz, et autre gent assez, qui mult en furent blasmez et petit esploit firent la ou il alerent.[50]
>
> [. . . and the captains promised Count Baldwin and swore on the relics of saints that they would go by way of the Straits of Gibraltar and would meet up with the army assembling in Venice and with him, in whatever place they were notified he was going. . . . The fleet was very beautiful and richly appointed and the count and the crusaders had great trust in it, since a large number of their best *serjanz* were going with it. But they kept their promise to their lord and the others very badly, since they and many others feared the great peril that the army assembled in Venice had undertaken. . . . Hence, that army was without the bishop of Ostun, Guy the count of Forois and Pierre Bromonz and many other people, all of whom were greatly blamed [for their desertion] and who did little of profit at their destination.]

Villehardouin goes on to speak of the dismay of Baldwin and others at these defections and that of other groups. Revisiting the affair in chronological sequence at the winter of 1202, the chronicler[51] recounts that:

> li estoire de Flandres . . . ere arivez a Marseille. Et Johans de Neele, chastellains de Bruges, qui ere chevetaines de cel ost [and the other two captains] manderent le conte de Flandres lor seignor que il ivernoient a Marseille et que il lor mandast sa volenté, que il feroient ce que il lor manderoit. Et il lor manda par le conseil del duc de Venise et des autres barons que il meüssent a l'issue de marz et venissent encontre lui au port de Mouton en Romanie. Ha las! il l'atendirent si malvaisement que onques convenz ne lor tindrent, ainz s'en alerent en Surie, ou il savoient que il ne feroient nul esploit.
>
> [The Flemish fleet arrived at Marseilles. And Jean de Nesle, castelain of Bruges, who was captain of that army [and the other two captains] informed the count of Flanders, their lord, that they would overwinter in Marseilles and that

48 *Villehardouin*, [11].

49 I am grateful to Professor J. H. Denton of the University of Manchester for an assessment of an 'appropriate age'. Note that there is no evidence that Jean [II] took the cross on the occasion of the Third Crusade. Assuming that only his youth prevented this, we could suppose that he was, say, a maximum of fourteen years old in 1190, and perhaps twenty-six years old in 1202. There might, however, have been other reasons for his not taking the cross and hence he might have been older.

50 *Villehardouin*, [51].

he should inform them of his wishes, so that they might carry them out. And he informed them that following discussions between the Doge of Venice and the other barons, that they should set sail at the beginning of March and come to meet him at the port of Mouton, in Romania. Alas, they paid so little attention to him that they did not keep their word in the slightest but rather went off to Syria, where they knew they would do little of profit.]

Villehardouin returns to the matter later,[52] when he says of the 'defectors' other than the fleet that:

Et furent si granz genz, que il estoient assez plus que cil qui estoient devant Constantinople. Oïez quex domages fu quant il ne furent avec cels josté: quar toz jors mais fust la crestienté alcie. Mais Diex ne volt por lor peciez: li un furent mort de l'enfermité de la terre; li autre tornerent en lor païs arriere. Onques nul esploit ne firent ne nul bien la ou il alerent en la terre.

[And there were so many of them, that there were more than those who went to Constantinople. I shall tell you what hurt was caused by their not being with that latter army: Christendom was damaged for ever. But God did not let their sins go unpunished: some died of the sicknesses of that land [i.e., Syria/Outremer]: others went back to their homelands. None of them did any good anywhere in that land.]

The chronicler Ernoul[53] also tells us of the Flemish fleet. He seems to imply that Jean, who was last to set sail for the Crusade, was one of those who did not agree with the plans to go to Venice and thence to attack Egypt.[54] Ernoul omits any reference to Baldwin, saying simply that:

Quant ce vint qu'il fu tans de passer, Jehans de Niele et li autre pelerin qui yverné avoient à Marseille et à autres pors passerent, quant il porent, et ariverent en le tiere d'Ottremer.[55]

[When it was time to sail, Jean de Nesle and the other crusaders, who had overwintered in Marseilles and other ports, sailed when they could and arrived in the land of Outremer.]

Jean and his band either sailed with or joined in Outremer with two groups of French knights.[56]

Mais il n'i fisent oevre, car il i avoit trives en le tiere. Ains s'en ala une partie à Triple et une partie en Antioce, au prince, qui guerre avoit au roi d'Ermenie.[57]

51 *Villehardouin*, [103].
52 *Villehardouin*, [229].
53 *Chronique d'Ernoul et de Bernard le Trésorier*, ed. L. de Mas Latrie (Paris, 1871), p. 340 [hereafter *Ernoul*].
54 For the question of who might have known of the plan to go to Egypt, see Queller and Madden, *The Fourth Crusade*, pp. 14–16.
55 *Ernoul*, p. 353.
56 The events are not entirely clear in *Ernoul*, but this is what seems to have happened. Cf. *Ernoul*, pp. 340–1.
57 *Ernoul*, p. 353.

> [but they could not do anything effective there, since there was a truce in the land. Rather, some went to Tripoli and some to Antioch, to the prince, who was at war with the king of Armenia.]

Part of the band was persuaded by its self-appointed leader, Reynald of Dampierre, to take service under Bohemond of Tripoli. As a result of the impatience of Reynald, who would not await a safe conduct from one of the Muslim leaders through whose territory they had to pass, that group was ambushed at Lattakieh and many massacred or imprisoned.[58] Although Ernoul's account is not totally clear, as we have seen above, it can be inferred that Jean was in a group that awaited a safe conduct and reached Antioch in safety.[59] What needs to be stressed is that Jean and his men joined in a civil war between Christian princes, a 'war of succession'. They fought for Leo II, King of Armenia, against Bohemond IV, prince of Antioch and count of Tripoli.[60]

Ernoul next brings Jean on to the stage when the ten-year truce between Christians and Saracens ended in 1204,[61] stating that he and the knights with him set out for Acre 'où li guerre estoit sor Sarrasins'[62] [where there was war against the Saracens] and presumably participated in this war. It then seems that in September of 1204, with the agreement of a fresh truce, most of the knights, who had come to the Holy Land in the previous two years, left,[63] many to join the now victorious crusaders in Constantinople, but that Jean and others (including Robert de Bove and Simon de Montfort) stayed 'en le tiere'[64] ['in the land']. That is the last mention of Jean in the chronicles of the Fourth Crusade. However, we should add that Jean's fellow captains of the Flemish fleet, Thierry de Flandres and Nicolas de Mailly, joined Baldwin in Constantinople.[65]

Analysis of Jean II's role in the Fourth Crusade

Let us note Nitze's assessment of Jean's role in the Fourth Crusade:

> Thus Jean's participation in the crusade was brief. It was independent, inasmuch as he attempted to carry out its avowed purpose, the liberation of

58 *Ernoul*, p. 342.
59 The *Estoire de Eracles*, p. 257, explicitly states that Jean's group '. . . orent sain conduit al aler'.
60 D. E. Queller, 'The Fourth Crusade: The Neglected Majority', in *Medieval Diplomacy and the Fourth Crusade* (London, 1980), p. 456, suggests that the Flemings could permit themselves this war against Christians rather than that at Constantinople, either: (1) because they had by this time '. . . fulfilled their vows and so felt free to resume the normal fratricidal behaviour of the feudal class'; or (2) '. . . they did not have to undertake the internecine war in the Holy Land at the side of excommunicants'. He notes that they hurried off to fight Saracens as soon as they could.
61 *Ernoul*, pp. 356–7.
62 *Ernoul*, p. 357.
63 Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades* (Pelican edn, London, 1971), p. 103.
64 *Ernoul*, p. 360.
65 *Villehardouin*, [493] and [322].

> Jerusalem from the Saracens. And it was not devoid of a certain idealism, since he resisted Baldwin rather than play the part of a 'politique'.[66]
>
> On the whole, the misunderstanding that existed between the crusaders, from the moral point of view, was to Jean's credit. Accordingly, on the death of Marie [de Champagne, Baldwin's wife] he refrained from uniting with Baldwin but set sail for home. . . .[67]

We can agree that Jean's participation was independent, but for Nitze to speak of this approvingly is to view his actions from a twentieth-century, liberal, individualist viewpoint. It is possible that Jean's own piety may have driven him to break his oath to Baldwin but he then went on to fight for one Christian prince against another in the Holy Land. Even were piety the spur,[68] there are the following other factors to place in any moral equation:
(1) The fleet, a major one, much needed by the crusading forces, was not Jean's and his fellow captains' to play fast and loose with: it was Baldwin's.[69]
(2) It is clear that Jean and his fellow captains broke their oath to Baldwin, and moreover, violated the collective agreement taken at Soissons.[70] I concur with Faral that it would be untrue to state that:

> Nul lien . . . ne tenait assemblés tous les «pèlerins», hormis un lien moral, religieux au moins à l'origine, un consentement d'hommes libres, qui se rompait de lui-même dès que l'action qu'on leur commandait ne leur semblait pas conforme à leur voeu de croisé.[71]
>
> [nothing held all the crusaders together, except a moral bond, a religious one, at least initially, the consent of free men, which broke of its own accord, as soon as the action they were commanded to take did not seem to them to conform with their crusader's vow.]

And I further agree with Faral when he says: 'En vertu du pacte féodal,

66 Nitze II, 74.
67 Nitze II, 74. The reference to Marie is Nitze's acceptance of the erroneous statement in one chronicle that Jean was accompanying her to the Holy Land.
68 We should note Brundage's warning against devaluing the spiritual motives of our medieval ancestors. As he says: 'It would be foolish to write off the force of a genuine, if at times grotesque, spirituality.' James A. Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law and the Crusader* (Madison, Milwaukee and London, 1969), p. 144. The question of religious motivation is addressed in a series of essays, Derek Baker, ed., *Religious Motivation: Biographical and Sociological Problems for the Church Historian* (Oxford, 1978). The comment of the Introduction (presumably by Baker) is useful: 'Not all motives are avowed or avowable, not all are present in the conscious mind and, sometimes, motives are claimed or ascribed to mask self-interest or to persuade and manipulate. The biographer continually faces these problems; some are capable, if not of solution, at least of clarification in the light of modern psychological and medical knowledge, but most are susceptible of what might be called "half-way explanations".'
69 This defection by Jean with the fleet has not really been taken account of in any of the analyses of the action of the Flemings. I believe it marks his action out from that of the other defectors, who found their transport after travelling overland, at a suitable port. Cf. J. Godfrey, *The Unholy Crusade* (Oxford, 1980), p. 71, where he suggests sound financial reasons why crusaders with their own transport would not wish to pay the Venetians.
70 *Villehardouin*, [15].
71 Faral, *Villehardouin, La Conquête*, I, xxv, quoting A. Pauphilet, *Sur Robert de Clari*.

l'armée tout entière était tenue à l'obéissance.'[72] ['By virtue of the feudal oath, the whole army was committed to obedience.']

Other reasons can be suggested for the disobedience of Jean and his companions. Villehardouin alleges fear.[73] Perhaps, indeed, the thought of attacking the great city of Constantinople was overwhelming. In this regard, we shall later see Jean being criticized for a certain reluctance to fight, at Bouvines, in 1214. However, the decision concerning Constantinople was not that of Jean alone and a crusade was in any case perilous. Certainly, if *Ernoul* is to be believed, as we have seen above, Jean was not afraid to fight.

Perhaps we should consider the possibility that fear of a different kind moved these 'pilgrims'. At the time Jean and his fellow captains sought their orders from Baldwin, he was at Zara, the Catholic city, which the crusaders had recently helped the Venetians to conquer. Queller[74] says:

> It may be assumed that the messengers also carried back to Marseilles news of the feared excommunication [excommunication by Pope Innocent III because of this attack on a Catholic city] and of the proposal to go to Constantinople, and that the Flemings at Marseilles re-enacted the heated debate that had occurred at Zara over the Constantinopolitan adventure. But this time those who were determined to go directly to Palestine prevailed. . . .

Fear of excommunication by the pope would indeed, one imagines, be a weighty factor. Would a young Jean have treated the threat of excommunication by a pope with the pragmatism that the older Jean showed towards actual excommunication by a bishop?[75] Or, again, was a twofold diversion (Egypt, then Constantinople) from the Holy Land a critical factor in the decision made by those in the fleet from Flanders?

Finally, for another view, let us turn to Longnon,[76] who perhaps offers us the 'contrepied' to Faral:

72 Faral, *Villehardouin*. It must be stated that this question of the freedom of conscience of the members of the crusading army is a huge one, and I have barely scratched its surface here. While the issue of Jean's oath to Baldwin is a clearer one, it too brings us into a complex area. It is apparent from the accounts of the actions of the crusaders that all the while in the host, whether in respect of the plan to take Zara or that to proceed against Constantinople, a great debate, a searching of consciences, was continuing. Cf. Queller and Madden, *The Fourth Crusade*, pp. 53–5, 82–4.

73 *Villehardouin*, [49].

74 Queller, 'The Fourth Crusade: The Neglected Majority', p. 455.

75 Jean was excommunicate while on the Albigensian Crusade in 1226, following a dispute with the bishop of Noyon. He carried on crusading, regardless. See Newman, *Les Seigneurs de Nesle*, I, 41–2, and Ch. Petit-Dutaillis, *Etude sur la vie et al règne de Louis VIII* (Paris, 1894), pp. 355 and 456, 117 for the full story. For an exposition of the very complicated matter of excommunication and the various ways in which it could be applied, see E. Vodola, *Excommunication in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1986), particularly Ch. III, 'Excommunicates in the Community'.

