

KINGSHIP AND WARFARE IN MALORY'S *MORTE DARTHUR*

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an exploration of kingship and warfare in Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur*. Broadly, this thesis explores the subjects of kingship and warfare through the character of King Arthur to demonstrate that it is not only right, but also necessary for Arthur to fight in war for his kingship and his polity. Although older scholarship argues that Arthur is presented positively, my main claim that Arthur is a just king throughout Malory's *Morte* is contentious because recent scholarship is more sceptical of Arthur's just kingship. I demonstrate that throughout Arthur's wars (Tale I, Tale II, and Tale VIII), Arthur consistently exceeds that which is expected of him as a just king, and that Malory most effectively demonstrates Arthur's just kingship by underscoring his ability to depend on counsel.

A NOTE ON MALORY'S TEXT

Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur* is a major landmark in English Literature. It is primarily a book of action and adventure with characters who "exemplify paragons of integrity or show a dashing lack of moral concern" (McCarthy, *An Introduction to Malory* xii). Perhaps most importantly, the book appeals to some of the most basic and powerful human emotions: those of loyalty, truth, goodness, and humility. The *Morte Darthur* is the first English rendition of the whole life of King Arthur from birth to death and was completed during Malory's last year of imprisonment, the ninth year of the reign of King Edward IV (i.e., 1469–70). William Caxton's version of the *Morte*, published on 31 July 1485 and not transcribed from the Winchester manuscript, was the only known surviving version until 1934, when the Winchester manuscript was discovered at Winchester College in Winchester, England. The Winchester manuscript is not perfect and lacks its first and final quires, equivalent to pages 1.1–15.12 and 933.29–940.30 of the critical edition, and there is wormhole damage that begins in the final leaves of the sixth tale that persists, and is joined by more wormhole damage, into the last extant quires (Field, *Le Morte Darthur* Vol. II 768). In 1947, Professor Eugène Vinaver published an edition of the *Morte* based on the Winchester manuscript, and filled in the textual lacunæ from the 1485 Caxton copy. Since then, a considerable number of editions of the *Morte* have been published; however, the current critical edition is Professor P. J. C. Field's *Le Morte Darthur*, published by D. S. Brewer in 2013. It is from this edition that all citations in this thesis relating to Malory's *Morte Darthur* will refer, unless otherwise marked. Quoted lines by secondary sources that reference Malory's *Morte* have not been updated to the Field edition: I mark these with O¹⁻³, respectively, in square brackets.

For reference:

- MD Morte Darthur* Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. P. J. C. Field. Text largely from Winchester manuscript, but frequently corrected with Caxton's 1485 *Morte* and with Malory's original sources. All references to *MD* are taken from Field's 2013 edition. Page-and-line references are given in the form *MD* 15.22 (= Page Fifteen, Line Twenty-Two).
- O¹⁻³ The Works of Sir Thomas Malory* Malory, *Works*, ed. Eugène Vinaver, first, second, and third editions (1947; 1967; 1990). *Nota bene* the third edition is revised by P. J. C. Field. Page-and-line references are given in the form *O³* 15.22 (= Vinaver, Third Edition, Page Fifteen, Line Twenty-Two).
- W Winchester Morte Darthur* Winchester manuscript of *Morte Darthur*. Currently housed in the British Library and catalogued as Additional MS 59678. Folio-and-line references are given in the form *W* 15^r.9 (= Winchester Folio Fifteen *Recto*-side, Line Nine).
- C Le Morte d'Arthur* Malory, *Le Morte d'Arthur*, ed. William Caxton. Currently housed in The University of Manchester (England) and The Morgan Library and Museum (New York, USA). Book-and-Chapter references are given in the form *C* *IV*.27 (= Caxton Book Four, Chapter Twenty-Seven).
- sMA Stanzaic Le Morte Arthur* Source-poem written in stanzaic form. Line references are given in the form *sMA* 500 (= 500th line).
- aMA Alliterative Morte Arthure* Source-poem written in alliterative metre. Line references are given in the form *aMA* 500 (= 500th line).

INTRODUCTION

King Arthur's life and death are framed by warfare, and there are few scenes within Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur* where some form of fighting is not happening or about to happen (Whetter, "Warfare and Combat" 169). Contextually, the *Morte*'s genesis is also framed by warfare, as are too its author's life and death. The final folio of the *Morte* finishes with, "this book was ended the ninth yere of the reygne of Kyng Edward the Fourth, by Syr Thomas Maleoré, knyght" (940.26–28), which dates Malory's holograph as finished sometime between 3 March 1469 and 4 March 1470 (Field, *Life and Times* 1). These dates are important because they fall in the midst of what is now known as the Wars of the Roses, a conflict that lasted through many sporadic episodes between 1455 and 1487 (Weir xiii). It is important that the author refers to himself as a "knyght" (940.28; *C XXI.13*, see Plate II) on the final folio, and in other places within the *Morte* as a "knyght presoner" (144.3), because it means that the author, Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel in Warwickshire, was both a fighting knight and a prisoner of the king.¹ This is important because it means that the *Morte* emerges from and is steeped in the

¹ The final folio of the Winchester Manuscript has not survived and so Malory's name on the final page of Field's edition of the *Morte* refers to the Caxton manuscript (*C XXI.13*, see Plate II). It is largely accepted by the Malorian scholarly community that the Caxton and the Winchester texts (see Plates III and IV) are collaterally related. Using infrared photography, Lotte Hellinga found ink from Caxton's type 4 on some folios of the Winchester. By this finding she was able to establish that Winchester resided in Caxton's workshop from 1480–1483, but also that Winchester was certainly not Caxton's copy-text for his 1485 printed edition (Plate II). Hellinga's discovery confirmed part of Vinaver's stemma that strongly suggests that the Winchester and Caxton are collaterally related and derived from an exemplar, itself descending from Malory's holograph (see her revised publication "The Malory

fifteenth-century political nucleus of the Wars of the Roses. Although much is not known of Malory's life, P. J. C. Field records all that is known about this "knyght," Sir Thomas Malory, in his monograph, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory*.² Connecting the true Sir Thomas Malory to the *Morte Darthur* is important "for socio-political contexts, for possible thematic emphases, and especially (it is often thought) for identifying where and how Malory acquired the sources for his *Morte Darthur*" (Crofts and Whetter, "Writing the *Morte Darthur*" 54). The subjects of kingship and warfare are germane to this thesis and so an understanding of the fifteenth-century contemporary political and social context surrounding the inception of the *Morte* aids in our understanding of the political and social circumstances found within the *Morte*, and within, especially, King Arthur's court.³

Malory's presentation of war stems from his own experiences with war. Important to this thesis is an awareness that Malory lived through the Wars of the Roses wherein he fought for both Yorkist and Lancastrian sides, became a prisoner of the king, and penned the famous *Morte Darthur*. Although the exact time-frame of the Wars of the Roses is contested by some

Manuscript and Caxton"). For more on Winchester's relationship to the 1485 Caxton print see Helen Cooper's "Opening up the Malory Manuscript." For useful commentary and a diagram of the above-mentioned stemma see Takako Kato's "Corrected Mistakes in the Winchester Manuscript" p. 14, K. S. Whetter's *Manuscript and Meaning* p. 8, and Thomas Crofts and Whetter's "Writing the *Morte Darthur*," p. 68. For several other places where the *Morte*'s author refers to himself as Malory see (O³) pp. 363.19, 845.29, 1037.12, and 1154.19 as recorded in P. J. C. Field's *Life and Times*.

² Field's research rebuts and replaces the candidates proposed by William Matthews and Richard Griffin.

³ For more on the social and political contextual history surrounding the *Morte* see Raluca L. Radulescu's *Gentry Context*.

historians, the core of the conflict lasted for approximately thirty-two years between 1455 and 1487, and was centered around complex claims to the throne of England.⁴ The conflict was not a continuous war, but rather was a series of seventeen battles split into three stages (Weir xiii–xv): the Early Stage, featuring the death of Richard, Duke of York; the Middle Stage, featuring Edward’s claim to the throne, the Yorkist triumph, Edward IV’s coronation, and the Earl of Warwick’s rebellion and the death of Henry VI; and the Final Stage, featuring Richard III’s tyrannical rule, the Duke of Buckingham’s revolt, and finally, Henry VII’s coronation and unification of the two royal houses—the House of York and the House of Lancaster—through the emblematic red and white Tudor Rose. Malory’s understanding of war as a fighting knight, enabled him to contribute an acute understanding of the politics of kingship and the realities of war to his narrative; however, what we also see in the *Morte* is an individual grappling with abstract human concepts—emotions such as love, loyalty and chivalry, betrayal and treachery; complex oaths of honour; and the spiritual world with God, Fortune, and freewill—through the concrete space of the battlefield. As Whetter states, “what we see in Malory’s presentation of Arthur’s early wars is an intelligent man trying to come to terms with the often unjust Wars of the Roses, wars in which Malory supported first York and then Lancaster and which, by 1469–70, God had yet to make clear which ... side was in the right” (“Historicity” 263). Thus, in Malory’s presentation of Arthur’s life and death, as well as in each of Arthur’s warring adventures, Malory (and Arthur) grapples with facets of humanity, the complexities of good and bad kingship, honour, and political and social turmoil, to expose lasting philosophical truths. . Although many of these issues could be approached through a study of ethics, my thesis follows

⁴ For an overview see A. J. Pollard’s *The Wars of the Roses*.

the many critics (especially Mann, Lynch, and Whetter) who focus on combat and fame, what Malory calls *worshyp*: for both Malory as narrator and for his characters, these interests are not only interrelated, they override many other elements, including morality.

Malory's quest in his *Morte*, or at least one of the more important quests, is to determine what makes a good king and what makes a war justifiable. The question of good kingship was an especially difficult subject for Malory given his experiences as a knight wherein he fought in some of the bloodiest moments of the Wars of the Roses and, consequently, during a time when the kingdom's monarchy was characterized by its volatility. In the *Morte*, Malory yokes the subjects of kingship and warfare through the character of King Arthur. Although older scholars argue that Malory's King Arthur is presented positively in war, recent scholarship is more sceptical.⁵ Ruth Lexton even goes so far as to claim that Malory's King Arthur looks like a tyrannical king and that his involvement in mediæval warfare serves only to perpetuate his selfish failings.⁶ Much scholarship—including Lexton's—that refutes the idea of Arthur's just kingship anchors itself on Arthur's moral instability. That is, critics argue that Arthur's morality and, by extension, his kingship are compromised because of his persistent involvement in war. Other critics, however, argue that morality in Malory is rarely clear and thus not the best subject for critical analysis;⁷ this is a position K. S. Whetter holds when he writes, "heroism and

⁵ Older scholars who read King Arthur in a positive light include Robert Henry Wilson and Edward Donald Kennedy. More recent scholars who read King Arthur in a poor light include William Matthews, Russell Peck, Ruth Lexton and Elizabeth T. Pochoda; although less severe than these others, Radulescu is also critical of Arthur.

⁶ See Lexton's *Contested Language*.

⁷ See Jill Mann's "Knightly Combat in Malory's *Morte Darthur*."

morality are rarely appropriate bedfellows” (*Manuscript and Meaning* 141). Further, Jill Mann notes that Malory is a master in conveying “human emotion” and “at catching the rhythms of human speech;” yet, he seems to have little interest in the “web of emotions” that lie behind “human speech and action” (235). This lack of detailed interiority makes it difficult to assess the *Morte* in moral terms, although, as Mann continues, “moral terms are by no means banished from the narrative” (Mann 235). The knightly world is dedicated to abstract moral values; however, to take one notable example, “the knight’s most characteristic activity is within the physical sphere, in physical combat, often undertaken for its own sake, or as the result of a randomly imposed ‘custome’” (Mann 235). Hence, although the moralities of Malory’s characters are ever-present in the narrative, the *Morte* is difficult to assess through a strict moral lens; rather, as Mann argues, we should focus on knightly combat in the *Morte* since Malory’s vocabulary and narrative structure reveal combat to be a crucial interest, not morality. Consequently, because Arthur’s kingship and relationship with the battle-space is complicated, my analysis of Arthur’s associations with war suggests that it is more appropriate to view Arthur’s character through the critical framework of justified warfare rather than through a morality lens, which is commonly used by scholars who oppose the notion that Arthur is a just king (e.g., Russel A. Peck, Charles Moorman, and others). Although many scholars argue that warfare only serves to perpetuate Arthur’s position as an usurper (Lexton), tyrant (Peck, C. Chism, Lexton, William Matthews, Karl Heinz Göller), and figure-head of a failing chivalric order (Moorman), it is my contention that Arthur’s actions in the war-spaces of the *Morte* illuminate, rather than diminish, his just kingship. Throughout this thesis I show how Malory presents us with an ideal picture of mediæval kingship and just warfare through the character of King Arthur.