76 Jean Longnon, *Les Compagnons de Villehardouin: Recherches sur les croisés de la quatrième croisade* (Geneva, 1978), p. 7. Note that Longnon has a confused account of Jean II, in which his career is combined with his father's. The reason is an original misreading by H. van Werweke, 'La contribution de la Flandre et du Hainaut à la troisième croisade', *Le Moyen Age*, LXXVIII (4e série, XXVII) (1972), pp. 55–90, cf. p. 81. Van Werweke has, I believe, misread Warlop, who has correctly quoted Newman (*Les Seigneurs de Nesle*) concerning the career of Jean I. I must apologize to the reader for this lengthy explanation, but it does offer a salutary lesson.

> je croirais . . . que c'est dû à l'indépendance anarchique de ces féodaux et au désir de beaucoup d'entre eux de se rendre directement en Syrie pour se libérer rapidement de leur voeu.[77]
>
> [I would think . . . that was due to the anarchic independence of these feudal lords and to the desire of many of them to make their way direct to Syria to discharge their vow quickly.]

But are independence and impatience enough to explain a course of action that required a deliberate act of disobedience on the part of the three captains? How did they explain it to the men in the fleet under their command? Did they lie about Baldwin's orders? Or did they gain the collective agreement of their men? These are unanswerable questions.

I think that we will find the roots of Jean's actions, at least, both in piety and politics, in the politics of Flanders. In 1202, we meet Jean II de Nesle at one of the *cruces* in the complex interplay of forces that constituted for centuries the relations between Flanders, England and France. Baldwin set out for the Fourth Crusade on 14 April 1202, a well-chosen moment as Dept states,[78] since quite recently he had concluded a peace treaty with Philippe Auguste of France, following the war of 1197–1200 with that country. 'Il laissait la Flandre en pleine paix et prospérité . . .'[79] ['He left Flanders both very peaceful and prosperous.'] But he had to be cautious: '. . . il devait se défier de son suzerain et ne pas lui donner l'occasion d'intervenir trop souvent en Flandre.'[80] ['He had to be distrustful of his overlord [i.e., Philippe Auguste] and not give him the opportunity to intervene too often in Flanders.'] He therefore made his wife regent of his lands until her own departure for the Holy Land, putting her additionally under the pope's protection.[81]

Baldwin seems to have taken care also to weaken the influence of the supporters of France within the nobility of Flanders. So far as we can tell, these 'supporters' at this date consisted of one man: Jean II de Nesle.[82] Jean, who had taken the cross in the company of his lord, was bound to set out on the crusade and unable to remain behind and foment trouble in Flanders.

77 Note what Villehardouin says of the attraction for many of joining the Fourth Crusade: 'Tuit cil qui se croiseroient et feroient le service Deu un an en l'ost, seroient quite de toz les pechiez que il avoient faiz, dont il seroient confès. Por ce que cil pardons fu issi granz, si s'en esmurent mult li cuer des genz; et mult s'en croiserent por ce que li pardons ere si granz.' ['All those who would take the cross and would serve God for one year in the army would be free of all the sins they had confessed to. Since the indulgence offered was so great, men's hearts were greatly moved by it; and many took the cross because the indulgence would be so great.'] *Villehardouin*, [2]. For an illuminating discussion of how Villehardouin's own views and need to justify his own actions may have coloured his treatment of the oath-breakers, see J. Dufournet, *Les écrivains de la IVe croisade: Villehardouin et Clari* (Paris, 1973), pp. 314–20 and, by the same author, *Geoffroy de Villehardouin: La Conquête de Constantinople* (Paris, 1969).

78 Dept, *Les Influences*, p. 35.

79 Dept, *Les Influences*, p. 35.

80 Dept, *Les Influences*, p. 35.

81 Dept, *Les Influences*, p. 35.

82 Dept, *Les Influences*, p. 78, and n. 4. In reaching this conclusion, he relies on the fact that Jean de Nesle did not subscribe to the Anglo-Flemish treaties of 1197. Jean II de Nesle might, it is true, not have succeeded his father, Jean I, at that stage. But, in any event, neither lord of Nesle subscribed to the treaties.

Baldwin then seems to have ensured that he was incommunicado by putting him in command of the Flemish fleet.

For what happened after the fleet had wintered at Marseilles,[83] I suggest the following, which takes account of a number of factors, namely Jean's piety, his caution, his desire for military action against the Saracen and his political acumen.

(1) Jean and his companions[84] may well have been moved by reasons of personal piety to resist Baldwin's orders. The diversion of the crusading forces from the Holy Land, initially towards Egypt and then Constantinople, could well have seemed to them 'not what they had signed up for'. Against this must be set Jean's eventual taking service in a Christian civil war in the Holy Land.[85]

(2) It may have seemed that proceeding direct to Outremer would offer the scope of military action against the Saracen, such as Jean's father, Jean I, had seen in the Third Crusade. This, in turn, would have offered prompt discharge of the crusader' vows. We may recall that '. . . le servise Deu un an en l'ost . . .' ['. . . serving God for one year in the army . . .'] was sufficient to fulfil the vow.[86]

(3) Jean may have been a naturally cautious man: the charge of cowardice does not sit easily on him, as we shall see later in connection with Bouvines. Notably, he took time to obtain a safe passage through Saracen territory and thus avoided imprisonment or death. This presumed caution would militate against his being so cavalier with his lord's property, the fleet and disobeying direct orders at Marseilles, but would explain why he declined to join the forces that were to attack Constantinople. The threat of excommunication may well, clearly, also have weighed in the balance.

(4) It could be that Jean, on receiving orders from Baldwin that in various ways conflicted with what he and the force under his command had expected, saw an opportunity to escape from Baldwin's scrutiny in the short term and in the longer term a course of action that would allow a more speedy return to Flanders, through a faster discharge of his crusader's vows, with a view to increasing his influence in that country. It is of great interest that in 1204, upon the conclusion of a new truce in the Holy Land with the Saracens, when, it seems, large numbers of knights, who had gone to the Holy Land rather than take the road to Constantinople, left to join the newly crowned Emperor Baldwin, Jean's fellow captains (Thierry d'Alsace and Nicolas de Mailly)

83 I see no evidence in the chronicles to support Hurter's hypothesis quoted by Queller ('Neglected Majority', p. 456) that Jean and company sailed to Outremer because they missed the rendezvous at Modon or Queller's own hypothesis that the matter of which claimant for the Byzantine throne was favoured by Jean and his men affected their decision. I favour Occam's Razor in this case.

84 For further light on the possible motives of one of those companions, Thierry d'Alsace, and his involvement with the politics of Cyprus, see W. H. Rudt de Collenberg, *Familles de l'Orient Latin XIIe–XIVe siècles*, 2 vols. (London, 1983), 'L'empereur Isaac de Chypre et sa fille' (1155–1207), I, 169–73.

85 Queller, as we have seen above, refers to this paradox. I think that Jean's very pragmatic actions in Outremer add weight to the 'political' solution I shall offer later.

86 *Villehardouin*, [2]. Again, see Queller, 'Neglected Majority', p. 456.

were among them and remained in the new Latin Empire for many years. Jean did not join Baldwin. We know him to have been back in Picardy by April 1205, as he promulgated an act in that month.[87]

There remain a number of unanswered questions in this affair. We do not know the weight placed on vows and oaths[88] by a man such as Jean and what might have happened to him, had Baldwin returned to Flanders. Perhaps he would have been reconciled with him, as were apparently his fellow captains. Clearly, though, Nitze's assessment of Jean is wide of the mark. By the standards of Nitze's (and our own) time, Jean's actions cannot clearly be shown to have 'a certain idealism'[89] and, there having been no 'misunderstanding' between the crusaders, there was no credit to Jean from 'the moral point of view'.[90] Additionally, and, I feel, importantly, it can be conjectured that the way Jean acted in the years 1202 to 1204 shows his commitment to a Flanders with close connections to France: to Philippe Auguste rather than to Baldwin. I suggest that Jean returned as soon as possible to Flanders, to pursue increasing his influence and that of Philippe Auguste, in a country now bereft of strong government, with Baldwin otherwise engaged and Marie de Champagne, Baldwin's wife and regent dead, during her trip to join her husband on crusade. The reference to Jean in a French source of 1205 as being among the 'barones regni Franciae'[91] reinforces that suggestion. My conclusion is, *pace* Nitze, that rather than Jean resisting 'Baldwin rather than play the part of a 'politique',[92] politics and the main chance were, in fact, his game.[93] I find no pressing case for this period being more appropriate than another for the presentation of a copy of ***P***.

87 Newman, *Les Seigneurs de Nesle*, I, 37. Queller, 'Neglected Majority', p. 454, notes 'one of the most enigmatic issues of the Fourth Crusade . . .', namely that '. . . Count Baldwin of Flanders, one of the main leaders, a signatory of the Venetian treaty, and the baron who gave most generously of his own wealth to attempt to make up the deficit owed the Venetians, would have contributed to the plight of the army by sending a part of his own force by another route.' There could have been various reasons for this, as Queller indicates, but he does not suggest either that the politics of Flanders entered into his calculations or that Baldwin may have been operating an insurance policy so far as transport went.

88 For the question of vows, see James A. Brundage, *The Crusades, Holy War and Canon Law* (Aldershot, 1991), Ch. VI, 'The Votive Obligations of Crusaders'. It appears that by Jean's time, '. . . to violate a vow which has been pronounced aloud, whether with or without solemnity' [with solemnity = accompanied by some sacred ceremony and witnessed by at least two or three persons] was considered, by the decretists at least, to be "mortally sinful" ' (Brundage, p. 85). This makes Jean's actions even more problematical. See Godfrey, *The Unholy Crusade*, p. 71, for the opinion that the defectors '. . . were under no canonical obligation as individually sworn Crusader-pilgrims to make their sacred journey to Jerusalem by the route laid down by Villehardouin and his fellow delegates'.

89 Nitze II, 75.

90 Nitze II, 74.

91 Archives Nationales, Paris, *Registre de Phillippe-Auguste JJ*., 9, p. 7. Cf., Dept, *Les Influences*, p. 78, n .4.

92 Nitze II, 75.

93 There is the possibility, which it is beyond the scope of this present essay to assess, that Jean was outvoted on the course of action by his fellow captains.

Jean's career 1206–12

Jean next appears in 1206, when he and other nobles wrote to Innocent III seeking that the Church not excommunicate nobles who had participated in tournaments but allow them to redeem themselves by contributing money to the crusades.[94] 'L'argent achetait tout' ['Money bought everything'], as Newman remarks, and this action may shed a little further light on Jean's attitude to the crusades: pragmatic, to be sure.

Additionally in that year, and more significantly, Jean was one of the very small group (five in all) of Flemish nobles who accompanied the regent of Flanders, Philippe de Namur, to Paris to witness the arrangements surrounding his marriage. These five constituted the 'French party' in Flanders, and the recognition of their small number led Philippe Auguste to buy further support there.[95] He was so successful that, by 1211, the witnesses of a document concerning the dowry of Philippe de Namur's wife included seventeen of the principal Flemish nobles.[96]

The strength of this party can be judged from the major part it played, in 1211, in persuading Philippe Auguste to drop his candidate as count of Flanders (Enguerrand de Coucy) in favour of Ferrand of Portugal.[97] Jean was one of the principals in this, lending a large amount of money to Mathilde, widow of Philippe d'Alsace, Ferrand's aunt, she being the prime mover in furthering the latter's cause with Philippe Auguste. The loyalties of Jean here are evident: providing for the future of Flanders but under the French thumb.

We should also note here that Jean did not take the cross in respect of the Fifth Crusade (the preaching of which began in 1213 and which reached an ignoble end in 1221). It could be argued that Jean's interests lay too firmly in Flanders between those years and that expediency kept him at home. Also noteworthy is the concern of Philippe Auguste about the mission of the papal legate, Robert Courçon, in France.[98] *Inter alia*, Robert's recruitment of French nobles as crusaders would have deprived the king of some of his most important commanders,[99] which, of course, would have included Jean. I suggest that politics rather than piety weighed heavier with Jean once again during the intervening years and that he saw his place as in the immediate sphere of the French king, not away from the action in Outremer or even the Pays d'Oc.[100]

94 Newman, *Les Seigneurs de Nesle*, I, 44. It may not be without significance that, in that same year, Innocent allowed a relaxation of the ban on tournaments, at the discretion of local bishops, in return for a payment towards the Crusades. This was, it seems, a successful money-raiser. (Vesey Norman, *The Medieval Soldier* (London 1971), p. 153.) The ban was reasserted by the Fourth Lateran Council (Canon, 70). We should further note that although the Church disapproved of the bloody battles, often leading to death, which constituted tournaments, the nobility saw them, *inter alia*, as essential preparation for war.

95 Dept, *Les Influences*, pp. 83–4.

96 Dept, *Les Influences*, pp. 83–4.

97 Dept, *Les Influences*, pp. 87–92.

98 See James M. Powell, *Anatomy of a Crusade 1213–1221* (Philadelphia, 1986), pp. 38–41, for the full reasons for his concern.

99 See the lists of *croisés* in Powell, *Anatomy*, pp. 207–58, showing little participation from Flanders.

100 See, for details of Jean's movements, Petit-Dutaillis, *Etude* (Paris, 1894), p. 295; Newman, *Les*

Likewise, Jean's failure to join the Albigensian Crusade until 1226 may bear the same significance.

Jean's career 1212–22

Returning to 1212, we see Jean driven out of Flanders, taking refuge with Philippe Auguste. Ferrand, the new count, had made an alliance with the English, and Flanders had become further embroiled in the struggle between Philippe Auguste and John of England, which was entering its decisive phase. A year later, in 1213, when the French king invaded Flemish territory, Jean acted as one of his guides.[101] When that army retreated, hastily, after Philippe Auguste's fleet had been destroyed at Damme, the port of Bruges, Jean was part of it, and in 1214 he fought with the French at Bouvines, the climactic battle between Philippe Auguste and John. According to Guillaume le Breton in his *De gesti Philippi Augusti*,[102] Jean did not distinguish himself in that battle, and Guillaume perhaps hints at behaviour bordering on the cowardly, saying of Jean:

> [he was] . . . miles quidem procerus corpore et forme venustissime, sed virtus animi venustati corporis in eo minime respondebat, undeet in prelio illo nondum cum aliquo conflixerat die tota;
>
> [. . . he was a handsome knight, well-built, but the greatness of his soul did not match his handsome appearance, as he had fought no one in the course of the whole day;]

However, in the *Philippidos*,[103] an extended version of his original chronicle, the same author has altered his account of the incident, so as to remove the slighting reference to Jean and has the Elect of Senlis entrust the count of Boulogne to Jean, to present him to the king as a pleasing gift.[104] Since Guillaume was present at Bouvines (as Philippe Auguste's chaplain), the inclusion of the original material is significant, as is the subsequent 'editing'. It is possible that the latter was carried out in the light of Jean's rise to prominence in France between Bouvines (1214) and the appearance of the *Philippidos* (1220–5[105]). The rehabilitation of Jean vis-à-vis Bouvines, the realignment of his actions reaches its conclusion with Philippe Mousket, who

Seigneurs de Nesle, I, 37–8 and II, 208–18; Warlop, *Flemish Nobility*, I, 266; Henri Gougaud, ed., *La Chanson de la Croisade Albigeoise* (Paris, 1989), cf. [201] 1.6; P. Guébin and Ernest Lyons, eds., *Petri Vallium Sarnaii Monachis: Hystoria Albigensis*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1926–30), 2, III.

101 Dept, *Les Influences*, p. 121, n. 1.

102 François Delaborde, ed., *Oeuvres de Rigord et de Guillaume le Breton, Historiens de Philippe Auguste*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1882), I, 196 (p .288).

103 *Oeuvres*, II, 700 (p. 347).

104 Another incident is added to the *Philippidos*, in which the bishop of Beauvais, having illicitly, as a priest, felled William Longsword, earl of Salisbury, gives orders to Jean to put Longsword in chains and receive credit for his capture.

105 *Dictionnaire*, p. 626.

in *c.* 1243,[106] typically punning, refers to Jean in the battle thus: 'Mesire Jehan de Nielle/ Maint hiaume a or I desniiele.'[107] The original account might suggest cowardice on Jean's part, for sure, but we saw him fighting in the Holy Land. Have we here another instance of Jean's shrewdness? Did his view of the battlefield perhaps not initially show obvious signs of a French victory and was he waiting for the opportune moment to move? We may never know.[108]

By the Treaty of Paris,[109] Jean II was specifically rehabilitated, and he returned to Flanders where his influence at the Flemish court increased: he was appointed *bailli* of Flanders and Hainault and presided over the *curia regis*. In the latter position, regent in all but name, we might suppose, he would have exerted a powerful influence during the next seven years, while Joanna ruled alone, her husband, Ferrand, having been, since Bouvines, a prisoner of the French.[110]

1222–4: the sale of the castellany of Bruges

However, in 1222, Jean's influence in Flanders began to wane. On 7 January of that year he was publicly insulted in the *curia* by two prominent nobles.[111] In August of the same year or before, after that personal humiliation, Jean was replaced as *bailli* of Hainault and a little later as *bailli* of Flanders. His career in Flanders was coming to an end. For reasons unknown, he quarrelled with the countess and, although he was her vassal, he accused her of denial of justice and appealed to the court of his lord, the king of France. The royal court profited from the occasion and, declaring itself competent, in 1224 judged in favour of Jean.

There have been a number of analyses of the reasons for the sale of the castellany. Newman rejects the theory that 'le seigneur de Nesle avait besoin d'argent comme beaucoup de nobles à cette époque' and the theory that 'sa position comme vassal du roi de France pour ses possessions en Picardie était devenue plus importante pour lui que sa châtellenie', then states[112] that there is no evidence of Jean's circumstances changing. He sees other reasons for

106 *Nihil de mortuis . . .?*

107 *Chronique rimée de Philippe Mouskes* [*sic*], ed. Baron de Reiffenberg, 2 vols. (Brussels, 1836–8), ll. 21829–30: a phrase straight from the romances!

108 For an account of part of the battle that might bear that construction, see J. Bradbury, *Philip Augustus: King of France, 1180–1223* (London and New York, 1998), p. 307.

109 Dept, *Les Influences*, pp. 137–8.

110 Dept, *Les Influences*, pp. 137–8. F. M. Powicke, 'The Reigns of Philip Augustus and Louis VIII of France', Chap. 9 in J. R. Tanner, C. W. Prévité-Orton and Z. N. Brooke, eds., *Victory of the Papacy*, vol. 6 of the *Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge, 1936), pp. 284–330, p. 319, notes that: 'Flanders was ruled by the Countess Joanna under Philip's watchful scrutiny.'

111 Dept, *Les Influences*, p. 193: the statement of Arnoul d'Audenarde, who was present at this incident, is given here. These nobles were both cousins of the king and, in the light of what followed, conspiracy theory might suggest that they colluded with Jean to engineer his exit.

112 Newman, *Les Seigneurs de Nesle*, I, 40.

Jean quitting Flanders.[113] Jean was the agent of the king of France; the countess, the nobles and the towns wanted more independence. In his position as *bailli* he had no doubt offended many people. Newman believes that if we had better documentation, we would probably find that jealousy and rivalry would explain the fall of the castelain of Bruges.

Nitze[114] notes, quoting Philippe Mousket who, under 1234, indicated that Jean '. . . blasmés en fut durement/Par Flandres, par France ensement' ['. . . he was greatly blamed for this, both in Flanders and France'] that 'the sale of an inherited fief was held a disgraceful act, and Jean II did not escape the odium attached to it'. Nitze also says:

> Nowhere, however, is the accusation made that Jean had wasted his property; on the contrary, his whole career would indicate that he was a canny manipulator of worldly goods. Hence, the sale[115] must have been prompted by a real desire to escape from an untenable and dubious situation.

Warlop, differently, sees Jean's fall as part of what was perhaps the climax of a campaign waged by Joanna of Flanders against the Flemish nobility in her efforts to strengthen her position: a battle in which, indeed, Jean had, at an earlier stage, assisted her.[116] Warlop describes the fall of Jean as 'the decisive victory of the comital authority . . .'[117] and sees the charge laid by Jean against Joanna of refusal of justice as being perhaps, in turn, Jean's way of putting pressure on her to accede to a plan he cherished, namely the sale of the castellany.[118] Where does the truth lie in this evident web of intrigue? Shrewd manoeuvring by Jean to extricate himself from an impossible division of loyalties? The key move in the long game of a ruler seeking to assert her authority (a process continued after Jean's departure[119])?

Into our consideration we could bring one further factor: the contention between Joanna of Flanders and her sister, Margaret, during the period 1218–23, which had led to warfare between Joanna and Margaret's husband, Bouchard d'Avesnes, with accompanying pillage and devastation, giving rise to discontent in the land. As Wolff says in his study of the period: 'With the

113 Newman, *Les Seigneurs de Nesle*, I, 40.

114 Nitze II, 77. This statement by Mousket (ll. 28355–6) is particularly interesting, in that it does mention criticism of Jean by others, whereas the other references to Jean by the chronicler put him in a good light: notably, Mousket's description of Jean's role at Bouvines, which we have seen above. Contrasting this with the, at best, lukewarm praise of Jean's role that we noted above, we could infer that Jean had to take a good deal of flak for the sale.

115 We should note here that the sum involved, 23,545 *livres parisis*, was very large. By comparison the income to the government of Philippe Auguste in 1221 was 195,000 *livres parisis* (J. W. Baldwin, *The Government of Philip Augustus. Foundations of French Royal Power in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1986), p. 245, table 8. Joanna paid dear to get rid of Jean.

116 Warlop, *Flemish Nobility*, I, 266.

117 Warlop, *Flemish Nobility*, I, 266.

118 Warlop, *Flemish Nobility*, I, 267. It is interesting that Jean chose to appeal to the royal court in this matter. This appeal to the 'cour judiciaire du roi' was the only one during the reign of Louis VIII (Petit-Dutaillis, *Etude*, pp. 351–2) – a set of circumstances very suggestive of Jean's position at the French court and his confidence, perhaps, in Louis's willingness to extricate him from the situation.

119 Warlop, *Flemish Nobility*, I, 266.

situation thus troubled and uneasy, the time for an explosion seemed at hand; the spark was provided by the rumor, which began to circulate in 1225, that Baldwin of Constantinople was alive and returned to Flanders.'[120] The result was virtual civil war.[121] Was Jean, seeing in 1222 the writing on the wall concerning the situation in Flanders, only too glad to be 'bought out' by Joanna? The period, begun in 1204, in which Jean could continue to gain advantage and wield power in Flanders was, one could imagine, clearly drawing to an end.

Evidently, we cannot say whether this was Jean's analysis or not. However, I think we get an insight into the man's true leanings at this point, from his settling in Paris[122] where he built a magnificent house and was often present at the royal court, one of the great barons of the realm. So we see the culmination of a process begun at least twenty-two years previously; the complete alignment of the interests of Jean II de Nesle with those of the French crown.

Without the comparative wealth of chronicle detail for the years preceding it, the final quarter or so of Jean's life may seem to us like a postscript. However, during that period Jean continued to be prominent and his life not without incident.

The Albigensian Crusade of 1226

In January 1226, Jean had joined with twenty-eight other barons[123] 'pleins de zèle pour la cause sacrée'[124] ['full of zeal for the holy cause'] (i.e., a crusade against the heretic Ramond VII of Toulouse) to urge Louis VIII to take up this enterprise. The decision for the crusade having been made by a council at Paris in January 1226, Jean duly took part in it. Once again, Jean as a committed crusader and we have therefore seen satisfied one of the criteria by which Nitze deemed it appropriate for a copy of ***P*** to be presented to him.

Jean's final years

Jean continues to be mentioned in documents during the years that follow until his death, which was, as we have seen above, on 22 December 1239. He clearly remained a trusted man at court, for instance in 1226 being one those that the mortally ill Louis VIII, on crusade, had made promise to swear allegiance to the future Louis IX and to ensure that Louis be crowned as soon

120 R. L. Wolff, 'Baldwin of Flanders and Hainault, First Latin Emperor of Constantinople: His Life, Death and Resurrection, 1172–1225', *Speculum* 27 (1952), 281–322, p. 294.

121 Wolff, 'Baldwin', p. 296.

122 Newman, *Les Seigneurs de Nesle*, I, 41.

123 Petit-Dutaillis, *Etude*, pp. 491, 315.

124 Dyggve, *Trouvères*, p. 216. I am not sure if this was intended to be an ironic reference by Dyggve, but it is worth noting Powicke's remarks that: 'Until Louis VIII stamped it with the marks of royal aggrandisement, the terrible warfare against the heretics of Languedoc had all the characteristics of a crusade' and 'The Crusade was given a national character in the great councils of Paris and Bourges in 1226.' Powicke, 'Reigns', pp. 322 and 323.

as possible after his father's death.[125] Apparently keeping that promise, we see the 'sire de Nielle' fitting the golden spur on the king to be, at the knighting of Louis IX, before his anointing as king, at Reims, in November 1226.[126] Finally, we see Jean, in 1234 being charged, along with Gautier, archbishop of Sens, with the responsibility of accompanying the princess Marguerite de Provence, Louis IX's fiancée, to the North.[127] We may reckon that at the time of his death, some five years later, he was in his early to mid-sixties.

Jean and the Seigneur de Cambrin

Having considered at length the biography of the dedicatee of the original of MS *Br*, we should now turn to the donor, the Seigneur de Cambrin. No text that I have so far consulted has a reference to a nobleman having such a title and yet he was in a position to offer a manuscript as a gift and also, via his scribe, to provide the remarkable admonition to Jean not, in effect, to cast the pearls of the *Perlesvaus* in front of 'ient malantendable' [colophon to MS *Br*]. Nonetheless, I believe that, having pursued Jean through the years and having accumulated the information set out above we are in a strong position to attempt a critique of Nitze's views on the date of that gift.

Before we consider Nitze's statements of 1937 and 1959, as set out above, I would like to take into account the argument set out in volume II of his edition of *P*, concerning the Seigneur de Cambrin.