Without knowing that Malory was a fighting knight, one can quickly come to the conclusion that “the technique of fighting, and more particularly of single combat, is Malory’s favourite topic” (Whetter, “Historicity” 268) as there are few places within the *Morte* where one is not fighting or preparing to fight. As a cursory reading of the war scenes in the *Morte* will show, Malory is fundamentally interested in just warfare, or war that is acceptable. The subject of just war has a venerable history stemming from the Ancient Greeks, and especially the Romans, into the Middle Ages, and further into the twenty-first century; however, a mediæval understanding of just war properly begins with Thomas Aquinas, a mediæval philosopher and theologian who is best known for his *Summa Theologiæ*. Just war theory has its foundations in Aquinas’s *Summa* and it postulates that war, while awful, is not always the worst option for resolving conflict as important responsibilities, undesirable outcomes, or preventable atrocities may justify warfare (Brooks, “Introduction”). In his *Summa*, Aquinas considers the subject of war and asks whether it is right for one to wage war: “*utrum bellare semper sit peccatum?*” (80).⁸ He begins with four claims that argue against warring and warfare and then rebuts them with references to Augustine and the Bible. Aquinas ultimately contends that “going to war is sometimes permissible, even if regrettable” (Davies 245), but remains throughout his argument emphatically opposed to the notion of unjust war. Aquinas frames just war in his *responsio* by arguing that in order for war to be just, it must be waged justly (*jus ad bellum*) and it must be fought justly (*jus in bello*) (80). Recently, twenty-first century Just War theorists such as James Pattison have broadened Aquinas’s conditions for just war to include *jus post bellum*, which means that the circumstances after war—such as the rebuilding of cities affected by war—must

⁸ “is it always a sin to wage war?”

likewise be just in order for the war to be deemed just (Pattison, “*Jus Post Bellum*” 635).⁹ His theory is important for my thesis because it bolsters my contention that whether viewing Arthur’s wars in the *Morte* through a lens that is grounded in fifteenth-century contemporary just war theory, or through a lens that views war through modern-day developments in just war theory, Arthur remains a just king before, during, and after war. Thus, just war in this thesis refers to those wars that follow *jus ad bellum*, *jus in bello*, and *jus post bellum*.

Just as it is important to contextualize Arthur’s kingship and warfare against theories of just war, so too is it important to understand what war is as opposed to other types of conflicts, such as battle, tournament, and single combat. M. H. Keen argues that war and peace were difficult to decipher in the Middle Ages because war was a permanent condition of mediæval society (*The Laws of War* 64): “in a society in which large scale violence was an everyday problem ... lawyers were very unwilling to admit that any war other than one levied on the authority of a prince was a war in the true sense of the word” (*The Laws of War* 68). Keen suggests that the reasoning behind this is because “war alters the effect of the civil laws, [consequently] it [war] cannot be declared except by one who is above [the law], which the prince alone is” (*The Laws of War* 69). Aquinas prioritizes a king’s authority to wage war in order to demonstrate how the sovereign alone is fully competent to determine just causes in concrete cases. In this sense, “legitimate authority stands as a formal precondition of just war” (Reichberg, “Legitimate Authority” 340) and a sovereign’s decision to wage war thus becomes the most visible mark of a just war: “on this interpretation the authorization of a prince is what

⁹ For *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, see Thomas Aquinas and M. H. Keen, and for *jus post bellum*, see James Pattison.

distinguishes the phenomenon termed ‘war’ from the other manifestations of violence—brawling (*rixa*), civil insurrection (*seditio*), and the like” (“Legitimate Authority” 340). It is important that war can only properly be waged by a sovereign because “care of the polity is entrusted to princes[;] protecting the common wealth of the cities, kingdoms or provinces that lie under their authority is a task that pertains to them” (Aquinas, 80). Given the evil nature of war, the decision to wage war is a matter of the highest responsibility. War then is only beneficial “insofar as it enables each individual prince to ensure the common good of the polity under his care” (Reichberg, “Legitimate Authority” 353). An understanding of the significance of war intensifies the noun “war” as it carries with it the weight that violence has been deemed necessary to fight the present evil and restore to equilibrium the peace in the land. In this thesis war, as opposed to other forms of conflict, is defined as a conflict that is waged by the king. Furthermore, for the purposes of this thesis, a tyrant is defined as one who is unjust in his rulership and in his actions before, during, and after war; a tyrant may or may not be the rightful heir to the throne. An usurper is one who seizes the throne with unjust cause; an usurper may be the rightful heir to the throne, however, even if he is the heir, he takes his kingship prematurely. Against mediæval attitudes to just war, a just war can only be waged and fought by a legitimate king; that is, one who is neither a tyrant, nor an usurper. As I argue in this thesis, King Arthur, as a rightful and just king, fights in wars in order to secure peace for his polity. Arthur’s battle prowess in war is then a reflection of his goodness, whereas King Lot’s and Sir Mordred’s prowess in war is not reflective of their goodness, because they fight unjustly: Lot fights unjustly with a selfish motivation to usurp the throne from Arthur, and Mordred first usurps Arthur’s kingship and then rules as a tyrant.

Structurally, this thesis follows King Arthur's warring adventures chronologically, beginning with his first wars in Tales I and II, and finishing with his last wars in Tale VIII. My re-consideration of King Arthur's kingship will closely analyze three prominent types of war: a war of contested succession in Tale I in the *Morte*; a war of defence against foreign threat in Tale II of the *Morte* and in its source, the alliterative *Morte*; and the civil war due to treachery in Tale VIII of the *Morte*. Throughout my analysis of the wars in the *Morte Darthur*, it is my contention that whilst Arthur is by no means a perfect king, he strives to be a template for good kingship during war. In Chapter One, beginning with Tale I, I investigate Arthur's relationship with war through his rise to power and his wars of contested succession against vassal-kings who wish to overthrow Arthur's kingship. Here, I look at two important subjects in the *Morte* that will lay the groundwork for the rest of the thesis: Malory's presentation of just kingship and his presentation of just warfare. It is my contention that while Malory presents a positive portrait of Arthur throughout Tale I and the rest of his *Morte*, Malory emphasises Arthur's justness as king and warrior through his actions in the theatre of war. In Chapter Two, I investigate Arthur's war against Emperor Lucius in light of Malory's main source for this tale, the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, to demonstrate that although both Arthurs are presented positively, Malory augments his source to portray an even stronger affirmation of his Arthur's kingship. I also contend in Chapter Two that a poor reading of Malory's King Arthur in this tale is in part due to Russell A. Peck's ambitious, but flawed, reading of the alliterative *Morte's* Arthur. Peck influentially argues that the *aMA* Arthur begins as a good template for just kingship, but that he turns tyrannical after defeating Emperor Lucius; as I show, subsequent scholars—including Lexton and to a lesser extent, Raluca L. Radulescu—seem to have taken Peck's misreading of the poem and applied it to Malory's *Morte*. In Chapter Three, I investigate Arthur's tragic fall and his last wars against

Lancelot and Mordred. Here, I show how Tale VIII is indeed a tragedy, and thus Arthur is a tragic hero who suffers a tragic fall. I demonstrate how Arthur remains a just king throughout Tale VIII even as the inevitable forces of Fortune and the follies of other characters strongly pull him on the Wheel of Fortune into the “hydeous depe blak watir” full of “serpentis and wormes and wyld bestis fowle and orryble” (920.20–21). Although Arthur tragically falls from the heights of his glory—and the concrete Round Table fellowship is irredeemably lost—I show that the impact of his fall is considerably lessened by his commitment to justice in his last wars, and especially in his last war against his son Mordred. Whilst recognising that Malory presents a very realistic view of Arthur, in that he is by no means a perfect king and warrior, I ultimately contend that Malory persistently characterises Arthur as a template for just kingship in war throughout the *Morte*.

CHAPTER ONE

Arthur's Just Rise to Kingship and His Wars of Contested Succession

The first tale of Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur* begins with Uther's wars and Arthur's birth, moving quickly to Uther's death and the complexities of Arthur being announced rightful heir by Uther and Merlin and by the drawing of the sword-in-the-stone, but subsequently having to prove his rightful kingship in warfare. This chapter focuses on Arthur's rise from adolescence to kingship and his wars against rebels who contest his rightful rule. The question, in this chapter, is whether King Arthur's decision to engage in wars against kings who threaten his right to kingship is a wicked action, or an action that is justified by religious authorities and mediæval just war theory. In answering this question, two subjects will be addressed that will lay the groundwork for the following chapters in this thesis: (1) Malory's presentation of just kingship; (2) and Malory's presentation of just war. Malory joins these two subjects—that of just kingship and just warfare—through the character of King Arthur. It is my contention that King Arthur is indeed a just king and a just warrior who, though not perfect, demonstrates justice through his actions in his court-spaces and on the battle-grounds. I begin by rebutting recent scholarship to show that Arthur is not tyrannical and is indeed the rightful king. This is important because his rightful kingship naturally leads to his right to wage just war. After establishing that Arthur is the true king to the throne, I structure this chapter around a perspective that characterises just war by the circumstances leading to war, *jus ad bellum*, the role of a warrior during war, *jus in bello*, and the responsibilities entrusted to the victor after war, *jus post bellum*. By looking at Arthur's character through these three facets of war, I will show that Arthur consistently exceeds that

which is expected of him as a just king, and that Malory most effectively presents Arthur's just character by underscoring Arthur's ability to depend on counsel.

My claim in this chapter that Arthur is both a just king and a just warrior runs against recent scholarship that denigrates Arthur. For instance, Ruth Lexton investigates the *Morte* through the lens of political language to make the bold, and incorrect, claim that Malory's King Arthur is not the ideal king that most would purport him to be; rather, she argues, he is a model of political failure. Lexton argues that terms used to describe Arthur as "noble, knightly and courteous resonate strongly through the narrative ... [but such accolades do] not directly transfer into terms of good kingship" (*Contested Language* 16–17). Further, she reads the praise given to Arthur by Malory and Caxton as ironic.¹ In critiquing Arthur, Lexton's language is consistently negative: she labels him as "inadequate king" and insists that "Arthur looks like a usurper and proves to be a tyrant" (*Contested Language* 14 and 18). Lexton's claim that Arthur is a tyrant is not something that she ever fully explains or defines; for her, Arthur is power-hungry, violent and illegitimate and these things alone seem to make him a tyrant. She ignores the fact that Malory adds Arthur's swearing of a coronation oath to be a righteous king, and she never addresses the distinctions or possible overlap between a legitimate king, a tyrant, and an usurper that I discuss in the Introduction. Instead, she simply claims Arthur's tyranny as proof of his

¹ Malory consistently praises Arthur's prowess throughout the *Morte*. See, for example, when Arthur heroically rehorses his knights (22.27–34) and Malory tells us that "Kynge Arthure dud so mervaylesly in armys that all men had wonder" (23.1–2). Following on Malory, William Caxton perpetuates the culture of praise surrounding King Arthur by placing *Le Morte Darthur* within his chivalric series and by rightly centering the *Morte* on Arthur's kingship. For more on Caxton's chivalric series see J. R. Goodman, pp. 257–75.

illegitimacy. Arthur's just kingship depends both on him *not* being a tyrant and on him being the rightful ruler of Britain.² Hence, I begin with Thomas Aquinas's first condition for *jus ad bellum* that just war must be waged by the authority of a sovereign to show how Arthur is the rightful heir to the throne. Aquinas's framework helps to validate Arthur's right to Uther's throne and demonstrates how Arthur is right to wage just war against rebels who deny his rightful kingship.