(1) Nitze states:[128] 'one may assume that the Seigneur de Cambrin . . . is addressing Jean in the latter's Flemish capacities, as a representative of Flanders in the Fourth Crusade or even . . . as "castellan" of Bruges'. This assumption is based on the town of Cambrin having belonged to Flanders in 1200 and having Flemish commercial relations. Nitze cites no evidence for this claim and, indeed, the indications are that the situation was otherwise. This is what Nitze says about the matter:

> . . . the town of Cambrin (the manuscript, using the common abbreviation, spells *Cãbrin*)[129] was apparently a Flemish possession. Today a village in the Pas-de-Calais, Cambrin lies five kilometers east of Béthune and about thirteen[130] west of Lille. Around 1200 it belonged to the domain of the count of Flanders; whether, like Lilliers and Béthune, it afterward changed hands in the struggle with France is difficult to ascertain.

Now, however, we are in a position to establish the fate of Cambrin:

125 195 Petit-Dutaillis, *Etude*, pp. 506, 435 and 436.
126 Dyggve, *Trouvères*, p. 216.
127 Newman, *Les Seigneurs de Nesle*, I, 43.
128 Nitze II, 79.
129 The MS being so clear would seem to preclude the town in question (as has sometimes been suggested) being Cambrai, which would allow a simpler line of argument, involving the more documented nobility or clergy of the latter town. See F. Lot, *Étude sur le Lancelot en Prose* (Paris, 1918), pp. 287–8, n. 2, on the scholars who have attempted to see, in the 'seigneur de cambrin', a bishop of Cambrai.
130 Actually, 30 km.

- the Treaty of Arras, October 1191, left the whole of the Pas-de-Calais owing allegiance to the French crown;[131]
- the Treaty of Péronne, 1200, which brought to an end the conflict, begun in 1196, between Philippe Auguste and a coalition led by Baldwin IX of Flanders, did not change the status of the area in which the town of Cambrin was situated, although a number of other areas did pass into Flemish control;[132]
- the Treaty of Pont-à-Vendin, in 1212, forced on the newly acceded Countess of Flanders, Joanna, by the French crown (in the shape of the future Louis VIII) annulled the provisions of the Treaty of Péronne, thus restoring the whole of the Pas-de-Calais to Philippe Auguste, a situation confirmed by the treaty of Melun of 1227, which finally concluded matters following the Battle of Bouvines (thirteen years earlier).[133]

  The Pas-de-Calais remained subject to the French crown thenceforth and, accordingly, I consider it clear, *pace* Nitze, that Cambrin neither formed part of the domain of the count of Flanders nor changed hands during the adult life of Jean II de Nesle. Nitze's argument is thus greatly weakened.

(2) Equally, the grounds for saying (as Nitze does in a passage we have quoted above) that Jean II was the Seigneur de Cambrin's patron are not strong. We have no indication of the relationship between the two, patron or friend.

(3) Again, Nitze's contention that because Bruges was famed for its phial of the Holy Blood, a romance 'glorifying the Grail as the cup *en coi cil qui le [Christ] creoient . . . recueillirent le sanc qui decoroit de ses plaies*'[134] ['in which they who believed in Christ . . . collected the blood which ran from his wounds'] it was a fitting work to present to Jean de Nesle, is just that, a contention. It cannot be ruled out, as we have no idea of the dedicatee's motives, but we should note that it is by no means certain that at the period we are considering the relic was in Bruges. N. Huyghebaert arrives at the very significant assessment, for our purposes, that 'la rélique vénérée [of the Holy Blood] en l'église Saint-Basile [in Bruges] a toutes les chances d'y être arrivée entre 1204 et 1256'[135] ['the venerated relic has every chance of having arrrived in the church of Saint-Basile between 1204 and 1256'] (i.e., he is unable to narrow the date range further than those two dates), following a flood of such relics into northern Europe after the sack of Constantinople.

131 C. Dehay, J. Dhondt, G. Espinas, A. Fortin, J. Fromont. C. Leroy, J. Lestocquoy, L. Petitot, R. Rodière, G. Sangnier (named as joint authors), *Histoire des territoires ayant formé le Département du Pas-de-Calais* (Arras, 1946), 'Les seigneurs du IXe au XIIIe siècle' (author J. Dhondt), p. 80.

132 Dhondt, 'Les Seigneurs', p. 81.

133 Dhondt, 'Les Seigneurs', pp. 82–3.

134 Nitze II, 79.

135 N. Huyghebaert, 'Iperius et la translation de la relique du Saint-Sang à Bruges', *Société d'Emulation te Brugge* 100 (1963), 110–87, 150. Cf. also J. Frappier, 'La Légende du Graal: origine et évolution', *Grundriss*, 4/1 (1978), p. 298, n. 14, who notes Huyghebaert's work.

I think, therefore, we can see that the grounds are not strong for giving credence to the first part of Nitze's argument, namely that the Seigneur de Cambrin dedicated a copy of ***P*** to Jean de Nesle II because of the bond created by their mutual adherence to Flanders.

What of the other part of Nitze's 'argument from politics', as set out in 1937 and 1959? I suggest that we can take issue with Nitze in a number of important matters concerning Jean.

(1) It is inappropriate to say that Jean entered into 'an open alliance with the French' in 1212. In that year that he *was* driven from Flanders (as Nitze states earlier[136]) but he was *driven* out because his position as a French partisan had become untenable. And that position had not been a secret or whispered about to that point. Jean was a vassal of the King of France and had been openly the man of Philippe Auguste since at least 1205 and, as I have indicated above, may well have had open leanings towards the French at a date before 1200, probably at least from 1202. Accepting the argument on Nitze's terms, therefore, that there was an 'appropriate date', the *earliest* appropriate date (a *terminus a quo*, as it were) could well have been around 1200.[137]

(2) The other point on which I would take issue with Nitze about Jean is his inference that this open French partisanship weakened Jean's 'stake' in Flanders. As we have seen, in the internal politics of Flanders, the question was not: 'are you for Flanders or are you for France?' It was, rather, 'are you for Flanders *in alliance with France* or for Flanders *in alliance with England*?' I do not see Jean as a man agonizing about his feudal loyalties: this was a man seeking the maximum advantage for himself, always in Flanders, and seeking the maximum support for that advantage in the place where he felt it most clearly lay, i.e., with the support of that king, who (after the death of Richard I in 1199), was the ablest and strongest in Europe, namely Philippe Auguste.[138] Jean withdrew from Flanders (whether he fell or was pushed, it amounts to the same, I feel) when he saw that his position was untenable, i.e., from 1222, and that the time for advantage in Flanders was ending. The country was on the verge of civil war and Jean, we may suppose, in his mid-forties, felt that a favoured position as a baron of the French king offered the best future. I see Jean as a political animal and his instincts, experience and acumen would

136 Nitze II, 75.

137 I would find it difficult to agree with Nitze when he says in his article in *Modern Philology* XVII: 'Obviously he had undergone a change of heart and having been an ardent Fleming *he had now become a staunch supporter of the French cause*' [my italics].

138 Note that Philippe Auguste's interests in Flanders go back to the time of Jean's father, Jean I. After the death of Philippe d'Alsace, count of Flanders, during the Third Crusade (in which Jean I participated), once Acre had fallen (on 4 July 1191), 'Philippe Auguste, désireux de rentrer en Occident pour régler à sa guise les affaires de Flandre' ['wishing to return to the West to settle in his own way the affairs of Flanders'] set sail on 31 July of that year (Van Werveke, 'La contribution de la Flandre', p. 74). Before leaving Acre, Philippe Auguste sent a letter 'to the nobility of Péronne in the Vermandois region [part of Philippe d'Alsace's territory] announcing the count's death and his own hereditary claims' (Baldwin, *Government of Philip Augustus*, p. 80). See also Runciman, *Crusades*, III, 52 and A. L. Poole, *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta, 1087–1216* (Oxford, 1993), p. 361.

have advised him, I suspect, that the moment was ripe to make a break with Flanders.[139]

Again, if we were to accept the terms of Nitze's argument about the 'appropriate' date, our *terminus ad quem* is 1225 or so. But we cannot accept those terms, for as we have seen above, there is no evidence that a copy of ***P*** was presented to Jean because there were 'Flemish connections' between him and the Seigneur de Cambrin, and on those grounds alone the dating argument falls, I believe. Moreover, it falls doubly if it is based on some notion of the strength or weakness of links with Flanders on Jean's part during the period up to 1225. After all, until the time his position in Flanders became untenable, he kept coming back to Flanders and latterly he was in a position of great power (i.e., as *bailli*).

In considering the biography of Jean de Nesle, we have gained an insight into the mentality of the upper levels of the nobility in the first half of the thirteenth century, much of it familiar in the political animal of any time: the manoeuvring for power; the taking of the main chance; the calculation, which led to Jean's settling ultimately for the French court. In addition, on the one hand, unfamiliar to us but nevertheless redolent of that same spirit, the calculation with, the sitting lightly to the dominant ideology: that of the Church, evident in the gifts to the Church to be withdrawn upon a safe return from war. Then, on the other hand, the obverse of that attitude, the acknowledgement that there was a higher power, beyond kings and barons, to be reckoned with, which it was well to treat with respect. The former attitude was visible, possibly, in Jean's reaction to excommunication by the bishop of Noyon: the latter was visible, possibly, in his reaction to the threat of excommunication by the pope, in respect of the Fourth Crusade. My final view is that political calculation and piety, rather than, *pace* Nitze, idealism, dictated Jean's actions in respect of that crusade: he was a man of his time.

We have sufficiently demonstrated, I believe, the weakness of Nitze's argument for presentation of the romance because of Jean's political affiliations at a given time, but we cannot eliminate the possibility that the Seigneur de Cambrin did indeed make this gift because of his perception of Jean's religious feelings.[140] However, to say that one time in Jean's life was more appropriate than another for a gift on those grounds is to make an assessment that no

139 In addition, the comments of Powicke about Philippe Auguste's relations within his vassals are of interest: 'By his insistence upon the implications of the homage due to himself – the emphasis upon it as liege-homage, recognising in him a claim to prior personal service – he put an end to the perplexing casuistry to which a multiplicity of claims so constantly gave rise. Thus he would not tolerate the double position of the Count of Flanders, Ferrand of Portugal, who tried to serve King John of England while remaining his vassal.' However, I would say that we could not apply this entirely to Jean, as he had effectively thrown in his hand with Philippe Auguste some seventeen years earlier.

140 We should note again the colophon's apparent reference to the religious message of the text. We might consider, also, the possibility that the gift was made because of Jean's living in a milieu with literary connections: Dyggve notes the *tenson* or *jeu-parti*, exchanged by Gautier de Dargies and Richart de Fournival, submitted to a *seigneur de nïelle* (very likely Jean II, given the dates of the two authors) for judgment. He also deduces that Jean was the recipient of two poems of Audefroi le Bastart (the *Dictionnaire*, p. 113, refers to Audefroi as Jean's 'protégé'). It is worth noting here the closely argued case of Y. G.

evidence we have seen can reasonably support. In fine, taking the very simplest approach (hence, setting aside literary considerations concerning the *termini*), I believe we must conclude that any date between, say, 1200 (assuming that was the year in which Jean succeeded his father) and 1239 (the year of Jean's death) would serve for the presentation of the copy. In short, I support the view of J. D. Bruce, quoted above.

Has our study therefore achieved nothing, except to open wider the 'window' for the presentation of a copy of the *Perlesvaus*? I think not. We have seen that Nitze's arguments do not stand up to exposure to the full historical data available now to us and thus the ground is now cleared for consideration on other, largely literary, grounds of the place of this romance in the corpus.

Lepage (*L'oeuvre lyrique de Blondel de Nesle*, ed. Y. G. Lepage (Paris, 1994) that Jean I de Nesle was the *trouvère* Blondel de Nesle.

XI

THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK'S *THE MISFORTUNES OF ELPHIN* AND THE ROMANTIC ARTHUR

Robert Gossedge

I

Although there are several comprehensive studies of the mid-nineteenth-century Arthurian revival, critical studies of pre-Tennysonian Arthurian literature are still remarkably few. This is, I believe, for three interrelated reasons. First, there is the absence of any Arthurian text written by a notable English literary 'star' of the Romantic period.[1] Second, what literature was produced is difficult to reconcile with the reverent, romantic and ahistorical Victorian use of the legend. The idealized versions of the legend in the work of Tennyson, Morris, Swinburne and the Pre-Raphaelite painters is unrecognizable in the bawdy burlesques, mock epics and satires of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. And despite the efforts of certain critics, the works of Fielding, Thelwall and Frere should not be seen as anticipating the later conservative use of the myth. Whereas the Arthurian legend from the middle of the nineteenth century was essentially a national epic, which was closely and obsequiously associated with the British monarchy and produced a visual spectacle that would decorate the halls of governmental splendour, the Arthurian story in the nineteenth century before Tennyson and William Dyce was essentially a comedy – a source to be plundered by the most amusing writers of the day.

The final reason, I believe, is that the irreconcilability of the Romantic and Victorian uses of the legend is not only generic, but also nationalistic. What emerges in early nineteenth-century Arthurian literature need not be, as

[1] Wordsworth could be considered the exception. His *The Egyptian Maid; or, The Romance of the Lily* does take Merlin as its central character and Arthur's court is the main setting of the poem. Wordsworth, however, demonstrates little knowledge of medieval or contemporary Arthurian literature, and the overall form of the poem is certainly non-Arthurian. See Wordsworth, *The Egyptian Maid; or, The Romance of the Lily*, in *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, 6 vols. (London, 1849–50), III, 184–97.

Stephanie Barczewski has claimed,[2] a notion of an inclusive British national identity. Rather, the work of Scottish, Cornish and Welsh writers reveals, a series of anti-colonial manoeuvres that actively seek to resist Anglocentric conceptions of culture, society and imperialism. This anti-colonial trope, however, is not only to be seen in the work of non-English writers, but also in the writings of several English poets and novelists – most notably in Thomas Love Peacock's *The Misfortunes of Elphin* (1829), which is the most thematically sustained and satisfying Arthurian text of the Romantic period. Indeed, it is the only full-length reworking of the legend before Tennyson. Nonetheless, the novel has been frequently ignored or disparaged by critics either for its satiric use of the myth or because of its employment of Welsh poetry and literary traditions. James Merriman has described it as a 'minor work' owing to its adoption of 'distinctly inferior materials' and considers it the result of Peacock's ignorance of the 'far greater and more vigorous later flowerings of the legend' in French and English literature.[3]

Peacock was, however, a great scholar who was, no doubt, as well acquainted with the English Arthurian materials as he was with Classical, French, Italian, Spanish and Welsh literature. His acceptance of 'inferior' sources can be understood, not in terms of the failings of the dilettante poet and intellectual, but rather in terms of the strained nationalistic identity politics that had become integral to the scholarship and production of Arthurian literature in Romantic England and Wales. In order to comprehend the peculiar position of an English satirist producing the first modern epic on the literature of medieval Wales, it is necessary to appreciate the relationship between contemporary Arthurian scholarship and nationalist and regionalist politics, and also the role of Wales as a site of armchair tourism and colonial ideology within the popular fiction of the period – two aspects that this essay will examine.

II

Peacock wrote three Arthurian works before publishing *The Misfortunes of Elphin*: *Sir Hornbook; or, Childe Lancelot's Expedition, A Grammatico-Allegorical Ballad* (1814), *Calidore* (1816) and *The Round Table; or, King Arthur's Feast* (1817). *Calidore* is an unfinished prose romance abandoned in 1816 and published, posthumously, in 1891. *Sir Hornbook* and *The Round Table* are both educative poems that only loosely and light-heartedly employ the Arthurian narrative to illustrate their pedagogical content. *Sir Hornbook* is intended to teach grammar by representing parts of speech as figures of

2 S. L. Barczewski, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Legends of King Arthur and Robin Hood* (Oxford, 2000).

3 J. Merriman, *The Flower of Kings: A Study of the Arthurian Legend Between 1485 and 1835* (Lawrence, 1973), p. 147.

chivalric romance, marshalled into various battalions for the benefit of Childe Lancelot, who is 'Resolved through every path to go, / Where that bold knight [Grammar] should lead'.[4] The poem is notable for its succinct definition and elucidation of adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections in twelve lines as well as for the militaristic manner in which the reader is taught:

> Indicative *declared* the foes
> Should perish by his hands
> And stout imperative arose
> The squadron to *command*.
>
> Potential and Subjunctive then
> Came forth with *doubt* and *chance*:
> All fell alike, with all their men
> Before Sir Hornbook's lance.[5]

The poem was very successful and went through several editions in the nineteenth century. As an Arthurian poem it is of minor interest; Peacock's knowledge of the old Romances would seem, here, to have barely extended beyond naming his fictional student after the greatest of Arthur's knights.

The Round Table, however, is slightly more aware of the tradition even if it treats the legend with a similar irreverence:

> King Arthur sat down by the lonely sea-coast,
> As thin as a lath and as pale as a ghost:
> He looked on the east, and the west, and the south,
> With a tear in his eye and a pipe in his mouth;
> And he said to old Merlin, who near him did stand,
> Drawing circles, triangles, and squares in the sand,
> 'Sure nothing more dismal and tedious can be,
> Than to sit always smoking and watching the sea:
> Say when shall the fates re-establish my reign,
> And spread my round-table in Britain again?'[6]

This anachronistic treatment of the legend would remain the most common source of comedic versions of the legend from Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889) to T. H. White's *The Sword in the Stone* (1938). Peacock's *The Round Table* is designed to instruct the denizens of the nursery on the kings and queens of England and is clearly inspired by the 'many histories of England being published for the use of young persons', as Peacock's introduction makes clear (p. 270). In the poem, Merlin, who is still Arthur's companion-tutor on the Isle of Avalon, raises the king's dejected spirits by providing him with a conjured procession of 'All the kings

4 T. L. Peacock, *Sir Hornbook; or, Childe Lancelot's Expedition, A Grammatico-Allegorical Ballad* [1814], in *The Poems of Thomas Love Peacock*, ed. B. Johnson (London, 1906), pp. 188–200 (ll. 63–4).

5 Peacock, *Sir Hornbook*, ll. 205–23.

6 T. L. Peacock, *The Round Table; or, King Arthur's Feast* [1817], in *Poems*, pp. 270–80 (ll. 1–10). Further references are given parenthetically in the text.

who have sat on your throne, from the day / When from Camlan's destruction I snatched you away' (ll. 17–18).

James Merriman, in one of the few studies of Peacock's Arthurian works, is a little disparaging of what he terms 'the old Rationalist mockery in his attitude toward the medieval hero'.[7] Yet the Rationalist mockery that Merriman complains of is abundant in the treatment of the Arthurian legend in England at this time. And there is little 'suspicious', as Merriman perceives it, in Peacock's use of his material in producing pedagogical doggerel for Regency moppets, for the Matter of Britain held little cultural currency in England at this time. Up until the early eighteenth century it had been used, predominantly, as ideological propaganda – whether in the numerous political pamphlets, styled as Merlin's prophecies, or in the allegories of John Dryden and Richard Blackmore of the 1690s. Yet the Merlin prophecies were no longer published by the middle of the next century and the lack of success of William Hilton's *Arthur, Monarch of the Britons* (1776), an unstaged and unstageable play, demonstrates the untenability of the Arthurian story as a model for contemporary political literature.[8] Instead it was as a tool for satirists and the butt of low-level comedy that Arthur became chiefly employed in English fiction in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The most notable example is Henry Fielding's *Tom Thumb* (1730), a remarkably successful play that is utterly ignorant of the medieval Arthurian corpus. Instead, *Tom Thumb* is a product of the chapbooks.

Since Caxton's printing of *Le Morte Darthur* in 1485, the Arthurian story, its epics and romances, had been subject to a series of redactions, abbreviations and corruptions. The increasing distortions of the legend's common narrative resulted, in *Tom Thumb*, in an Arthurian text that contained not a single traditional Arthurian knight, no Guenevere, nor any of the motifs, symbols or plot devices to be found in any of the great medieval romances. Arthur himself was now a timorous king, whose wife, Dollalolla was 'a woman entirely faultless, saving that she is a little given to drink; a little too much a *Virago* towards her husband, and in love with Tom Thumb'.[9] The play is entirely farcical and ends with the death of every character, including Tom, who is eaten by a horse. Yet this lowly position is not merely the unscholarly whim of an apprentice-author. It is symptomatic of the status of the legend at this time. The legends of the old romances now resided in the nursery – in the discarded chapbooks and forgotten broadsides that were no longer part of the

7 Merriman, *The Flower of Kings*, p. 144.

8 See, W. Hilton, *Arthur, Monarch of the Britons: A Tragedy*, in *The Poetical Works of William Hilton*, 2 vols (vol. 1, Newcastle, 1775; vol. 2, Newcastle, 1776), II, 169–251 (p. 247). In contrast Blackmore's *Prince Arthur: An Heroick Poem, in Ten Books* (London, 1695) went through three editions in less than twelve months – attesting to the poem's phenomenal success. Two years later he produced the equally profitable *King Arthur: An Heroick Poem, in Twelve Books* (London, 1697).

9 H. Fielding, *The Tragedy of Tragedies; or the life and death of Tom Thumb the Great*, revised 1731 edn (Ilkley, 1973), p. 1.

respectable adult library of the eighteenth century. It was only proper that Arthur should be joined with another minor hero of the child's library.

Fielding's proto-pantomime was very successful and was a model for a number of later works, including a light operatic treatment of Fielding's work by Eliza Heywood and William Hatchett.[10] It also seems to have influenced, in its irreverent treatment of the legend, a number of early nineteenth-century reworkings of the story, including John Thelwall's Arthurian burlesque, *The Fairy of the Lake* (1801), described by James Merriman as a 'tasteless concoction of freely manipulated romance elements, scrambled pseudo-history, "Cambrian" tradition, Northern mythology, and plain nonsense'.[11] *Monks and Giants* (1817), by John Hookham Frere, combines the bathos of Fielding and Thelwall with a satire on Wellington's Peninsula campaigns. Frere's rather limited comedic effect lies in anachronism and in the perceived disparity between medieval and contemporary manners:

> [The knights were] prepared, on proper provocation,
> To give the lie, pull noses, stab and kick;
> And for that very reason it is said,
> They were so very courteous and well-bred.[12]

Thelwall's and Frere's work remains slight: *The Fairy of the Lake* was no more stageable than Hilton's *Monarch of the Britons* and Frere only completed three parts of his projected twelve-book epic. Incompleteness is a frequent theme in English Arthurian production throughout the Romantic period, with many writers beginning though rarely completing retellings of the Arthurian legend. As it was, the English Arthur remained, in Sharon Turner's words, pursued only 'by the whips of satirists' and was the subject of verse for only the most meagrely talented of poets.[13]

In contrast to the facetious and often frustrated use of the myth in England, which obviously inspired Peacock's capricious educational poems, there emerged in contemporary Scottish, Cornish and Welsh literature a flourishing Arthurian tradition. Walter Scott's poem, *The Bridal of Triermain*, successfully appended the folktale of Sleeping Beauty to the larger Arthurian narra-

10 E. Haywood and W. Hatchett, *The Opera of Operas; or, Tom Thumb the Great. Alter'd from 'The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great'. And set to musick after the Italian manner. As it is performing at the New Theatre in the Hay-Market* (London, 1733). Another version of the play was produced by Kate O'Hara: *The Life, Death, and Renovation of Tom Thumb; A Legendary Burletta in One Act* (London, 1785).

11 Merriman, *The Flower of Kings*, pp. 137–8.

12 J. H. Frere, *Prospectus and Specimen of an Intended National Work, by William and Robert Whistlecraft, of Stow-Market, in Suffolk, Harness and Collar-makers, Intended to Comprise the Most Interesting Particulars Relating to King Arthur and his Round Table* [1817], in *The Works of John Hookham Frere in Verse and Prose. Now Collected with a Prefatory Memoir by his Nephews W. E. and Sir Bartle Frere*, 2 vols. (London, 1872), II, 204–59 (p. 210). This work, however, is commonly known as *Monks and Giants*, under which title it has been otherwise printed.

13 S. Turner, *The History of the Anglo-Saxons from their First Appearance Above the Elbe to the Death of Egbert* (London, 1799), p. 277.

tive structure.[14] Anne Bannerman, regarded by Scott as the chief Border poet of her day, claimed her right to 'appropriate' and recast the 'fate and disposal of this great, national hero' to her own Scottish-nationalist ends.[15] In Cornwall, writers including Thomas Hogg, the Reverend R. S. Hawker and George Woodley each configured the Arthurian story as a central narrative in the construction of a Cornish regional identity – the latter going so far as to cast Mordred as the hero and a weak and unscrupulous Arthur as the deserving victim of 'stern justice' at the Battle of Camlan.[16] In Welsh literature the situation was more complex, though it still produced the Arthurian poems of Richard Llywd and David Lloyd, as well as the Welsh-inspired work of the English poet, Felicia Hemans, and, of course, Peacock's *Elphin*.[17] And like the Arthurian literary production in England, Scotland and Cornwall, it was a result of the scholarly and antiquarian revival of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

III

At the beginning of the scholarly revival of interest in the medieval corpus of Arthurian literature, Thomas Percy stated with confidence that ''tis most likely that all the old stories concerning King Arthur are originally of British growth, and that what the French and other Southern nations have of this kind, were at first exported from this island'.[18] Yet it was the study of French romance that dominated English critical appreciation of medieval Arthurian literature. Le Grand d'Aussy's *Fabliaux* (1779–81), for example, was translated twice and published in five editions by 1800, and a further edition was made in 1815. Likewise, Dunlop's very successful *History of Fiction* (1814) gives narrative synopses of the Vulgate *Merlin*, the *Queste del Saint Graal*, Chrétien's *Perceval*, and several other long French romances. Robert

14 W. Scott, *The Bridal of Triermain*, in *Poetical Works* (London, 1881), pp. 338–66.

15 A. Bannerman, *The Prophecy of Merlin* [1802] (The University of Rochester: The Camelot Project). Available at <http://lib.rochester.edu/camelot/bannmrl1.html>. See the note to l. 164 for Bannerman's languid defence of her disparaging poem on Arthur.

16 The relevant Arthurian passages of G. Woodley's *Cornubia: a poem in five cantos* (1819) and T. Hogg's *The Fabulous History of Cornwall* (1827) as well as R. S. Hawker's poem, *The Sisters of Glen Nectan* (*c*. 1831) are contained, along with a plethora of other Cornish Arthurian material, in *Inside Merlin's Cave: A Cornish Arthurian Reader 1000–2000*, eds. A. Hale, A. M. Kent and T. Saunders (London, 2000), pp. 81–2, 82–7, 87–8.