* * *

Arthur's right to wage war against the rebel kings in Tale I stems from his legitimate kingship, for a war can only be just if it is waged by a legitimate authority. Just warfare naturally begins with *jus ad bellum* and there are three conditions that frame *jus ad bellum*, or the circumstances leading to war: war is only just when it is waged by the authority of a sovereign; war must be waged for a just cause; and peace must be a central motive for war even in the midst of violence. Concerning Aquinas's first condition that just war must only be waged by the authority of a sovereign, Aquinas references Augustine, who states that "the natural order conducive to human peace demands that the power to counsel and declare war belongs to those who hold the supreme authority," and Romans 13.4, which states that "the bearing of the sword has its significance. The authorities are there to serve God: they carry out God's revenge by punishing wrong doers" (Aquinas 80). Gregory M. Reichberg, in his analysis of Aquinas's writings on war, claims that Aquinas proposes two arguments for why a special authority is needed for war-making: (1) the

² Radulescu supports the claim that Arthur is the "rightful king of all England" (*Gentry Context* 99) and points out that this is "a title that will be repeated in other tales" (*Gentry Context* 99) She notes the places where Merlin foretells that King Arthur will be king of all England, including in (O³) 16.37–39, 18.8–10, and 371.10–19 (*Gentry Context* note 38 on p. 99).

juridical principle, where “just war becomes operative only in the absence of established judicial procedures;” and (2) that defence of the common good “requires a chain of command with the prince at its head” (“Legitimate Authority” 337).³ Aquinas is specific about who can wage war: a prince (*princeps*) and later a legitimate (*legitima*) authority. Hence, for war to be just princely power must be acquired and war must be exercised in accordance with the rule of law (“Legitimate Authority” 338). Legitimate kingship foregrounds the beginning of the *Morte Darthur*: Tale I begins with Malory establishing Arthur as rightful monarch through Merlin’s counsel, Uther’s dying proclamation, the drawing of the sword-from-the-stone, and the acclamation of the people (1–10), all of which gives Arthur power to wage just war. Malory’s purpose in using many devices to consolidate Arthur’s kingship in Tale I foregrounds Malory’s concern for just war and enables Malory to present Arthur as a template for just kingship in war going forwards in the *Morte*.

³ Aquinas’s reference to Augustine in the first condition follows the Great Chain of Being, or *scala naturalæ*, which stems from Plato and Aristotle, but was further developed by Aquinas. The Great Chain of Being structures all life and matter hierarchically, beginning with God and finishing with inanimate objects, such as precious stones and other minerals. This hierarchical chain is important because humans occupy a special place between the celestial and earthly spheres. That is, people are connected to the celestial world through their powers to reason, love, and imagine; however, they are trapped in an earthly body and so also occupy a space in the terrestrial world. The king’s place in this hierarchical chain is important because he does not submit to any earthly authority; rather, he submits to, and carries out, God’s will on Earth. Consequently, the “power to counsel and declare war” is a responsibility that belongs only to the king who occupies this special God-ordained position. Against this philosophical and theological background, Malory’s Arthur should be considered a rightful king who has the sovereign power invested in him to wage just war.

Arthur's right to kingship begins with Merlin. Merlin is an interesting character because he occupies both earthly and celestial realms in Arthurian legend. Importantly for the present argument, Merlin acts as one of Arthur's most important counsellors in the *Morte*. Malory's treatment of Merlin starts a new version of the Arthurian legend and in Tale I Malory chooses to portray Merlin in two important offices: "he is the agent through whom God's will and 'grace' are expressed, and he is an omniscient strategist who leads Arthur to victory over the rebel kings" (Wright 23). As Thomas L. Wright notes, Malory's treatment of Merlin is reminiscent of the French *Suite du Merlin*, which Malory uses as his main source for Arthur's first wars, yet Merlin's function in Malory's *Morte* is Malory's own invention (23):⁴ in comparing the *Morte* to its sources, Wright contends that Malory "creates the role in which Merlin contrives the birth of Arthur and guides him steadily to his throne" (24). Particularly important for the present argument is that Merlin's foremost office—that of acting as an agent through whom God's will is expressed—supports Arthur's right to kingship. Having Merlin act as an emissary between God and His people suggests that Arthur's role as king in the narrative is part of God's divine will. It then follows that for a mediæval audience Arthur would be seen to be submitting to mediæval theological expectations of just kingship that regard just rule as adhering to the natural order, or the Great Chain of Being. It is equally important that Merlin is the "agent" through whom Arthur's kingship is achieved because it produces a double helix of religion and secularity

⁴ For full details on Malory's sources see especially the chart "Malory's Sources" on page 49 in Norris's "Malory and His Sources". For an extensive account on Malory's sources see Norris's *Malory's Library* and Vinaver, ed., Introduction and Commentary to *Works*. For the availability of sources to Malory see Crofts and Whetter, "Writing the *Morte Darthur*," especially pp. 53–57.

which threads itself throughout the narrative and which allows Malory to justify Arthur's rightful kingship to a broad audience. Malory intrinsically interweaves religion and secularity so that his audience understands from the beginning that anything ordained by God will be represented through Merlin, and, likewise, anything ordained by Merlin is an affirmation of God's will. The interweaving of both secular and religious values in association with Arthur's character is important for the *Morte* because it enables Malory to reach a broad audience and leaves no room for disputing Arthur's just kingship in the religious or the secular spheres.

On the earthly plane, Arthur's right to rule is principally confirmed by Uther's dying proclamation. This is an important scene because Malory augments his sources to include Merlin's response to the barons who ask what they should do about the dying king. Merlin's response to the barons is to say that "there nys none other remedye ... but God wil have His wille" (6.13-4). This reply renders Uther's forthcoming proclamation indisputable because Merlin establishes that the events surrounding Uther's death are ordained by God. After establishing God's authority in this scene, Merlin, a supernatural character who has knowledge of the barons' later refusal of Arthur's kingship, asks "aloud unto Kyng Uther, 'Syre, shall your sone Arthur be kyng after your dayes of this realme with all the appertenaunce?'" (6.17-9). In reply,

Uther Pendragon torned hym and said in herynge of them alle, 'I gyve hym Gods blissyng and myne, and byd hym pray for my soule, and righteously and worshipfully that he clayme the croune upon forfeiture of my blessing.' (6.20-3)

Particularly important here is Merlin's forceful hand in the proceedings wherein he directly asks Uther who will be king and does so in "heryng of them alle". Although Uther's dying proclamation is all that is needed to validate Arthur's right to the throne, Merlin ensures that

Uther proclaims Arthur king in the presence of all the barons because it provides Arthur with the right to wage war against those traitorous barons who later refuse to accept Arthur's right to rule even on Merlin's testimony (Wright 22–23; see further Boyle 54–55).

Although Malory gives Arthur right to his kingship supernaturally through Merlin and naturally through Uther, Malory includes the drawing of the sword-in-the-stone figuratively and literally to consolidate Merlin and Uther's declarations: figuratively, the sword represents divine appointment, which means that Arthur holds the power to declare just war; and literally, Arthur now has physical possession of a sword with which he can fight. Following Uther's death, the "reame [stood] in grete jeopardy long whyle, for every lord that was myghty of men maade hym stronge, and many wende to have ben kyng" (6.27–9). Because the kingdom stands without a ruler, Merlin counsels the Archbishop and sends "for alle the lordes of the reame and alle the gentilmen of armes" to come to London so that God could "shewe some myracle ... for to shewe who shold be rightwys kynge of this reame" (6.30–7.2). The sword-in-the-stone appears (7.7–16), and the audience is told that the Archbishop trusts that whosoever "shall encheve the swerd ... God will make hym knowen" (7.25–7). Arthur draws the sword from the stone and is immediately given his kingship. Arthur's drawing of the sword is figuratively important for this thesis because it is an expression of Arthur's regal power and inherently declares that Arthur is now the only one who holds the divinely appointed power to declare just war. Furthermore, as Aquinas states, "the bearing of the sword has its significance" (83) and thus Arthur's drawing of the sword literally prepares Arthur for waging just war. As Gregory M. Reichberg notes, princes in addition to the normal tasks associated with governance—framing laws, ensuring the provision of needed goods, etc.—must also provide effective protection against internal disturbers (*interiores perturbatores*) of the peace.

Likewise princes must adopt measures to safeguard against attacks launched by external enemies (*exterioribus hostibus*). To this dual end of protection, princes are accorded the power of the sword. (“Legitimate Authority” 353–54)

That is, Arthur is now armed with the weapon he needs to defend his right to rule and protect his polity.

Although Arthur’s first sword—the sword-from-the-stone—breaks and disappears from the narrative, Arthur is given a second sword, by the Lady of the Lake (43.7–44.35), which is called Excalibur. Malory and critics often use the name “Excalibur” for either sword and both are powerful weapons. Indeed, Merlin advises Arthur to “fyghte not with the swerde that ye had by myracle til that ye see ye go unto the wers; thenne drawe it out and do your best” (13.29–31). There are two things to consider here: first, Excalibur is the best sword in the world and so it must only be used as a last resort and always in the pursuit of peace. Excalibur’s impressive strength is referenced during the second sword-ceremony when Malory provides the etymology for its name: “‘the name of hit,’ seyde the lady, ‘ys Excalibir, that ys as mucche to sey, as Kutte Stele’” (51.5–6). Figuratively, raising Excalibur in battle carries with it regal power. Any who contend with Excalibur during battle fight against both Arthur as knight and Arthur as divinely appointed sovereign. Thus, Merlin’s warning to raise the sword only at the right moment is a warning to Arthur that he must only raise the sword in justly ordained circumstances because as the divinely appointed king, his decisions are made in the name of God. Secondly, part of Arthur’s just kingship is proven on the battle-grounds and so Merlin’s warning about using Excalibur also serves to show that Arthur as king is expected to prove his prowess in war before relying on Excalibur’s power. Thus, when Aquinas says, princes draw the “sword of war” (83; Reichberg, “Legitimate Authority” 359), he refers to the responsibility invested in kings to wage

just war. In Arthur's case, the "sword of war," or Excalibur, is a concrete and continual reminder of the divinely appointed weight of responsibility that Arthur now carries when waging and leading his knights into war.

Important in this context are the circumstances leading to Arthur's drawing of the sword from the stone because they showcase Arthur's genuine goodness and humility. Arthur draws the sword because Kay is without a sword for the jousting tournament. Arthur does not pull the sword for his personal gain or merit, but rather pulls out the sword because he does not want his brother, Kay, to go sword-less (8.11–3). Further, Arthur initially pulls the sword when no one is watching, "so whan he cam to the chircheyard Arthur alight and tayed his hors to the style, and so wente to the tent and found no knyghtes there, for they were atte jousting" (8.14–6), which demonstrates that Arthur is wholly committed to ensuring Kay has a sword, rather than claiming the sword for his own merit. Both Arthur's selflessness in drawing the sword and his desire to sustain familial bonds become character traits that continue to define Arthur throughout his kingship in the *Morte*. The circumstances leading to the acquiring of the sword showcase Arthur's concern for others.