17 R. Llwyd's *The Bard of Snowdon, to His Countrymen*, in *Poems, Tales, Odes, Sonnets, Translations from the British* (Chester, 1804), pp. 190–2, contains references to Arthur. D. Lloyd's celebration of Arthur's martial victories and his quest for freedom, *British Valour; or, St David's Days*, was published in 1812 – see *Characteristics of Men, Manners and Sentiments; or, the Voyage of Life and Other Poems* (London, 1812), pp. 284–6. F. Hemans's Arthurian poem, *Taliesin's Prophecy*, a lament for the loss of Welsh independence, was contained in *A Selection of Welsh Melodies*, music arranged by John Parry (London, 1822).

18 T. Percy, 'Preface' to the modernized version of *The Boy and the Mantle*, in *Reliques of Ancient Poetry, Consisting of Old Heroic Ballads, Songs, and Other Pieces of our Earliest Poets, Together with Some Few of Later Date* [1765], ed. H. B. Wheatley, 3 vols. (New York, 1966), III, 315–17 (p. 316).

Southey, in his introduction to the deluxe 1817 edition of *Le Morte Darthur*, considers the *Histoire du Tristan*, *Le Roman de Méliadus de Léonnois*, *Le Roman de Gyron le Courtois*, Chrétien's *Perceval*, the Vulgate *Merlin* and *Lancelot*.[19] Yet he refers in depth to not a single English romance (few of which were then available) and largely considers the *Morte Darthur* to be little more than a rough translation of Malory's French sources.[20] There is little doubt that for English critics the Matter of Britain belonged firmly to the French romancers rather than native writers.

The paucity of original English Arthurian literature negated the desire expressed by some writers and critics to produce an English national tale based on the Arthurian legends. For although the *Morte Darthur* had been through three editions by 1817, not one major English writer, with the singular exception of Thomas Love Peacock, wrote an extended Arthurian narrative in the Romantic period. Coleridge summed up the attitude of the English towards Arthur in 1833: 'As to Arthur, you could not by any means make a poem on him national to Englishmen. What have we to do with him?'[21]

In contrast to the English conception of their native Arthurian literature as being no more than a derivative, minor adjunct of the French medieval corpus, Scottish and Welsh antiquarians were able to take Arthur as a centre-piece in establishing native literary cultures. John Pinkerton and David Lang printed native Scottish Arthurian poems.[22] Walter Scott, in 1804, produced an edition of *Sir Tristrem*, a long romance found in the Auchinleck romance in what he thought was a Scottish dialect.[23] It was not with a little nationalist pride that Scott wrote of medieval Scottish romancers:

> When the [English] language began to gain ground in England, the northern minstrels, by whom it had already been long cultivated, were the best rehearsers of the poems already written, and the most apt and ready composers of new tales and songs. [. . .] By this system we may also account for the superiority of the early Scottish over the early English poets, excepting always the unrivalled

19 R. Southey, 'Introduction', in Malory's *The Byrth, Lyf, and Acts of King Arthur; Of His Noble Knights of the Rounde Table, Theyr Merveyllous Enquestes and Adventures, Thachyeung of the Sant Greal; and in the End Le Morte Darthur, with the Dolourous Deth and Departyng out of this Worlde of Them All* (London, 1817), pp. i–lxiii.

20 G. Ellis, in his *Specimens*, had published résumés of *Arthour and Merlin*, the stanzaic *Morte Arthur* as well as Geoffrey's *Historia*. See *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances, Chiefly Written During the Early Part of the Fourteenth Century. To Which is Prefixed an Historical Introduction*, 3 vols. (London, 1805). Joseph Ritson had published a number of minor romances in *Ancient Engleish Metrical Romanceës*, 3 vols. (London, 1802), none of which appear to have had any influence on immediately subsequent literature.

21 S. T. Coleridge, *Table Talk, recorded by Henry Nelson Coleridge (and John Taylor Coleridge)*, ed. C. Woodring, in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn, 16 vols. (London, 1976), XIV, 441.

22 See J. Pinkerton (ed.), *Scotish Poems, Reprinted from Scarce Editions*, 3 vols. (London, 1792) and D. Laing (ed.), *Select Remains of the Popular Poetry of Scotland*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh, 1826).

23 Scholars have since been unsure of the text's Scottish origins. See, for instance: B. Vogel, 'The Dialect of *Sir Tristrem*', *JEPG* 40 (1941), 583–44; A. Lupack, 'Introduction' to *'Sir Lancelot du Laik', and 'Sir Tristrem'*, ed. A. Lupack (Kalamazoo, 1994), pp. 143–52.

> Chaucer. And, finally, to this we may ascribe the flow of romantic and poetical tradition, which has distinguished the borders of Scotland almost down to the present day.[24]

Simultaneous with the construction of the literary Arthur as an emblem of Scottish cultural pride there emerged an anti-Arthurian movement with the republication of several medieval histories. Editions of the Scottish medieval histories of John of Fordun, Walter Bower and Hector Boece, all of which vilified Arthur as a usurper of the British throne, were all available in the early years of the nineteenth century.[25] And these publications were clearly an influence on Bannerman in particular, who depicted Arthur as a cowardly king who had to call upon the assistance of Urien, the Strathclydean hero, to restore his courage.

It was, however, Welsh scholars who established the greatest medieval corpus of Arthurian literature. Among the many publications dedicated to Welsh medieval culture by far the most important was the *Myvyrian Archaiology* (1801, 1802, 1807), edited by Owen Jones, Edward Williams (Iolo Morgannwg) and William Owen Pughe. The three volumes contain a wealth of Arthurian material, including the *Preiddeu Annwn* ('the spoils of the otherworld'), four Arthurian dialogues, two redactions of Geoffrey's *Historia Regum Brittaniae*, the *Brut Tysilio* and a nearly complete *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, which are unfortunately supplemented by a large number of forgeries composed by Iolo Morgannwg. Save the introductory preface, all of the *Myvyrian Archaiology* was printed in Welsh without being translated. It was Peacock's *Elphin* that first provided many of the English translations of the poems contained in the *Myvyrian Archaiology*.

Peacock was, along with many social and literary historians, also influenced by William Owen Pughe's *Cambrian Biography* (1803). Owen's English-language work gave over many of its pages to discussions of the Arthurian legend, with 'historical notices' on Arthur, Taliesin and Elphin among others, as well as supplying summaries of *Culhwch ac Olwen* and Arthurian verses from the *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*. The work is an attempt to refute the English assumption that Wales was a country barren of literature, backward and comprised of an ignorant populace – accusations apparent in numerous travel and antiquarian works of the period, as Jane Aaron and Andrew Davies have demonstrated.[26] Pughe's introduction to the *Cambrian Biography* resists such heady English libel:

24 W. Scott (ed.), *Sir Tristrem; a metrical romance of the thirteenth century by Thomas of Erceldoune, called the Rhymer* (Edinburgh, 1804), p. lxv.

25 Johannis de Fordun, *Scotichronicon, cum supplementis et continuatione Walteri Boweri*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1752); a second edn was published in 1759. H. Boece's *Scoturum Historiae* was first available, in W. Harrison's translation of Bellondon's Scottish dialect version, in vol. 5 of Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, 6 vols. (London, 1807). This Anglicized edition bears little ideological similarity to the original *Historiae*; a more faithful edition was the facsimile edition of Bellondon's 1572 translation: *Hector Boethius' 'Scotorium Historiae'*, trans. J. Bellondon (London, *c.* 1820).

26 A. Davies, ' "The Reputed Nation of Inspiration": Representations of Wales in Fiction from the

> I cannot help but observing that, their neighbours sometimes flatter the mountaineers of Wales, that they are making some slow advances towards civilization. In several respects this compliment may be just; but in others it is not deserved, as the changes made have produced a contrary effect by barbarizing many beautiful specimens of ancient characteristics.[27]

Pughe's writing, along with his contemporaries', was essentially a recuperative and preservationist project that sought to shore up the ruins of its native culture from centuries of English colonial encroachment and celebrate its literature as among the finest in Europe.

Generally English scholarship took note of the Cambrian antiquarians. Several histories of the Celtic peninsula went through numerous editions, such as Warrington's *History of Wales* (1786), reprinted in 1788, 1805 and 1823 (twice). Many English scholars, poets and historians began to learn Welsh, including George Ellis, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey.[28] Although Joseph Ritson would characterize the Welsh as possessing 'more vanity' and 'less judgment' than any other 'people in the world',[29] others, such as Sharon Turner, would write spirited defences of the antiquity of medieval Welsh poetry.[30] Indeed, Turner became one of the chief champions of Welsh literature in England and began, in conjunction with Southey and Pughe, to produce a history of Welsh literature for the proposed *Bibliotheca Britannica*.[31] The scholarship of medieval Welsh and Scottish literature, and especially the study of native Arthurian literature, was successful in that it effectively disturbed an Anglocentric conception of medieval literature in Britain. It also had a major impact on contemporary literary production, for the only substantial and complete Arthurian work of the Romantic period to be produced in England was an epic based on the literature and scholarship of medieval Wales.

IV

Calidore was Peacock's first, and uncompleted, attempt at a prose treatment of the Arthurian narrative. Like *Sir Hornbook* and *The Round Table*, the chief comedic device in *Calidore* is anachronism. Peacock uses the figure of

Romance Period, 1780–1829' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cardiff, 2001); J. Aaron, 'A National Seduction: Wales in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing', *New Welsh Review* 27 (1994), 31–8.

27 W. O. Pughe, *The Cambrian Biography, Or Historical Notices of Celebrated Men Among the Ancient Britons* (London, 1803), p. iii.

28 See A. Johnston, *Enchanted Ground: The Study of Medieval Romance in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1964), pp. 158–9, and R. Southey's *Life and Correspondence*, ed. C. C. Southey, 2nd edn, 2 vols. (London, 1849–50), II, 218, 222.

29 J. Ritson, *The Life of King Arthur: From Ancient Histories to Authentic Documents* (London, 1825), p. xxxix.

30 See S. Turner, *A Vindication of the Genuineness of the Ancient British Poems of Aneurin, Taliesin, Llywarch Hen, and Merdhin, with Specimens of the Poems* (London, 1803).

31 For details of the proposed, but never realized, collaboration between Turner, Southey and Pughe, see: Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p. 159.

Calidore, a character drawn from Spenser's *The Faerie Queen*, to contrast a number of contemporary targets for his satiric aim – including paper money, Coleridgean metaphysics and drunken clergy – with an idealized romantic past. Calidore himself is a knight of King Arthur's court-in-exile, existing on the island of Terra Incognita on which Arthur, Merlin, Guenevere, Lancelot, Gawain, Kay and Bedivere have been living without ageing since the Battle of Camlan. Calidore is instructed to sail to Britain where he is to find a wife for himself and a philosopher for Merlin to dispute with. Calidore arrives first in Wales, where he meets Ellen, the daughter of the Vicar of Llanglasrhyd, who shall become his bride. A reader of Robert Forsythe's *The Principles of Moral Science*, she is suitably liberal as befits a Peacockian heroine. Yet Calidore discovers that there is no such thing as an intellectual among the Welsh, for it is a country, in the narrator's view, that terms such men as 'very terrible monsters, fiends of the darkness and imps of the devil'.[32] Rather, Calidore believes that Wales is a country inhabited by foolish women and drunken rectors.

This double sentiment, at once idealizing the liberal Ellen as being worthy of an Arthurian knight while berating the supposed idiocy of the Welsh, is typical of contemporary English stereotyping. Throughout his early letters Peacock praises the scenery of Wales, while describing the Welsh in the worst of terms:

> There are no philosophers in Wales. The natives have a great deal of religion, without a single grain of morality. Their total disregard of truth is horrible, their general stupidity prodigious, and their drunkenness most disgusting.[33]

This portrayal of the Welsh is evident in *Headlong Hall*, Peacock's first novel, published the same year he wrote 'Calidore':

> Harry Headlong, Esquire, was, like all other Welsh squires, fond of shooting, hunting, racing, drinking, and other such innocent amusements, *μείζονος δ΄άλλουτινος* [and of something else greater], as Menander expresses it. But, unlike other Welsh squires, he had actually suffered certain phenomena, called books, to find their way into his house; and by dint of lounging over them after dinner [. . .] he became seized with a violent passion to be thought a philosopher.[34]

32 T. L. Peacock, *Calidore: A Fragment*, in *Calidore and Miscellanea*, ed. R. Garnett (London, 1891), pp. 32–47 (p. 38).

33 T. L. Peacock, letter 30, to T. Forster, 28 July 1810, in N. A. Joukovsky (ed.), *The Letters of Thomas Love Peacock*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 2001) pp. 55–7 (p. 55). Peacock remarks on the beauty of Wales in several other letters: letter 25, to E. T. Hookham, 20 January 1810, p. 43; letter 28, to T. Forster, 6 April 1810, pp. 50–3; letter 53, to T. Forster, 26 August 1813, pp. 105–6; letter 97, to P. Shelley, *c*. 11–16 October 1821, p. 183.

34 T. L. Peacock, *Headlong Hall* [1816], in *Three Novels: 'Headlong Hall', 'Nightmare Abbey' and 'Crotchet Castle'* (London, Edinburgh, Paris, Melbourne, Toronto and New York, 1940), pp. 15–108 (p. 18).

The illegitimacy of the Welsh gentleman's claim to being a philosopher is typical of the cultural and intellectual backwardness that characterized contemporary depictions of the Welsh. It is a portrait that can be seen to derive from and contribute to the colonialist ideology inherent within the current trend of English fiction set in Wales.

Moira Dearnley has shown how much of the eighteenth-century travel writing on Wales not only offered touristic descriptions of its scenery and people, but also attempted to validate the English colonial project.[35] This validation can come in the form of accounts of materials and wealth, which obviously demonstrate the gains to be made by the colonizer, but also through the desire to improve or Anglicize the Welsh, which clearly shows the 'gains' to be made by the colonized. As Dearnley and others have shown, these travel accounts developed into a sub-genre of the English novel, which locates intrepid English travellers in Wales. As Stephen Knight has written, these travellers who are 'enriched with both the moral and often financial profits of the visit, live a life fuller than the demeaning mercantile and urban activities that English Romanticism was already criticizing'.[36] These texts were not so much concerned with writing about Wales, but rather 'using Wales as context for English self-development'.[37] A typical denouement in this genre occurs with a marriage between a Welshman and an Englishwoman or a Welshwoman and an Englishman, always of the gentrified class. Such unions always take place within an Anglicized context, the Welsh squirearchal class, or *boneddigion*, having resembled the English gentry in language, education and social outlook from the sixteenth century.

This concept of 'unionism' is at the heart of these fictions. They close the narrative and return the reader to the comfortable surroundings of middle-class English society, the intriguing and often dangerous elements of the colony now held in check by the institution of marriage. Although *Headlong Hall* does not strictly belong to this genre, its conclusion possesses multiple unions, two of which involved Welsh–English marriages.[38] Curiously, though, Peacock's own life reads like one of these fictions. In 1809 Peacock had made his first of several visits to Wales. Here he fell in love with Jane Gryffydh, whom Shelley described as a 'milk-white Snowdonian antelope'.[39] Yet he did not marry her, nor did he have any contact with her,

35 M. Dearnley, *Distant Fields: Eighteenth-Century Fictions of Wales* (Cardiff, 2001).

36 S. Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction: Writing Welsh in English* (Cardiff, 2004), p. 3. See also A. Davies, ' "The Reputed Nation of Inspiration"; J. Aaron, 'A National Seduction: Wales in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing'; J. Henderson 'The Gothic Novel in Wales (1790–1820)', *National Library of Wales Journal* 11 (1959–60), 244–54, and A. Davies's revised checklist of the gothic novel in Wales: ' "The Gothic Novel in Wales" Revisited: A Preliminary Survey of the Wales-Related Romantic Fiction at Cardiff University', *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text* 2 (June 1998). Online: Internet (accessed 3 August 2005): <http://www.cf.ac.uk/encap/corvey/articles/cco2_no1.html>.

37 Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, p. 3.

38 Harry Headlong marries the English Tenoria Chromatic, while his very un-Welsh sounding sister, Caprioletta, marries Mr Forster. See: *Headlong Hall*, pp. 98–9.

39 Shelley, 'Letter to Maria Gisborne', in *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley Including*

until 1820 when he had established himself in the East India Company and wrote to her in a business-like way, asking for her hand. The portrait of Ellen in 'Calidore' is generally recognized to be based on her, and the drunken, foolish Vicar of Llanglasrhyd is thought to be a caricature of Jane Gryffydh's father.[40]

Although Peacock had already developed an acquaintance with the language in his youth, it was under his wife's tutelage that Peacock learnt Welsh to a degree sufficient enough that he could read the *Myvyrian Archaiology* in the original. Indeed, so proficient did Peacock become that he was invited by William Owen Pughe to become a member of Cymmrodorion ('earliest inhabitants'), a London-based society of Welsh language and culture established in 1751.[41] He was one of the first Englishmen to be admitted.

V

The Misfortunes of Elphin is, in part, a showcase for Peacock's newly acquired knowledge of Welsh literature. Its narrative begins at the start of the sixth century, during the reign of Uther Pendragon who holds nominal sovereignty over the kings and princes of Britain. One of these petty kings, Gwythno Garanhir, is the ruler of Ceredigion. Part of this kingdom is comprised of the plains of Gwaelod, which are protected from the Irish Sea by an ancient embankment. This structure, however, is rotten and Prince Seithenyn, charged with its upkeep, is a negligent drunkard. Elphin, Gwythno's son, attempts to coerce Seithenyn to repair the embankment, but his efforts are in vain: the fortification is destroyed by the sea and the kingdom is laid waste. Some time later, Elphin, while fishing, discovers a coracle containing the baby Taliesin, who is brought up by his finder and becomes the greatest bard of his, or any other, age. In time, Gwythno and Uther die and Arthur reigns in Caerleon. But it is a time of moral banditry: Maelgon, ruler of North Wales, abducts Elphin and, later, Melvas, tyrant and lord of the lands around Glastonbury, kidnaps Gwenyvar. Taliesin, now in the bloom of manhood, sets out to free his liege-lord and also to win the love of Melanghel, Elphin's daughter. To do this he petitions Arthur for help and demonstrates his qualities as a poet. He also decides that in order to persuade Arthur to assist him he must attempt to free Gwenyvar, which he succeeds in doing through peaceable means. This done, Maelgon releases Elphin, and

Materials Never Before Printed in Any Edition of the poems, ed. T. Hutchinson (Oxford, 1904), pp. 403–11 (l. 239).

40 C. C. Van Doren, *The Life of Thomas Love Peacock* (London and New York, 1911), p. 45.

41 Peacock joined Cymmrodorion on 5 June 1824, a year after being introduced to Pughe. See Joukovsky, 'Introduction', in *The Letters of Thomas Love Peacock*, vol. 1, pp. v–lxxxi (p. lxx). For an account of the London-Welsh societies, see R. T. Jenkins and H. Range, *A History of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion and of the Gwyneddigion and Cymreigyddion Societies 1751–1951* (London, 1951).

Taliesin and Melanghel marry – their ceremony being 'the most splendid that has seen in Caer Lleon'.[42]

The novel is immersed in Welsh literary culture. Its structure is essentially triadic: part one concerns the destruction of the plains of Gwaelod in the kingdom of Ceredigion; part two, the birth and education of Taliesin; part three, the abduction of Gwenyvar and her rescue by Taliesin, followed by the judgments of Arthur. The narratives were drawn exclusively from the work of the Welsh antiquarians. The story of Gwaelod was taken from two sources: the entries on Gwythno and Seithenyn in Pughe's *Cambrian Biography* and the poem *Pan ddaeth y Mor tros Gantref y Gwaelawd* ('on the inundation of the Cantrev of Gwaelod') from the *Myvyrian Archaiology*.[43] Peacock also provided a translation, in *Elphin*, of this poem (pp. 39–41). Much information concerning the birth and education of Taliesin was taken from the same sources as well as from Edward Celtic Davies's *Mythology of the Rites of the Druids* (1809), which contains an account of the birth of Taliesin.[44] The *Myvyrian Archaiology* also contains twenty-seven poems ascribed to the great bard of the sixth century, four of which Peacock translated.[45] Part three, however, was taken from Caradoc of Llancarfan's twelfth-century *Vita Gildae*, which was available in a number of different synopses. More generally, Peacock gained a wide appreciation of medieval Welsh literature from the *Cambro-Britain*, which he owned, and he displays throughout *Elphin* a thorough knowledge with the *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, the collection of characters and incidents from early Welsh myth and history arranged in the form of three-part mnemonic devices.

Although his handling of his material is certainly playful, Peacock deftly manipulates and reconciles a number of disparate sources in *Elphin*. He was also highly selective: he paid little attention, for example, to the account of the miraculous birth of Taliesin, and the Arthur of *Elphin* is hardly similar to the warrior chieftain who journeys to the underworld in the *Preiddeu Annwn*, or the imperial king of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia* – both of which were available to Peacock. This selective use of material provided a framework in which to discuss the political and ideological concerns Peacock felt in the wake of the militant Toryism of the mid-1820s. For, as Marilyn Butler has convincingly argued, within the first part of triadic structure of *Elphin*, the narrative of the destruction of the kingdom of Gwaelod, Peacock found a structure for his satire on the contemporary political climate of George

42 T. L. Peacock, *The Misfortunes of Elphin*, facsimile reprint of the first edn [1829] (Felinfach, 1991), p. 136. Further references are given parenthetically in the text.

43 Pughe, entries on 'Gwyddno Garanhir' and 'Seithenyn', in *Cambrian Biography*, pp. 170–1, 314–415, and *Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales*, pp. 52–4.

44 Pughe, entries on 'Elphin' and 'Taliesin', in *Cambrian Biography*, pp. 112, 321–3.

45 These four poems were: *Dyhuddiant Elphin* ('Elphin's consolation'), pp. 25–6; *Kanu y Medd* ('mead song'), pp. 26–7; *Dymma fustle y beirdd* ('the gall of the bards'), p. 29, and *Can y Gwynt* ('ode to the wind'), p. 38. Peacock's translations can be found on pp. 46, 69–70, 74–5 and 71–2. All titles and translations of titles are those that appear in the *Myvyrian Archaiology.*

Canning and, later, Wellington's reactionary premierships, with their unwavering resistance to the 'irresistible groundswell of reform'.[46]

At the opening of *The Misfortunes of Elphin*, the embankment that has held back the sea from the plains of Gwaelod for centuries is in disrepair. Prince Seithenyn, arch-drunk and obscurantist, is charged with the embankment's upkeep. He has neglected his duties, however, and defends his 'virtual superintendence':

> 'Decay' said Seithenyn, 'is one thing, and danger is another. Every thing that is old must decay. The embankment is old, I am free to confess; that it is somewhat rotten in parts, I will not altogether deny; that it is any the worst for that, I do most sturdily gainsay [. . .] our ancestors were wiser than we: they built it in their wisdom; and if we should be so rash as to try to mend it, we should only mar it.' (p. 18)

Seithenyn accuses those who would attempt to improve the embankment as being 'blind to antiquity' (p. 19) and he supports the notion of keeping the status quo:

> 'But I say, the parts that are rotten give elasticity to those that are sound: they give them elasticity, elasticity, elasticity [. . .] There is nothing so dangerous as innovation [. . .] it was half rotten when I was born, and that is a conclusive reason why it should be three parts rotten when I die.' (p. 19)

Seithenyn's drunken rhetoric clearly resembles the speeches made by Canning, which were published the year Peacock was writing *Elphin*. Through Seithenyn's speech, Peacock caricatures Canning's oration against the need for radical Parliamentary reform: 'I contend for a House of Commons, the spirit of which, whatever be its frame, has without any forcible alteration, gradually, but faithfully, accommodated to the progressive spirit of this country.'[47] In other places Canning had spoken: '[w]hile we dam up one source of influence, a dozen others will open'.[48] And Macaulay, writing of the French nobility's failure to acknowledge the need for reform, had written of the revolution as a 'deluge', 'in which the valleys had been raised, and the mountains depressed, and the courses of the rivers changed'.[49]

Neither Seithenyn nor Canning paid heed to the warnings to make the required emendations. The embankment in *Elphin* collapses and lays waste the kingdom, and the Tories, while of course not suffering a 'deluge' on the scale of the French nobility, were swept from power as the Whigs gained a majority in 1830 and passed the First and Second Reform Bills in 1831.

46 M. Butler, *Peacock Displayed: A Satirist in his Context* (London, 1979), p. 158.

47 Quoted in Butler, *Peacock Displayed*, p. 163. See also: *The Speeches of the Right Honourable George Canning, with a Memoir*, ed. R. Terry, 6 vols. (London, 1828).

48 Butler, *Peacock Displayed*, p. 164.

49 T. Macaulay, 'The Present Administration', *Edinburgh Review* 46 (1827), 264–7. Quoted in Butler, *Peacock Displayed*, p. 161.

However, political reform in nineteenth-century Britain only took place after Wellington and a government drawn largely from the Army lists occupied a parliamentary term of reactionary politics and martial authoritarianism. This is also satirized by Peacock in his portraits of the ultraconservative tyrants, Maelgon and Melvas, who are lords of petty kingdoms. They are also kidnappers and the chief instigators of the plots that will occupy the novel's second and third parts. The first abducts Elphin, the prince of the ruined kingdom, while Maelgon's son, Rhun, attempts to rape Elphin's queen, and Melvas, 'the arch-marauder of West Britain' (p. 113), kidnaps Gwenyvar.