Arthur's persistent attention to the voices of his common polity is a topic that threads itself throughout the *Morte* serving to showcase Arthur's just kingship and to protect him against any accusations of tyranny. The "comyns" provide the popular support for Arthur's rule in Tale I and "the presence of the 'comyns' is original with Malory, as is the whole passage" wherein the commons acclaim Arthur to be their king (Radulescu, *Gentry Context* 98; following Vinaver, *O³ Commentary* 1287). The "comyns" praise for Arthur in Malory's version emphasises Arthur's just rule and presents Arthur as an even better king than in Malory's sources. As Radulescu claims, this "comyns" scene is "far removed from the spirit of the French source, where ample

space is given to the courtly display at Arthur's coronation. Instead, Malory chooses to impose an image of the solidarity of all the estates and the social contract between the king and his subjects as a crucial point in the coronation oath" (*Gentry Context* 98). That is, instead of showcasing an Arthur who is concerned with pomp and circumstance—as is observed in some of Malory's sources—Malory portrays an Arthur who proves to be foremost concerned with the care of his polity and the just governance of his kingdom. Although Radulescu agrees that Malory focuses less on God than his sources do, she contends that Malory does not altogether leave God out of Arthur's kingship: "the figure of King Arthur emerges as a typical English king, whose duty is to maintain justice in the realm, unlike his French counterpart, who first swears allegiance to the church, and then is bound to 'loiauté en terre et pais' [*Suite* 146]" (*Gentry Context* 98). Malory's choice to focus more on the "social contract between the king and his subjects" (Radulescu, *Gentry Context* 98) is a choice that in my opinion heightens Arthur's "good kingship [as one] that carries the approval of God and the people" (Lexton, *Contested Language* 20). Arthur's justice is further emphasised when "within fewe yeres" (11.21) he amalgamates the kingdom by overcoming all who try to assuage his power: "thurgh the noble prowesse of hymself and his knyghtes of the Round Table" (11.24–5). Arthur "is portrayed [here] as the one who, as a good lord should, dispenses justice and solves problems that have troubled his people for a long time" (*Gentry Context* 98). It is important for Arthur's kingship and his subsequent wars that he possesses the requisite support in order for him to fight both well and justly; but it is also important because the commons' support serves as an essential affirmation of just kingship. Consequently, "King Arthur appears worthy of being a king not only through magic, as he miraculously pulls the sword out of the stone, but also because he fulfils the pragmatic English requirements of a king" (Radulescu, *Gentry Context* 98). Thus,

Arthur, by drawing the sword-from-the-stone, reveals God's will for him to be king; yet, Arthur also reveals God's will for his kingship through Merlin's forging a path to his kingship; and Arthur's kingship is approved by the people. Malory is thus interested in presenting a powerful and good king who looks after the needs of his people, puts an end to private discord, and restores justice.

As I have demonstrated, Arthur is rightfully king through Merlin, God, by drawing the sword-from-the-stone, and by the commons' approval; however, as Reichberg notes, in addition to Arthur having the right as king to wage war, "competence to decide on war is attributed to the 'public' authority" ("Legitimate Authority" 338). Therefore, discourse "shifts from the person of the prince to the underlying subject of this competence—the political community—which acts through its leadership to protect the common good" ("Legitimate Authority" 338–9). This means that although the king has the right to wage war through his position as divinely appointed sovereign, he also has the responsibility to accept advice from his "political community," or in the *Morte*'s case, Merlin, Kings Ban and Bors, and Arthur's Round Table fellowship.⁵ This position—that it is Arthur's duty as a mediæval king to listen to counsel before deciding upon sovereign and martial affairs—is proven by a number of scholars including John Watts, Edward

⁵ The Round Table fellowship, often shortened to simply "Round Table," is a concrete representation of Arthur's counselling body in Arthur's Court within the *Morte*. The Round Table literally refers to a round table given to Arthur by Guenevere's father (formally given to him by Uther) upon the occasion of Arthur's marriage unto Guenevere (77.5–8). A real Round Table, which is dendrochronologically dated to 1275 A. D., is on display in the Great Hall in Winchester, England (see Plate I). Interestingly, the Round Table may have been displayed on the same wall as it is currently displayed when Malory was alive. For more on the Round Table's figurative role in the *Morte* see Chapter Two of Molly Martin's *Castles and Space*, pp. 59–114.

Donald Kennedy, K. S. Whetter, and Raluca L. Radulescu. Evidence of Arthur seeking out advice from a “political community” bookends his wars with King Lot. For example, before waging war against King Lot, Arthur meets Lot’s camp in the company of the Archbishop, Sir Baudewyn, Sir Kay, and Sir Brastias. Following the skirmishes with Lot and his forces, Arthur meets again with his Round Table to establish peace in the land and knight valiant fighters.

The themes of council and counselling are first introduced into the *Morte* through Merlin. Merlin’s counsel throughout Arthur’s first wars enable Arthur justly to restore peace in his kingdom. Malory underscores the subject of counsel as an important aspect of just kingship by grounding Arthur’s wars in the *Morte*’s historical context. For example, counsel in the *Morte* has its traces in the mediæval advice texts such as Aquinas’s *De Regno*, Giles of Rome’s *De Regimine Principum*, and Christine de Pizan’s *Epistre Othea a Hector*. One advice tradition in particular is the *speculum principis* tradition which is purported to have been well known to mediæval audiences (Boyle 53). By looking at the changes Malory makes to Merlin’s character from his source texts, it is evident that Malory forms a perfect counsellor in Merlin. Louis Boyle both foregrounds and counters this idea that Merlin is a perfect counsellor; first Boyle shows how “infallible” Merlin’s advice is and thus how justified Arthur is to follow it; but Boyle then argues that part of Arthur’s downfall at the end of the *Morte* is due to his over-reliance on Merlin as supreme counsellor: “Malory’s emphasis on Merlin as an infallible advisor lays bare the contradictory nature of counselling patterns advocated by advice texts in the *speculum principis* tradition” (52). Boyle claims that the inherent paradoxical nature of counselling patterns in the *Morte* leads to Arthur’s failure as a king. That is, Boyle argues that because Arthur is so reliant on taking counsel from Merlin he does not, and cannot, follow other tropes of advice as set out in the *speculum principis* (52). That is, he claims that counsel becomes paradoxical in nature

because Arthur only follows Merlin's counsel and thus cannot follow anything else. Malory makes clear, however, and Boyle himself admits, that Merlin's counsel is consistently correct, whether in social policy or military tactics.⁶ Therefore, Boyle's claim is further weakened because, although initially directed by Merlin, Arthur gathers advice from other sources such as his barons before and after engaging in just warfare. Furthermore, Merlin himself directs Arthur towards other sources of advice. This is best illustrated in the apparition scene following the Battle of Bedgrayne where Merlin first takes on the appearance of a fourteen-year old child and then an elderly man (34.23–36.25). The child meets Arthur at the fountain and tells Arthur that he is a fool for pensively sitting at the fountain, and also reveals that he knows who Arthur's true parents are: "Kynge Uther was thy fadir and begate the on Igrayne. ... I know hit bettir than ye or ony man lyvyng" (35.32–36.2). Arthur rejects what the child has to say and is "wrothe with the chylde" (36.3–4). Merlin then appears in the likeness of an elderly man and asks why Arthur is sad. Arthur retells his encounter with the child, to which the elderly man responds with rebuke and a prophecy:

the chylde tolde you trouthe, and more he wolde a tolde you and ye wolde a suffirde hym; but ye have done a thyng late that God ys displesed with you, for 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. (36.13–7)

⁶ See also Thomas L. Wright's "'The Tale of King Arthur.'"

Merlin then appears in his usual manifestation and explains to Arthur that it was he who took on the child and elderly man appearances.⁷ Given his message that the child could have advised Arthur if only Arthur listened, Merlin's apparitions become one way of demonstrating to Arthur the importance of listening to other forms of advice, but also serve to foreground the subjects of council and counselling, which will become integral to Arthur's just kingship later on in the *Morte*. Given that the ideal mediæval king was expected to heed counsel, and that Merlin is effectively training Arthur in how to be a good king by listening, Arthur's kingship is not tyrannical, as Lexton would have it, because Arthur is legitimately instated to kingship through Merlin's counsel, Uther's dying proclamation, the drawing of the sword-from-the-stone, and the acclamation of the people. Furthermore, Arthur's persistent ability to heed council reaffirms his just kingship and establishes his place as rightful king.

* * *

Arthur wages just war against rebels who deny his rightful kingship in order to bring peace to his kingdom. A precondition of just war is that it must occur for a good and just purpose rather than for self-gain or an exercise of power. That is, "those who are attacked are attacked because they

⁷ See Helen Cooper's "M for Merlin" for more on Merlin's apparition scenes. She observes in this paper that there is a recurrent habit of abbreviating the name of Merlin to a capital M when Merlin disguises himself in the narrative. She gives three possible explanations for this persistent rubrication practice: superstition around Merlin's name, widespread scribal practice, and that it may figure as a rhetorical strategy. Cooper settles on the latter stating that "Merlin is not a character who always announces himself, or who appears in his own declared shape, and the form his name takes often follows suit ... [and] it may none the less be stretching credibility too far to suggest that the scribes intended, or that the readers of the manuscripts would have understood, such a finely tuned adjustment of import" (97–104).

deserve it on account of some wrong they have done” (Aquinas 83). Whetter argues that “one element that is immediately apparent about Arthur’s wars with the rebel kings and [later] with the Roman Emperor is the pains Malory takes to emphasize the justness of Arthur’s cause” (“Historicity” 262). Aquinas, citing Augustine, describes just war “as one that avenges wrongs, that is, when a nation or state has to be punished either for refusing to make amends for outrages done by its subjects, or to restore what it has seized injuriously” (83). Following Arthur’s drawing of the sword-from-the-stone, Arthur amalgamates much of the kingdom, yet his rule continues to be contested by kings and dukes who refuse to accept Merlin’s endorsement of Arthur’s kingship: “some of the kynges had merveyl of Merlyns wordes and demed well that it shold be as he said, and som of hem lough hym to scorne, as Kyng Lot, and mo other called hym a wytche” (12.34–13.1). Arthur has a dual purpose for waging just war against Lot and the other rebellious barons: that is, to defend his rightly ordained kingship and to restore unity and peace amongst his people. Furthermore, because Arthur as king is God’s representative on earth and it is within God’s plan to have Arthur as king, according to the Great Chain of Being (*scala naturalæ*) Lot and his camp’s rebellion against Arthur is also a rebellion against God. Thus, because Lot is defying both earthly and celestial authorities Arthur becomes even more justified in his cause to wage war against Lot. Mediæval attitudes towards good kingship were influenced by the period’s affiliation for warring and thus expectations of a mediæval monarch were that “he would defend the realm from enemies and maintain peace and justice within it” (Robeson, “Warre and Worshyppe” 79). Thus, because Arthur wages war to protect his divinely appointed kingship and to protect his polity, his decision to wage war against these rebels is just.

Although Arthur’s decision to wage war establishes him as a just king, his choice to fight in these wars further accentuates his just kingship. The monarch, as Head of State, was expected

to govern, and often times participate in wars as long as they were framed by just war expectations. Furthermore, a monarch would be justified, and perhaps even glorified, if he chose to participate in these wars as it demonstrated dedication to the people and simultaneously accentuated the monarch's just kingship. In Tale I we see King Arthur not only participating, but also leading in war: "Kyng Arthur on horsback leyd on with a swerd and dyd merveillous dedes of armes, that many of the kynges had grete envye of his dedes and hardynesse" (13.34-14.2).

Radulescu notices that when Arthur

encounters his enemies there is 'no mekenes but stoute words on bothe sydes, but alweyes kyng Arthur ansuerd them and said he wold make them to bowe and he lyved' [O³ 18.27–29; MD 13.14–16]. This implies his ability to confront difficult situations, despite his young age, and later his 'grete dedes and hardynesse' [O³ 19.11; MD 14.1–2] are indicators of his natural gifts for kingship.

(*Gentry Context* 99)

In fighting the rebel kings Arthur not only serves his kingdom but, more importantly, willingly fights with and for his knights towards the attainment of peace. Thus, in justly fighting to defend his kingdom, Arthur strengthens his martial prowess and demonstrates that he has the martial aptitude and physical strength to protect his people; all of which is yoked to his ability to take counsel in martial and sovereign affairs.