Whereas Maelgon is little more than a pirate, Melvas is more intellectual, especially in his defence of 'the Right of Might' and his capturing of Arthur's own wife:

> 'What do you mean by his own? That which he has is his own: but that which I have, is mine. I have the wife in question, and some of the land. Therefore they are mine [. . .] The winner makes the law, and his law is always against the loser. I am so far the winner; and, by my own law, she is lawfully mine.' (pp. 115–16)

He later explains his argument further:

> 'Have not you and I a right to this good wine [. . . that] I got by seizing a good ship, and throwing the crew overboard. They disputed by right, but I taught them better. I taught them a great moral lesson, though they had not much time to profit by it.' (p. 117)

Butler has likened Melvas's philosophy of the Right of Might to Canning's economic opportunism as well as his employment of force in order to secure the interests of British trade, which had on several occasions brought the country to the brink of war.[50]

This use of sixth-century Wales as a site of satire on contemporary English politics enraged the book's initial reviewers. An anonymous critic wrote in the *Westminster Review* that: 'It is not for the genuine satirist, either directly or indirectly, to insinuate the superiority of half-barbaric states of existence, by partially adverting to the evils consequent on higher stages of civilization.'[51] By extension, it was also not for the genuine satirist to compare England with a country that was still considered to be barbaric by many English writers. However, *The Misfortunes of Elphin* does not present Wales, as Butler and Davies have claimed, as a 'backdrop against which [English] ideological preoccupation can be worked out'.[52] There is no doubt that *Elphin* is constructed from the frustration felt among liberals with the contemporary militant Tory government. Nonetheless, to employ Wales as merely a microcosm of English political life would have caused little advancement in the

50 Butler, *Peacock Displayed*, p. 167.
51 Anonymous Review, *Westminster Review* 10 (April 1829), 434.
52 Davies, ' "The Reputed Nation of Inspiration" ', p. 277.

position of Welsh culture in English writing – which was presumably Peacock's chief aim in studying the antiquarian scholarship of Wales, and composing *The Misfortunes of Elphin*.

VI

Although Peacock's inspiration for his theme of the Right of Might may have lain in contemporary Tory politics, to produce a too historically and politically specific reading of *Elphin* limits the impact and scope of Peacock's satire. Peacock's themes of the Right of Might, economic opportunism and profiteering are universal subjects and are not pertinent solely to internal English politics. They are themes that can also be considered in light of Peacock's position as an administrator in the East India Company. The acquisitionalism at the heart of both Maelgon's and Melvas's tyrannies cannot be fully divorced from the colonial exploitation of materials from the subcontinent and, indeed, from the Celtic peninsula. The presentation of Melvas's 'moral right' to rob and murder because of his greater strength than his victims can be seen as a satire not only on Tory politics of the mid-1820s but also to correspond to the entire colonial project of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Indeed, there is a pronounced tension in *The Misfortunes of Elphin* between Peacock writing a novel about Wales, which was accepted by native scholars in euphoric terms,[53] and his active participation in the colonial endeavours in India.[54]

Although chapter VI, 'The Education of Taliesin', is primarily a satire on religion, a discourse on colonialism becomes apparent within Peacock's bathetic humour. He relates the mission of St Augustin to convert the Saxon pagans, which also had the additional benefit of using the newly converted English as instruments to bring the Celtic Christian Church under Rome's yoke. The Saxons massacre twelve hundred Welsh monks of the monastery of Bangor:

> This was the first overt act in which the Saxons set forth their new sense of a religion of peace. It is alleged, indeed, that these twelve hundred monks supported themselves by the labour of their own hands. If they did so, it was, no doubt, a gross heresy; but whether it deserved the castigation it received from St Augustin's proselytes, may be a question in polemics.
>
> As the people did not read the Bible, and had no religious tracts, their religion, it may be assumed, was not very pure. (pp. 51–2)

53 See the anonymous review in *Cambrian Quarterly* (April 1829), p. 231. E. Strachey remarked on Peacock's pleasure on this comment in his 'Recollection of Thomas Love Peacock', in *Calidore and Miscellanea*, pp. 15–23 (p. 20).

54 Peacock joined the East India Company on 18 May 1819. His tasks were mainly drafting and proof-reading Company dispatches to Bengal, Madras and Bombay. He rose steadily in his job and replaced John Mill after his death in 1836 to become the Company's Chief Examiner. See Joukovsky, 'Introduction', in *The Letters of Thomas Love Peacock*, p. lxxii.

By the early nineteenth century, Wales had again been the subject of English colonial missionaries. The founder of Armenian Methodism, John Wesley, had preached in Wales in 1739. Methodism spread quickly throughout Wales: by the 1820s the Welsh were clearly configuring themselves as a Nonconformist nation. However, Methodism had become naturalized, its missions led by Welsh preachers such as Daniel Rowlands and Hywel Harris.[55] Therefore, more likely inspiration for Peacock's account of the Saxons' martial evangelism is the missionary zeal demonstrated in the Christianization of India and the other British colonies, especially the Serampur mission founded by William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward in 1799, which emphasized education and the reading of the Bible – subjects that were lampooned with equal vigour in Peacock's work. Further evangelist projects were undertaken when the House of Commons voted in 1813, after a three-hour speech by William Wilberforce, to allow missionaries to be active in the provinces of the East India Company.[56]

Peacock's satire of religion is not, of course, directed only at Anglican evangelism or Christianity more generally: he also attacks the older Druidic order as having been wily, superstitious and mercenary (pp. 52–4). Religion is just a notable example of Peacock's larger aim of comparing and contrasting ancient and contemporary systems of social and cultural practices and finding both lacking; other instances include: economics (pp. 47–8), industry (p. 49) and political machinations (p. 49). He also writes of the barbarity that is perceived, by his contemporary historians, to have been manifest in ancient Britain, particularly in the pre-Christian religious rites of the Druids (p. 54). He also laments their inability to anticipate the future:

> They lacked some of our light, to enable them to perceive that the act of coming, in great multitudes, with fire and sword, to the remote dwellings of peaceable men, with their premeditated design of cutting their throats, ravishing their wives and daughters, killing their children, and appropriating their worldly goods, belongs not to the department of murder and robbery, but to that of legitimate law, of which the practitioners are gentlemen, and are entitled to be treated like gentlemen. (p. 54)

This is not a satire on modernity: Peacock is not privileging the past in favour of the present. Rather he is undermining the precepts with which Peacock's present judged the past. *Elphin* denies the legitimacy of present writers examining the past with moral and epistemological authority. Peacock's satire is, in effect, a mockery of contemporary historiography – particularly of the antiquarian travel accounts that castigated the Welsh as barbaric and uncivilized. As with his satire on religious evangelism,

55 See, G. H. Jenkins, 'From Reformation to Methodism, 1636–1750', in *The Tempus History of Wales, 25,000 B.C.–A.D. 2000*, ed. Prys Morgan (Stroud, 2001), pp. 141–74, especially pp. 166–9.

56 The East India Company Charter Act was passed on the third reading on 3 July 1813.

Peacock's strongest condemnation of this historiographical procedure is found in the above passage, which smacks of colonial enterprise.

The Misfortunes of Elphin, however, is not merely a list of complaints and satires that are pertinent to the position of Wales as a subject of colonial discourse. *Elphin* also presents that rarest of things in a Peacock novel: a heroic principle.[57] It is the semi-mythical bard Taliesin, rather than King Arthur or one of his knights, who is the hero of Peacock's work. He occupies the role of Gildas in Caradoc of Llancarfan's *Vita Gildae* and brings about the release of Gwenyvar from Melvas's captivity (p. 119). This done, Arthur then forces Maelgon to release Elphin, Taliesin's liege-lord (p. 134). Taliesin achieves his quest not through might of arms, but through subtle persuasion: he demonstrates that by refusing to release Arthur's wife he should divide the strength of the Celtic kingdoms that are threatened by the Saxons, who because of their greater might possess a greater right to their lands. The advance of the Saxons temporarily forestalled, the novel ends happily with a marriage between Taliesin and Elphin's daughter, Melanghel (p. 135), a traditional conclusion for a historical romance.

Taliesin is a unique figure in a number of ways. He is one of very few Peacockian characters to be drawn without any satiric strokes of the pen. During Peacock's account of the bard's education, the author reveals his most unequivocal expression of Romantic idealism to be found in his writing:

> In all bardic learning, Gwythno was profound. All that he knew he taught to Taliesin. The youth drew on the draughts of inspiration among the mountain forests and the mountain streams, and grew up under the roof of Elphin in the perfection of genius and beauty. (p. 57)

As an Arthurian hero of romance he is also unique: he operates as a knight errant, yet never draws arms or uses the threat of force to coerce his enemies to Arthur's will. To a certain extent he operates in Merlin's traditional role: that of the power behind the pomp of monarchy or the violence of the chivalric classes. Yet unlike the traditional portrayals of Merlin and, indeed, Taliesin, he is not, in *Elphin*, a mystical druid uttering prophecies and commanding the natural forces. Rather, he is a prosaic bard: an advisor to Elphin and a pacific errant vassal of Elphin and Arthur whose means of victory are subtlety of words and an ability to compel political adversaries to alter their course of action. In these qualities he seems almost to represent the junior politician or the government official – a position that echoes Peacock's own role in the East India Company.

Taliesin, then, is depicted as functioning within the machinations of modern political society. But they are machinations governed by political ideologies – militant Toryism, in the nineteenth century, the belief in the 'Right of Might' in the fictional sixth century – that neither Peacock nor

57 His only predecessor is Forester in *Melincourt*, another novel that at many instances can be seen to satirize contemporary political life.

Taliesin conformed to. The bard overcomes the illegitimate aggression of Melvas and Maelgon through peaceable meditative means, and Peacock, in his satiric portraits, triumphed over the rhetoric of contemporary Conservative politics. Indeed, it may not be going too far to suggest that Taliesin was constructed as an idealized, heroic portrait of Peacock himself, or at least his ideological beliefs, seen through a veil of self-distancing satire – the governmental official removing political evils through the means available to a poet of Peacock's standing. However, Peacock differed from his fictional hero in one very important way: as an English colonial administrator, Peacock was intimately associated with the forces of colonialism, while Taliesin is instead confronted with them. And, though he manages to forestall them for a time, they will, of course, overcome Celtic Britain after the death of Arthur. The text does not, however, conclude with the Battle of Camlan and Mordred's complicity with the Saxons, though it does allude to this later event (p. 132). Instead, the *The Misfortunes of Elphin* presents a Celtic Britain which, like the embankment, is rotten in parts but still independent – and with the poetry of Gwythno and Taliesin, as translated by Peacock, in one of its finest flowerings of culture.

VII

Peacock's Arthurian works can be seen as the confluence for the diverse and competing uses of the Matter of Britain in the Romantic period. His minor work inherits the facetiousness of Fielding's *Tom Thumb* and Thelwall's *The Fairy of the Lake* and combines it with the anachronistic satire of Frere's *Monks and Giants*. But in his later work, particularly *Elphin*, Peacock also incorporates contemporary scholarship and produced the only novel-length treatment of the Arthurian legend of the age. In doing so, Peacock did not display the cultural insecurity that lay at the heart of the many failed attempts and false starts of his English contemporaries when dealing with the Matter of Britain; instead he produced a work that was wholly reliant on material exterior to the English literary tradition – material that, in the first place, resulted in this cultural insecurity. Also, although the comedic use of the legend was born of the Arthurian myth's lack of cultural currency in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Peacock's work demonstrates that myth could be utilized as a major framework in which to criticize contemporary politics and ideologies, while still operating within a comedic genre. Moreover, Peacock's amusing Arthurian tales also enact a major shift in the target of their humour. In 'Calidore', Peacock presents a comedy on the foolishness of the Welsh; in *Elphin* he presents a comedic epic on the literature of medieval Wales, dedicated to the contemporary Welsh. Peacock moves from the position of a colonizer to one in sympathy with the colonized and even presents a critique of the colonial process.

Critics, however – with the notable exception of Marilyn Butler – have

largely been unfavourable in their attitude towards *The Misfortunes of Elphin* for its 'failure' to correspond to the French and English manifestations of the Arthurian tradition and its reliance upon 'inferior' Welsh medieval materials.[58] James Merriman's dislike of the Welsh basis of the novel, however, can be understood as a difficulty with reading Arthurian literature outside the later Tennysonian paradigm, in which the Arthurian narrative became a vehicle for an Anglocentric conception of British national identity. This dislike of the Welsh materials has also been apparent in the comments of those who have praised the novel. David Garnett, for example, wrote:

> The charm of *The Misfortunes of Elphin* has, however, little to do with the legends which went to the making of it, or with the ancient poems which are introduced by the way. It is almost entirely the result of the felicitous blend of irony and good humour, qualities which are all too seldom found together.[59]

Likewise, the unfavourable contrasting of a 'primitive' pre-Saxon Britain, which the contemporary critic in the *Westminster Review* thought so unseemly, was still detested by Carl Dawson in his 1970 biography of Peacock.[60]

Yet Peacock was himself remarkably pleased when his book was judged by the Welsh antiquarians to be 'the most entertaining book, if not the best, that has yet been published on the ancient customs and traditions of Wales'.[61] He took great pains to render Celtic Britain with fidelity to both his sources and the overall aims of William Owen Pughe and his compatriots. Moreover, in associating himself so closely with the poet Taliesin, Peacock demonstrated how he as a writer could resist the ideological forces and oppose the doctrines that he found repellent despite being a component in their political machinations. Indeed, the whole of *The Misfortunes of Elphin* – from its conception as a work based exclusively on ancient Welsh materials to its publication to a generally negative critical response – could be perceived as being a personal attempt to assuage Peacock's misgivings concerning his professional life as a colonial administrator. Indeed, the text is perhaps best understood not as a minor satire of little interest to modern Arthurian scholars, as Merriman would have it, but as an act of cultural reparation for centuries of English colonial encroachment upon Welsh literary, cultural and political affairs.

58 Merriman, *The Flower of Kings*, pp. 146–7.
59 D. Garnett, 'Introduction to *The Misfortunes of Elphin*', p. 551.
60 C. Dawson, *His Fine Wit: A Study of Thomas Love Peacock* (Berkeley, 1970), p. 253.
61 See above, n. 53.

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