* * *

Arthur's motivation for securing peace in his kingdom satisfies the conditions of waging just war and serves as the foundation for meeting the requirements of justice in the midst of war, or *jus in bello*. Aquinas argues that peace must be a central motive even in the midst of violence: "even those who wage a just war intend peace. They are not then hostile to peace" (85). This idea

is strengthened by a citation from Augustine: “we do not seek peace in order to wage war, but we go to war to gain peace. Therefore be peaceful even while you are at war, that you may overcome your enemy and bring him to the prosperity of peace” (85). Arthur demonstrates his ability not to perpetuate war for self-gain, and his motivation to secure peace in the midst of violence, by listening and adhering to Merlin’s counsel. After Lot flees the battleground following Arthur’s drawing of “his sword Excalibur” (14.9), Merlin advises Arthur not to pursue Lot: “and Merlyn come unto Arthur and counceilled hym to folowe hem no further” (14.14–5). In this battle scene Arthur forfeits the self-glorification he would attain if he continued to pursue Lot and his camp with Excalibur. In following Merlin’s advice and showing mercy to the rebels, Arthur gains a period of peace and demonstrates that he is able and willing to listen to counsel.

Arthur also fights for peace through his battle-rage. When, in the midst of the fighting, Arthur realises that both camps are equally matched and that neither will give way to the other, he stirs up his strength in order to bring a halt to the fighting:

But whan Kynge Arthure saw the batayle wolde nat be ended by no maner, he fared woode as a lyon and stirred his horse here and there on the ryght honde and on the lyffte honde, that he stynted nat tulle he had slayne twenty knyghtes. Also he wounded Kynge Lotte sore on the shulder, and made hym to leve that grownde, for Sir Kay with Sir Gryfflet dud with Kynge Arthure grete dedis of armys there.
(24.10–16)

This passage is important because it demonstrates two aspects of good kingship: Arthur's worship and prowess,⁸ and his desire to attain peace both for himself and for his opponents. Arthur's worship and prowess are demonstrated through his fighting "as a lyon" (24.11–2) wherein Arthur "defends the realm and merits his title" (Radulescu, *Gentry Context* 100). Arthur thus models himself as a brave knight and "risks his life like any other knight-companion" for his kingdom. Robeson rightly argues that Arthur's battle fury in this scene demonstrates his power and duty to his people, while Malory's comparison of Arthur to a lion intensifies his prowess and might in battle ("Warre and Worshyppe" 84). Lexton argues that Arthur's lion-like warring is evidence of his tyrannical and selfish desire to secure power (*Contested Language* 41), but as Lynch shows, prowess in Malory is synonymous with goodness (*Book of Arms* 44). Malory, however, demonstrates Arthur's justness in war through his ability to grant mercy towards his enemies. For example, Arthur forces Lot out of the battle arena by wounding, not killing, him. This is important for two reasons: first, the text makes it clear that Arthur does not pursue or cruelly murder Lot even though it would be within his right to do so; and secondly, this scene shows that Arthur has internalised some of the council he has received from Merlin who warns Arthur not to chase after his enemies when they flee from the battle-ground (14.14–15). Arthur's fearless and just behaviour in this scene leads into the second aspect of his good kingship, which is his desire to attain peace for his kingdom. It is important that it is "Kyng" Arthur who stirs up to end the battle because he does so with the authority of his kingship. Through this choice the audience sees that Arthur acts with reason and is not governed by his emotions; that is, through

⁸ Worship in Malory, as several critics note, is best understood to mean reputation. See especially Andrew Lynch, *Malory's Book of Arms*.

his decision to fight tirelessly, he decisively commands an end to the battle. Thus, his aim in battle is not wholly to achieve prowess and worship, rather his aim is to secure peace in the kingdom and the former qualities of good kingship come as by-products of his ultimate achievement.

Although King Arthur has satisfied all of the conditions to engage in war, he must continue to ensure that his actions in war are just. Arthur learns how to discern good from evil, and justice from injustice, through the advice of Kings Ban and Bors, which is again overseen by Merlin's counsel. After determining that Arthur's position as king faced with rebels is unstable, Merlin advises Arthur to take counsel from Kings Ban and Bors because "onlesse that our kyng have more chyvalry with hym than he may make within the boundys of his own reame, and he fyghte with hem in batail, he shal be overcome and slayn" (14.33–35). In Arthur's wars against King Lot and his camp, Malory is careful to use both human and divine authority to guide King Arthur in order to satisfy Arthur's just kingship to a broader audience. That is, Ban and Bors represent a secular counselling influence on Arthur, whereas Merlin's omnipotence in the war space, and his position as agent of God's will, demonstrates divine authority over Arthur's fighting.

Malory presents Kings Ban and Bors as just warriors to demonstrate that Arthur is receiving good counsel from them. The first indication that Kings Ban and Bors are good counsellors is by the fact that they are called upon by Merlin (15.2–15), and Merlin's function in the narrative is to guide Arthur to power. However, more convincing evidence for Ban and Bors' just example in battle reveals itself through Bors' martial prowess, which is recognised by King Lot's forces:

whan Kynge Lotte had aspyed Kynge Bors, he knew hym well, and seyde, ‘Jesu defende us frome dethe and horryble maymes, for I se well we be in grete perell of dethe; for I se yondir a kynge, one of the most worshipfullyst men and one of the best knyghtes of the worlde, and the best knyghtes of the worlde be inclined unto his felyship.’ ‘What ys he?’ seyde the Kynge with the Hundirde Knyghtes. ‘Hit ys,’ he seyde, ‘Kynge Bors of Gaule. I mervayle,’ seyde he, ‘how they com unto this contrey withoute wetyng of us all.’ ‘Hit was by Merlions advice,’ seyde a knyght (25.11–20).

This passage shows a connection between prowess and worship, as well as between prowess and good kingship: Lot recognises Bors’ martial prowess when he fears for his life, recognising that Bors is one of the “best knyghtes of the worlde” (25.14–5) yet this prowess is importantly linked to Bors’ worship and kingship. Bors is an exemplar of good kingship, as revealed by Merlin and Lot, and consequently demonstrates that worship and good kingship can be established through martial prowess. Thus, Bors, in this scene helps Arthur by challenging Arthur’s foes, yet, more importantly, sets a good example for how a just king should fight in war. Further, this passage is important because Lot realizes that Bors is there by Merlin’s advice, and so Merlin’s omnipotent function in the narrative is further emphasised. That is, Lot’s camp now recognises that they are not merely challenging earthly beings in this war, but rather they are fighting against Merlin as spokesperson for supernaturally preordained events.

It is essential to recognise that this is a fair battle because each side is equal in military prowess. This is demonstrated by the respect that Lot has for Bors but equally by the respect Bors and Ban have for Lot’s camp. In the midst of the battle against the rebels, Malory describes the many chivalric deeds performed by many knights on both Lot’s and Arthur’s sides: “and

there they dud on bothe partyes merveyulous dedes of armys” (29.17); and later Arthur’s martial prowess and strength are emphasised by the strengthening of Lot’s forces: “so they departed as they here devised, and thes six kyngis made their party stronge agaynst Kyng Arthure and made grete warre longe in the meane whyle” (24.32–34). This prowess from both battle-camps serves to emphasise the greatest of chivalric deeds, which are performed by Arthur himself: “than Kyng Arthure dud so mervaylesly in armys that all men had wondir” (23.1–2). Martial fairness between the two sides is important because it gives Malory another opportunity to accentuate Arthur’s military prowess. That is, Arthur’s prowess is described throughout the narrative: “he fared woode as a lyon and stirred his horse here and there on the ryght honde and on the lyffte honde” (24.11–3); but his prowess is heightened because he goes above and beyond the great deeds of all the other experienced knights engaged in that same battle. Further, the narrator captures Arthur’s motive in this battle, which is foremost to establish peace, but also to ensure that he fights with and for his people. This is demonstrated when Arthur ensures that his soldiers are re-horsed in the midst of battle:

but Kyng Arthure was glad that hys knyghtes were horsed agayne. And than they fought togidres, that the noyse and the sowne range by the watir and woode. Wherefore Kyng Ban and Bors made hem redy and dressed their shyldis and harneysse, and were so currageous that many knyghtes shooke and byverd for egirnesse. (23.35–24.4)

Emphasis is placed on the fact that “they fought together,” which demonstrates that Arthur is not afraid to lead and fight with his knights. Ban and Bors are defined as having prowess by the fact that they incite fear in their enemies: “be than com into the felde Kyng Ban as fere as a lyon, with bendis of grene and thereuppon golde crownys” (26.4–5). Here, King Ban is described in

like manner to King Arthur, which is important because Ban is Arthur's advisor and recognised by both Merlin and Lot as a good fighter. He and Bors thus demonstrate the standard that King Arthur must work to attain. At the culmination of battle, Lot calls Arthur "thys noble kynge Arthure" (28.18–19) when he counsels his soldiers. This is important because it demonstrates that Lot's knights are not cowards, nor will they back down from King Arthur. Thus, Arthur is fighting a difficult battle. By building this scene, Malory goes out of his way to heighten respect for King Lot, but simultaneously to accentuate Arthur's prowess (23–24).

Malory is careful not simply to narrate the prowess of these knights but ensures that they demonstrate their prowess. King Lot tells us that Kings Ban and Bors are the most valiant knights in the world:

'A ha!' seyde Kynge Lott, 'we muste be discomfite, for yondir I se the most valiante knyght of the worlde, and the man of moste renowne, for such too brethirne as ys Kynge Ban and Kynge Bors ar nat lyvyng. Wherefore we muste nedis voyde or dye, and but if we avoyde manly and wysely there ys but dethe.'
(26.6–10)

But Malory also has the kings demonstrate their prowess:

So whan thes two kyngis, Ban and Bors, com into the batayle, they com in so fersely that the strokis re[d]ounded agayne fro the woode and the watir. Wherefore kynge Lotte wepte for pité and dole that he saw so many good knyghtes take their ende. But thorow the grete force of kynge Ban they made bothe the northirne batayles that were parted hurteled togidirs for grete drede. And

the three kynges and their knyghtes slew on ever, that hit was pité to se and to beholde the multitude of peple that fledde. (O³ 33.3–11)⁹

Ban and Bors demonstrate their prowess through their fierce warfare with “strokies [that] resounded agayne fro the woode and the watir.” King Lot’s weeping “for pité” accentuates Ban and Bors’ military might, yet Lot’s failure to retreat also demonstrates his own prowess in battle. In Lot’s case, though, as each of Malory, Merlin, and Ban and Bors make clear, the prowess is misplaced: Lot is a worthy fighter but a rebellious vassal.¹⁰

Respect is part of Bors and Bans’ counselling because in order for Arthur to understand just warfare and subsequently recognise justness within himself, he must first be able to recognise it in others. Reichberg argues that during war a king must be virtuous in order to inspire virtue in others, and cites Aquinas who “emphasises how the binding judgements issued

⁹ I have referenced Vinaver’s O³ edition here because he follows more closely the Winchester edition by including Kings Ban and Bors. In *MD*, Field only includes Ban with his reasoning coming from one of the *Morte*’s source-texts, the French *Suite du Merlin*, which only includes Ban in this section of the narrative. See, Field’s Commentary in *MD* vol. 2, p. 27. For reference: Field (26.11): “So whan **Kynge Ban** com into the batayle;” Vinaver (22.9): “So whan these two kyngis, **Ban and Bors**, com into the batayle;” Winchester (13v): “So whan these two kyngs **Ban & Bors**.” (*NB*: Bold-face type indicates rubrication in *W*.)

¹⁰ K. S. Whetter contends that the tombs for the dead rebels built by Arthur and Merlin “honour the noble rank and knightly prowess of Arthur’s enemies. But the tombs also emphasize the prominence of worship and prowess in the *Morte* by revealing how occasionally, and Lott is a notable example, a knight might be recognized as a man of *worship* and yet fight against Arthur. The worship of Arthur’s enemies is significant, for if his enemies are worthy opponents and yet insufficient to stand against him at length, then Arthur’s own glory is accordingly all the greater” (*Manuscript and Meaning* 165).

by those in power should proceed from an inward inclination of justice” (“Legitimate Authority” 362). Further, Aquinas warns against the “erroneous judgements that can arise from a defective appetite for justice” (“Legitimate Authority” 363). That is, if a man hates another man then it can lead the former to think evil of the latter and thus treat him with undue injustice: “justice is unique [compared to other moral virtues] insofar as the mental appreciation of another’s right, the judgement of what is or is not owed to him implies strict conformity with an objective standard” (“Legitimate Authority” 363). Thus, by respecting the prowess of Lot and the rebels whilst also helping to defeat the rebels Ban and Bors do not simply teach Arthur military prowess, but also instruct him in the virtues that accompany just kingship.

Part way through the battle with King Lot, Arthur becomes exceedingly angry at the kings who persistently fight against him: “Kynge Arthure had mervayle of their dedis of armys, and was passynge wrothe” (27.32–3). Ban and Bors rebuke him, saying that persistence is a good trait for a warrior and that Arthur needs to recognise good warriors whether or not they are on his side:

‘A, Sir Arthure,’ seyde Kynge Ban and Kynge Bors, ‘blame hem nat, for they do as good men ought to do. For be my fayth,’ seyde Kynge Ban, ‘they ar the beste fyghtynge men and knyghtes of moste prouesse that ever y saw other herde off speke. And tho eleven kyngis ar men of grete worship; and if they were longyng to you, there were no kynge undir hevyn that had suche eleven kyngis nother off suche worship.’ ‘I may nat love hem,’ seyde Kynge Arthure, ‘for they wolde destroy me.’ ‘That know we well,’ seyde Kynge Ban and Kynge Bors, ‘for they ar your mortall enemyes, and that hathe bene proved beforehonde. And thys day they have done their parte, and that ys grete pité of their wylfulness.’ (27.34–28.11)

Thus, part of being a good king is being able to recognise what makes a strong and warrior and potentially just person, even if these qualities reside within the enemy. Here, Ban and Bors recognise the good fighting of their enemies in the same way that King Lot previously recognised the strength of Ban in battle. Thus, part of Arthur's learning how to fight in war comes by recognising when his enemies act justly. Because one can only recognise justice in another if one has a fundamental understanding of it within oneself, Arthur's own just kingship emerges once he begins to see justice in others.

Hence, Arthur's growth and recognition of justice at the culmination of this battle nods towards his own just character: "whan Kynge Arthure and Kynge Ban and Bors behelde them and all hir knyghtes, they preysed them much for their noble chere of chevalry, for the hardyeste fyghters that ever they herde other sawe" (29.1-4). Arthur's willingness to praise both his and other knights for their prowess is also a clear sign that he has taken the advice of Kings Ban and Bors. Thus, his actions simultaneously prove that he is capable of listening to counsel and that he has the emergent traits of just kingship.

Arthur's growth in military prowess is evident in the praise he receives from various knights, including Lot's camp, but his "worship is all the greater considering that his opponents are later called 'the beste fyghters of the worlde' [30.1-2] and 'knyghtes of moste prouesse that ever y saw other herde off speke'[28.1-2]" (Whetter, "Historicity" 172). In addition, Arthur's good kingship is emphasised by the fact that by the culmination of battle he has attained the military status of Kings Ban and Bors. That is, Arthur's wars against King Lot begin with Kings Ban and Bors giving Arthur much advice as well as reprimanding him when he shows injustice. Both Arthur's military prowess as well as his ability to judge just actions crescendo in the narrative to a climax in the battle when Arthur, instead of following behind Ban and Bors, fights

alongside Ban and Bors: “so there com into the thycke of the prees Arthure, Ban, and Bors, and slew downeryght on bothe hondis, that hir horses wente in blood up to the fittlockys” (29.17–20). This is important because it shows Arthur’s progress in accepting counsel in martial and sovereign affairs, but also gives more space for Malory to demonstrate that Arthur has attained the status of just king even or especially when engaged in warfare. Because Ban and Bors have proven to be just kings themselves (by Merlin’s appraisal and their ability to give just counsel), it follows that placing Arthur at their level in battle also indicates that he is just. Further, it demonstrates that Arthur has now gained the necessary training to wage and fight just wars in the future. Arthur’s attainment of Ban’s and Bors’s status is visually emphasised in the rubrication of the three names, “**Arthure Ban & Bors,**” (29.18; *W* 15^r.9, bold-face indicates rubrication in *W*) in the Winchester manuscript (see Plate III) where Bors’s name is pushed off the margin in a possible scribal attempt to keep all three of the names together.¹¹ This rubrication parallels Arthur’s success with Ban and Bors as Lot’s army is driven back over a river and Merlin appears on “a grete blacke horse” (29.24) to praise Arthur. Merlin’s presence is emphasised here as he appears from apparently nowhere and, in the manuscript, the imagery of his black horse juxtaposes the red ink of his rubricated name to make his presence stand out in the midst of the war (*W* 15^r.14; see Plate III). Merlin praises Arthur, saying “of so fewe men as ye have, there was never men dud more worshipfully in proues than they have done to-day: for ye have macched thys day with the beste fyghters of the worlde,” (29.34–30.2) and Ban and Bors support

¹¹ For more on rubrication and its role in emphasising literary themes of the text in Malory’s *Morte Darthur* see Whetter’s *The Manuscript and Meaning of Malory’s Morte Darthur* and Helen Cooper’s “Opening Up the Malory Manuscript.”

Merlin's praise by saying "that ys trouthe" (30.3). Arthur's greatness in both prowess and kingship here is further consolidated in a rare example of meta-narrative at the end of the war when the scribes in the *Morte* chronicle the battle (30.29–34). Merlin, however, continues on to give Arthur counsel by instructing him to reward Kings Ban and Bors and then Arthur's own knights for their prowess:

all the goodis that be gotyn at this batayle, lette hit be serched, and whan ye have hit in your hondis lette hit be geffyn frely unto thes too kyngis, Ban and Bors, that they may rewarde their knyghtes wythall; and that shall cause straungers to be of bettir wyll to do you servyse at nede. Also ye be able to rewarde youre owne knyghtes of youre owne goodys at what tyme somever hit lykith you. (30.11–8)

This is important because Merlin guards Arthur against tyranny. That is, Arthur must not rest on his laurels, but rather move on to settle peace in his kingdom.

Robeson argues that Malory specifically honours the achievements of individuals: "Arthur and his knights' prowess and battlefield success at Bedgrayne are critical in establishing the Round Table's prestige" ("Warre and Worshyppe" 85). Thus, it is not an accident that Malory departs from his sources to praise Arthur's knights. A knight's conduct in battle was an important means for establishing his identity and for Malory a place at the Round Table is earned through knightly acts ("Warre and Worshyppe" 85). It is also interesting to note Robeson's contention that Malory's descriptions of battle here emphasises one-on-one actions: "the descriptions are more characteristic of tournaments than warfare;" Lynch, who is partly Robeson's source, makes a similar statement, that "Malory presents pitched battle as a series of individual duals" (*Malory's Book of Arms* 48). Robeson also references Larry D. Benson who argues that by the fifteenth century the winning of knightly honour was associated more with the

tournament than with warfare; however, “knights who earned their reputation for prowess in warfare were more esteemed than those who achieved it on the tournament field” (“Warre and Worshyppe” 86; following on Benson 167). Further, Robeson states that

At Bedgrayne, the battle in which Arthur participates in the roles of king, commander, and knight, and in which many of his future knights of the Round Table are introduced, it is by their combats, the worthiness of each knight is proved and the status of Arthur’s court as the proper home of ‘the floure of chevalry’ [95.31] confined. (“Warre and Worshyppe” 86)

Lynch asserts that a knight’s conduct in battle is an important means for establishing his identity, and for Malory, a place at the Round Table is earned through knightly acts (Lynch, *Malory’s Book of Arms* 43–45; and Robeson, “Warre and Worshyppe” 85). Thus, Arthur’s place as head of the Round Table is not only his right as king but has also been earned through his success in warfare. It is significant, therefore, that it is at Bedgrayne that Arthur fights so heroically that his shield becomes so covered in blood that it is no longer recognizable. As Robeson observes, Arthur here “has earned the high worship of honour in warfare” (“Warre and Worshyppe” 85). That is, the covering of his shield illustrates his military strength. Robeson further argues that the emphasis on Arthur’s character and specifically battle fury in this passage demonstrates Arthur’s power and the comprehension of his responsibility towards his people, while Malory’s comparison of Arthur to a lion intensifies his prowess and might in battle (“Warre and Worshyppe” 84). Arthur’s attitude towards securing peace in the midst of warfare is emphasised by Malory’s change in narrative style. The Battle of Bedgrayne introduces Arthur to the audience as a good king, it introduces the prowess of his future Round Table knights, and shows the emergence of the High Order of Knighthood which will be concretely symbolized in the Round

Table itself: “Arthur and his knights for the first time establish a corporate identity” (Robeson, “Warre and Worshyppe” 86). Further, “Arthur’s success against the rebel kings not only stabilizes Britain politically but also transforms the young knight from a warrior-king to a chivalric king presiding over an order of knights” (Robeson, “Warre and Worshyppe” 89). Thus, Arthur fights *jus in bello* and through his actions demonstrates his knightly prowess as well as his ability to fight as a just king.

* * *

Whether one views Arthur’s wars through Aquinas’s thirteenth-century just war framework, Malory’s fifteenth-century understanding of just war, or twenty-first century approaches to just war theory Arthur remains a just king and a just warrior. Recent developments in just war theory largely pioneered by James Pattison argue that in addition to *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, just warfare also necessitates *jus post bellum* (“*Jus Post Bellum*” 636). That is, there is a responsibility to ensure the establishment of peace after war and to rebuild what was negatively affected during the war. Although Aquinas and Keen argue that the waging of war must have the attainment of peace as the primary goal (*Summa Theologiae*, 2a2æ 40.1; *The Laws of War* 64), they do not investigate the responsibilities of establishing that peace in the aftermath of war. Pattison’s argument is important because Arthur’s successful establishment of peace within the kingdom after war, as well as his swift ability to amalgamate the kingdom *post bellum*, adds another dimension to Arthur’s just character and kingship. I argue that Arthur acts justly in the aftermath of war because he takes on the responsibility of rebuilding and amalgamating the kingdom with the aim of attaining peace. In taking over the responsibility of rebuilding *post bellum* he takes advice from Merlin, Kings Ban and Bors, as well as his barons. Further, after establishing peace he founds the High Order of Knighthood, which will act as a counselling body

to oversee justice later on in the *Morte* and in Arthur's warring career. Thus, whether viewing Arthur's wars in Tale I through a lens that is grounded in fifteenth-century contemporary just war theory, or through a lens that views war through modern-day developments in just war theory, Arthur remains a just king before, during, and after war.

At the culmination of Tale I, Arthur post-war establishes himself as a suitable representation of chivalry and becomes the leader of a kingdom governed by the High Order of Knighthood whose polity is governed by the Round Table Oath. Robeson argues that Arthur's position is two-fold as he literally becomes ruler over his knights, but also figuratively head of the chivalric system which establishes and will maintain, at least for a while, peace within the kingdom; and further, his position is consolidated by the worship he gained in the battlefield ("Warre and Worshyppe" 83).¹² Robert L. Kelly notes that Eugène Vinaver observes that the Pentecostal Oath at the end of Tale I is wholly original to Malory and "perhaps the most complete and authentic record of *M[alory]*'s conception of chivalry" ("Royal Policy" 43; following on Vinaver O³ p. 1335, note to text 120.11–28). Furthermore, Kelly references Wright's argument which claims that Malory forgoes some of the religious aspects of chivalry in order to produce a Round Table that is much more secular than in the source ("Royal Policy" 44; following on Wright, "The Tale of King Arthur" pp. 34–44). Consequently, Arthur meets all of

¹² Megan Leitch claims, in her book *Romancing Treason*, that "because the Round Table oath is reminiscent of the teachings of fifteenth-century courtesy books, it reminds contemporary readers that, in both the Arthurian world and their own, personal worship depends upon fulfilling social obligations, while contravening them leads to loss of community" (100). Consequently, by earning worship on the battlefield Arthur not only solidifies his position as king, but also strengthens the chivalric community, of which he is head, through his fulfilling of social obligations.

the secular and religious requirements of the Middle Ages to hold kingship. Through his sovereignty Arthur is able and, in the case against King Lot's camp, obliged to wage just warfare. All of which he does under the mediæval requirements for *jus ad bellum*. That is, he has a just cause to wage war because he is protecting his kingdom and polity from internal threats, and wages war with a purpose to bring peace to his kingdom. Furthermore, Malory introduces the themes of council and counselling to show Arthur's progression towards just kingship and to demonstrate to the audience that he is not a tyrant, with Malory underscoring Arthur's justness through his ability to accept counsel and form counselling bodies. At the culmination of war, Arthur's just kingship is consolidated in the formation of the High Order of knighthood, which is concretely represented by the Round Table. Malory's Tale I is thus an important template for just warfare and just kingship, which serves to foreshadow and define Arthur's good kingship in his later wars. Malory's purpose in using many devices to describe and establish Arthur's justness leaves no room for doubting Arthur's just character or his rightful conduct before, during, and after war.

Thus, Arthur is not tyrannical as some would purport him to be because he is revealed as king by Merlin, God, the sword-in-the-stone, and the commons. Through his appointment as king, Arthur is given the responsibility to protect both his kingship and his polity. Part of protecting his kingdom comes through his right to wage justified war against those who seek to attack either his kingship or his polity. Against theological and philosophical attitudes to just war, Arthur is just in fighting against the barons in Tale I. Furthermore, through Arthur's interactions with the rebels in the war space, Malory shows how Arthur learns to depend on counsel and that through war Arthur is able to become a better template for just kingship.

CHAPTER TWO

Arthur's Establishment of Power and His Wars Against Foreign Threat

The issue of just warfare in Tale II, although important, has been overshadowed by debates about sources. Furthermore, there is a critical trend to conflate Malory and his sources in this section of the narrative. Much scholarship has been dedicated to determining precisely what Malory's sources were for his *Morte Darthur*. Ralph Norris argues that source study is imperative to Malory scholarship because it not only illuminates the artistic genius of Malory's work and the "sophisticated relationship" Malory had with those sources ("Malory and His Sources" 32), but also deepens our understanding of how Malory's reworkings of his sources develop and emphasise major themes within his text ("Malory and His Sources" 52). The great paradox and genius of the *Morte* is that "although he invented very little from scratch, Malory nevertheless created something greater than the sum of his various sources" ("Malory and His Sources" 47). Malory's main source for the Roman War story of Tale II was the English alliterative poem *Morte Arthure*, augmented with John Hardyng's English historical *Chronicle* and the French prose romance *Suite du Merlin*.¹ Eugène Vinaver argues that the alliterative *Morte Arthure*'s influence on Malory's Tale II is strong enough to suggest that Tale II was probably written before Tale I ("Introduction," in *The Works*, ed. Vinaver, 1 vii–lxxii). Although more recent

¹ For full details on Malory's sources see especially the chart "Malory's Sources" on page 49 in Norris 32–52; also Vinaver, ed., Introduction and Commentary to *Works*. For the availability of sources to Malory see Crofts and Whetter, "Writing the *Morte Darthur*" especially 53–57.

scholarship refutes this position (Kennedy, “Malory and His English Sources” 28–39), the presence of this argument in early debates concerning Malory and his sources opens up discussions on the order in which Malory chose to compose his tales (Norris, “Malory and His Sources” 51). More significantly for my purposes, this debate about the alliterative *Morte*'s important status in Malory scholarship justifies extending my focus from Malory's Roman War story to include an examination of the same story in the alliterative source. The alliterative poem's importance as a primary text to Malory's Tale II is such that scholarship on the former is germane to this chapter. Indeed, a parallel can be drawn between the influence of the alliterative poem as a source-text for Malory's *Morte* and Malory's approach to warfare, and the influence that scholarship on the alliterative *Morte* is having on scholars writing about Malory's text.² That is, literary analyses of battle scenes and kingship in the alliterative poem have bled into the scholarly analysis concerning King Arthur's conduct as a king and warrior in Malory's *Morte*.³ Although Malory's Tale II takes its plot-line from the first 3218 lines of the alliterative *Morte*, thereby making it appropriate to consider scholarship on the latter text when analyzing the former, much current scholarship fails to recognise or acknowledge the changes Malory makes to his tale from his source text when presenting claims concerning Arthur's just or unjust conduct during war. The purpose of this chapter is thus to illustrate the extent to which scholarship that upholds Malory's Arthur as a poor template for kingship is itself sourced out of a misreading of

² I owe this observation to K. S. Whetter.

³ For example, Raluca L. Radulescu uses Peck's theoretical model in her lecture, “Portable Arthur,” when she makes the passing claim that Arthur begins as a good template for kingship, but ultimately fails and instead becomes a template for poor kingship.

the alliterative *Morte Arthure*. This analysis is tied to the issue of Arthur's kingship and conquests.

It is my contention that recent claims supporting Arthur's status as a poor, unjust, or even tyrannical ruler in Tale II of Malory's *Morte* stem from a misreading of the alliterative *Morte's* King Arthur.⁴ Fundamentally, scholarship concerning Arthur's status as ruler and conquering warrior in the alliterative *Morte* has infected Malorian scholarship on this subject to the extent that the two debates have been wrongly joined. The alliterative *Morte Arthure*, written anywhere between 1378 and 1402, gives an account of Arthur's last campaigns and his death, with the poet promising in his prologue that "those who like to hear deeds of olden time [will hear] a noble tale about the great knights of the Round Table and how they conquered the kingdom of Rome" (Burrow 77, paraphrasing aMA 12–25). Although, as J. A. Burrow argues, "it would seem that the poem is firmly set on an encomiastic course" (77), much scholarship following William Matthew's and Russel A. Peck's readings of the alliterative poem has diverged away from celebrating King Arthur as a good king, contending instead that Arthur is in fact a poor template for kingship: that he is an unjust king whose war-plans become "openly imperialistic" as the poem progresses (Hamel, ed., note to lines 2399–405, p. 332). In what follows, I intend to show why debates concerning King Arthur's just character in the alliterative poem and in Malory's *Morte* cannot occupy the same spaces. This will be achieved by countering criticism concerning Arthur's poor kingship in the *Morte Arthure* and Malory's *Morte* by treating each text's Arthur

⁴ For Fiona Tolhurst's and K. S. Whetter's argument that "the persistence of anti-war and anti-Arthur readings of the Alliterative *Morte Arthure* can be accounted for by historicizing current scholarship within the contexts of Victorian moralizing and modern memories of war" (90) see their "Memories of War".

individually. Arthur's kingship in the former text will be addressed by investigating several lacunæ in Peck's argument. Concerning the latter text, I will demonstrate how Malory's Arthur stands as a justly fashioned king by examining the changes Malory makes from his main source-text, the alliterative *Morte Arthure*. Whilst my readings in this chapter present both Arthurs as ultimately good kings, Malory moves his Arthur's imperial successes from the end of the king's career in the poem to the beginning of his career and the near-beginning of Malory's book in order to fashion an Arthur who is, from the beginning, a much stronger representative of good kingship than current scholarship allows.

Russell A. Peck argues in his influential reading of the alliterative *Morte* that Arthur is initially presented as a good king, yet he is also a king who chooses to follow the circular motion of the Wheel of Fortune by neglecting governance over his personal self and "willfully" becoming a template for poor kingship (153–82). Peck cleverly demonstrates this idea through a "hysteron proteron fashion" wherein King Arthur's "actions of the second half of the poem tend to reflect deluded judgement and to parody the more rationally orientated events of the first part" (157); for Peck, the Battle of Sesseine and Arthur's defeat of Lucius act as the fulcrum to his reading of the narrative and to his theory. Although Peck's argument is plausible on some grounds, he overemphasises aspects of Arthur's character to fit him into his all too tight "hysteron proteron" framework. In particular, Peck fails to mention key moments running throughout the poem that explicitly nod to Arthur's continuous and exemplary just kingship. Amongst the many lacunæ in Peck's argument are three important issues concerning Arthur's status as just king and warrior that need addressing: (i) Arthur's justification for war at the beginning of the poem; (ii) Peck's claim that the alliterative poet's praise is ironic; and (iii) the

significance of the scene between the duchess and Arthur at the Siege of Metz, a scene that Peck (like Matthews before him) sees as symbolizing Arthur's willful fall from just kingship.

* * *

It is important to note how the anonymous poet of the *Morte Arthure* begins his panegyric, or praise poem. The poet begins with a chronicle detailing all of the lost ancestral lands that Arthur has successfully recovered following Uther's poor reign. This opening culminates in Arthur's building of the City of Cærleon, which demonstrates his ability to be both a conqueror and a provider for his people:

Qwen that the Kyng Arthur by conqeste hade wonnyn
Castells and kyngdoms and contreez many,
.....
In Glamorgan with glee, thare gladchipe was euere.
And thare a citee he sette, by assentte of his lordys
That Cærlyon was callid, with curius walles,
On the riche reuare þat rynnys so faire:
There he myghte semble his sorte to see whenn hym lykyde.
(aMA 26–63)

Molly Martin contends that throughout the Middle Ages castles, as spaces, “became seats of royal and seigniorial power” and have been shown to be “deeply invested in symbolizing that power.” Further, she notes that “cultural order is created by the castle’s presence, and power is wielded ... through its ownership” (24). Although Martin’s argument pertains to Malory’s *Morte*, Arthur in the alliterative poem does construct a city with “curius walles” (aMA 61) near a river where “he myghte semble his sorte to see whenn hym lykyde” (aMA 63). In other words, he

builds or “sette[s]” a castle. Cærlyon is a symbol of the culmination of Arthur’s successes, but also represents a manifestation of Arthur’s authority, which strongly correlates to his peaceable and “successful political regime” (Martin 25). Hence, the poet begins his poem by setting Arthur within a very public space that reflects his colossal successes, yet this space deeply signifies and reveals a kingdom governed by order. This restored land with its peaceful and strong governance indicates Arthur’s healthy kingship at the beginning of the poem.

Peck argues here that Arthur begins in what seems to be splendour where “the opening scene is designed to show Arthur as a powerful and wise king ... [with] the founding of the city [of Cærlyon] as a sign of Arthur’s generative behavior” (158–59); however, Peck uses Arthur’s achievements to reflect his reading of Arthur’s interiority by stating that these successes show the “completeness of Arthur’s satisfaction” (159). For Peck, this scene neatly foreshadows Arthur’s supposed selfish desires in the latter half of the poem. It is my contention that Peck reads too much into the poet’s opening lines because the poet’s military language, used to describe Arthur’s successes in battle, functions to heighten Arthur’s just martial achievements rather than to fashion him into a selfish tyrant. As John Finlayson notes, the opening scene presents the audience with an heroic Arthur: “the list of [Arthur’s opening] conquests is long and impressive [aMA 26–47], and immediately brings the hero before us almost at the height of his powers” (15). Tolhurst and Whetter similarly note that the alliterative poet valorizes prowess in war, which places the poem within the epic-heroic tradition. This valorization of prowess in war is clear because they show that the poet consistently uses pious language within martial contexts to praise Arthur on several levels (“Memories of War” 91). The poet also makes it clear that Arthur is far from tyrannical because his first order of business following his early battles is to dub his best knights and provide a stable governance over the land: “mad of his cosyns kyngys

ennoyntede,/ In kyth there they couaitte crounes to bere” (50–51). Notably, the rightful king only rests after convening the Round Table: “whene he thes rewmes hade redyn and rewlyde the pople,/ Then rystede that ryall and helde þe Rounde Tabyll” (52–53). Likewise, Arthur only builds the city of Cærlyon after asking the approval of his knights: “And thare a citee he sette, by assentte of his lordys” (60). These actions demonstrate traits of Arthur’s good kingship because providing for the “material and spiritual welfare of the people” is a sign of a good mediæval king (Tolhurst and Whetter, “Memories of War” 96). Hence, the promising description of Arthur’s just governance over his land, foreshadowed in the poet’s long chronicle of Arthur’s successes, paints a strong picture of Arthur’s just sovereignty wherein one observes that he cares for his knights and polity before resting on his own laurels. This opening scene finishes with Arthur convening with the Round Table, which is a representation of good and diversified council. The alliterative poet thus presents a picture of Arthur’s just kingship, in which he is able to govern his people with sound reason and is not morally swayed by his own imperial successes. This positive portrayal of Arthur stifles Peck’s thesis that the poet is foreshadowing a future selfish and tyrannical Arthur by establishing from the outset Arthur’s consistent commitment to maintaining a healthy and just kingship throughout the rest of the narrative.

As Martin goes on to point out, Malory follows on the alliterative poet in his Tale II by underscoring the political stability of Arthur’s kingdom in the opening passages. Malory foregrounds this by emphasising the magnitude of Arthur’s wealth and producing a relaxed atmosphere with King Arthur in the opening political space (Martin 36; *MD* 145.1–9). Arthur’s maintenance of a healthy kingship is demonstrated through Arthur’s ability to maintain an equilibrium between spaces of war and spaces of peace. Martin especially notes how Malory’s Arthur constantly places himself between these spaces of war and peace where he is able

successfully to maintain his outlook on his kingdom's present peaceful state, but equally keep a sharp watch on the ever-present threat of war. This is observed in the peaceable and rich opening to Malory's Tale II, which is noticeably interlaced with references to war:

HYT BEFELLE WHAN Kyng Arthur had wedded Quene Gwenyvere and fulfilled the Rounde Table, and so aftir his mervelous knyghtis and he had venquyshed the moste party of his enemyes, than sone aftir com Sir Launcelot de Lake unto the courte, and Sir Trystrams come that tyme also. And than he rested and helde a royall feste and table rounde with his alyes of kynges, prynces, and noble knyghtes all of the Rounde Table." (145.1–9)

In this passage, one can see that within the same phrase Malory moves in and between several spaces that alternate between references to peace and war: from Arthur's wedding, to a gathering of the Round Table fellowship following a war, to Arthur's court where he holds a royal feast. This movement is important because, as Martin notes, it demonstrates Arthur's "consolidation of power through war, through the establishment of the Round Table, and through marriage" (36). Yet, more importantly, Malory gives the audience a glimpse of "Arthur's political reach" and the type of power he wishes to wield (Martin 36). That is, in Malory's opening sentence to the Roman War one observes how Arthur's successful negotiation of these polar spaces strengthens the contention that Arthur is able, successfully, to govern his kingdom in both war- and peace-times. Arthur's ability to balance both spheres—that of peace and of war—provides another lens through which one can read Malory's Arthur as a just king.

The just and balanced nature of Arthur's kingship in both Malory's and the poet's opening scenes serves to emphasise the justness of both Arthurs' decisions to wage war against the Roman Emperor. In the alliterative poem, Arthur's just decision to wage war against Rome

follows the poet's announcement of the arrival of Emperor Lucius's messengers with their threat of foreign invasion from the Emperor:

So come in sodanly a senatour of Rome
Wyth sexten knyghtes in a soyte sewande hym one
.....
'Sir Lucius Iberius, the Emperour of Rome,
Saluz the as sugett. Vndyre his sele ryche.
It es credens, sir Kynge, with cruell wordez;
Trow it for no truffles, his targe es to schewe. (80–89)

The senator's sudden intrusion into King Arthur's court with his message that Lucius desires Arthur to be his vassal threatens Arthur's kingship. Arthur as king has a duty to keep his kingdom unified and protect his polity from external threat, and since Lucius demands unjustified tribute and threatens invasion and death, Arthur's decision to wage war against Rome is not only a just decision on his part, but also forms the foundation for Arthur's just kingship and chivalry at home and abroad. On this issue, Gregory M. Reichberg, who follows on Thomas Aquinas, argues that "repelling an attack can be just, provided it is a necessary and proportionate response to unjustified violence" ("Legitimate Authority" 348). Although Burrow recognises that "the poem never questions Arthur's right to defend his own realm" (78)—and I would add that what is implicit in Burrow's thesis is that the poet's mediæval audience likely did not critique Arthur's decision to wage war against Lucius either—a modern-day audience may critique this choice. For example, in 1960, William Matthews argued that all of Arthur's wars in the alliterative *Morte* are unjust from the outset and thus he reads Arthur as a sinful tyrant

throughout the poem (*Tragedy of Arthur*, throughout).⁵ In contrast, Finlayson contended in 1967 that Arthur is tragic but heroic, insisting that Arthur's wars in the first half of the poem are entirely acceptable; even Finlayson, though, accepts that Arthur's conquests of Lombardy and Lorraine are overly ambitious and unjust wars of "aggression and acquisition" (Finlayson, ed., *Morte Arthure* note to lines 80–1). Then, almost twenty years later, Peck adds his voice to this modern critique of Arthur's later wars in the alliterative *Morte* (153–82).

Unlike Finlayson, Peck does not explicitly state whether or not he believes Arthur is in the right for waging war against Lucius, but he does acknowledge that "Arthur shows balanced judgement" before making his decision to wage war: "instead of leaping after the words of the 'meruailous man,' [aMA 260] he would 'trette of a trew towchande pise nedes' [aMA 263] ... [and] rather than succumb to Lucius' demands, Arthur will meet him in the field to defend his own" (160). Consequently, although Matthews, and to an extent Finlayson and Peck, argue that Arthur is unjust to wage war against Rome, Arthur's Round Table knights, the general polity, and even Lucius's messengers agree that Arthur is justified to engage in this war. This argument that Arthur is just to engage in war with Lucius also applies to Arthur's decision to wage war against the Emperor in Malory's Tale II version of the Roman War story because Malory keeps Emperor Lucius's demands and threats (46.9–19). Ultimately, Arthur's decision to wage war against Lucius in both the poet's and Malory's versions is just because he is repelling an attack

⁵ Fiona Tolhurst and K. S. Whetter note that currently most scholarship on the alliterative *Morte Arthure* follows on Matthews' 1960 interpretation that undercuts "Arthur's heroism, highlight[s] his failings, and critique[s] his unjust wars" ("Memories of War" 88).

and by doing so Arthur is protecting his rightful kingship and his polity from unjustified violence.

In light of theological and philosophical frameworks of justified war Arthur is right to wage war against Emperor Lucius; however, it is significant that the poet and Malory emphasise Arthur's justness through their characterisation of him because it helps build the argument that Arthur is a just king throughout the alliterative and prose *Mort*. Furthermore, this positive treatment of Arthur later serves to magnify the *pathos* that the audience feels for him during his tragic fall in Chapter Three of this thesis. Consequently, it is important to note that Arthur's decision to wage war is made with his head and not his emotions. Mary E. Dichmann claims that "the ability to command oneself necessarily precedes the ability to command others" (81). Thus, by placing emphasis on Arthur's intelligence rather than on his emotion, Malory persistently portrays King Arthur as a character defined by self-control, an important and necessary trait for just kingship. Malory emphasises his Arthur's just character by adjusting Arthur's character when lifting him from his alliterative source. In the alliterative *Morte*, Arthur's countenance following the Roman messenger's demand for tribute is clearly irate, prolonged, and much more detailed:

The kyng blyschit on the beryn with his brode eghn,
Pat full brymly for breth brynte as the gledys;
Keste colours as kyng with crouell lates,
Luked as a lyon and on his lyppe bytes. (116–19)

Malory, instead, opts to use only one line to describe Arthur's emotion and quickly moves to Arthur deciding to call on counsel, preventing his emotion from prevailing. Although Malory's

Arthur “looked up with his gray yghen and angred at the messyngers passyng sore” (*MD* 145.25–26), he follows this wave of emotion with a calm, thoughtful, and calculated response:

for all thy brym wordys I woll nat be to over-hasty, and therefore thou and thy felowys shall abyde here seven dayes, and shall calle unto me my counceyle of my moste trusty knyghtes and deukes and regeaunte kynges, and erlys and barowns and of my moste wyse doctours. And whan we have takynoure avysement ye shall have your answeare playnly, suche as I shall abyde by.

(146.20–26)

While both Arthurs are justified to respond to Lucius’s message with anger, Malory presents a much more self-controlled version of Arthur to demonstrate that his Arthur will not wage war on emotion alone; rather, Malory is more concerned with presenting an Arthur who wages war based on reason and council than on emotion. This self-control in Malory’s Arthur is evident in the handling of the Roman Embassy where Arthur makes his decision on two conditions: first, the messengers must wait in Arthur’s court for seven days; and, secondly, Arthur must consult his “moste trusty” council. The prime number seven is important here because it represents wholeness and unity, signifying that Arthur’s decision will be deemed perfect. The wholeness of seven combined with Arthur’s decision to consult his “beste counceyle” (114), who notably come from varied backgrounds representing all of his kingdoms, remind Malory’s audience of the importance of counselling in Tale I and its concretization into what Malory repeatedly calls the High Order of Knighthood associated with the Round Table. This taking of counsel is also important because both the poet and Malory use the council scene to clarify that Rome is the aggressor and Arthur is defending his kingdom in a just war. This counselling parallel in Malory’s *Morte* is relevant because it draws a line back to Chapter One and Tale I and Arthur’s

oaths and ultimate duties as king to protect his polity against internal and external threats; however, the counselling pattern also serves to remind the audience of the bildungsroman genre of the *Morte Darthur* where Arthur has now internalised his continual need to call on counsel, rather than being told to do so by Merlin and others, before exercising any decisions regarding the state. That is, in Malory's Tale II, it is important to recognise that Arthur perpetually forgoes being governed by his emotions, and draws on the Round Table for counsel before deciding on anything concerning his kingdom and polity. Ultimately, although both Malory's and the poet's Arthurs give just responses to the Romans, Malory presents his Arthur as an even better representation of just kingship through his persistent ability to rely on reason and council, rather than on emotion.

Arthur's just kingship is further emphasised in his decision to bring council literally and figuratively with him to Rome. Following Arthur's decision to wage war against Rome, there is a sense that Arthur will bring the Round Table with him on his journey to Rome both literally in the form of his Round Table knights, and figuratively in the form of royal counsel. When Arthur arranges to leave England to fight Rome, he says, "in all haste me redy make with my keene knyghtes, and *by the rever of Roone holde my Rounde Table*" (*MD* 149.10–11; *O*³ 190.16–18).⁶ This is subsequently repeated when he declares that "all shulde be assembled for to holde a

⁶ Here I quote from Field's 2013 edition of Malory's text, but I have marked with asterisks where Vinaver marks the specific lines that are lifted from the alliterative source. In Vinaver's edition the lines are marked with straight commas, however, for this thesis I use an asterisk. Henceforth, regular text is taken from Field's 2013 edition of the *Morte* and the corresponding lines from Vinaver's third edition will be referenced with its abbreviation (*O*³) following the Field edition reference.

parlement at Yorke” (*MD* 152.1–2), and before they set sail, “there were the moste party of all the Rounde Table redy on tho bankes for to sayle whan the kynge lyked” (152.29–31). This is important because Arthur does what a good king should do by willingly seeking and receiving counsel from his Round Table.⁷ These examples also demonstrate Malory’s concern with characterisation and the bildungsroman-style development of character in his narrative. In these scenes, Arthur actively engages with council on his own intuition and is able to govern and protect his kingdom with less help from others: Merlin and Kings Bors and Ban, for example, so integral to Arthur’s decision-making in Tale I, are no longer needed. It is a concern for Malory to portray Arthur as either a good or a bad king and character—and he consistently chooses the former portrait. One way in which he does this is by showcasing Arthur’s preordained right to rule accorded to him by the power of the sword-in-the-stone, which gives him the sovereign right to wage war, including his war with Rome. Malory adjusts Arthur’s characterisation by showing how his Arthur responds differently to plot-contingencies present in both narratives. The changes Malory makes in fabricating Arthur’s character illustrates his continued concern for how he portrays his characters within his narrative, and works to make his Arthur an even better representation of just kingship than the good King Arthur in the alliterative poem.

Malory’s careful attention to title patterns is reflexive of his deep concern for characterisation, thus making it no accident that Arthur’s encounters with war in Tale II work to shape him as a just template for kingship and chivalry. By drawing the sword from the stone in Tale I, Malory’s Arthur gains kingship over the land along with all the responsibilities pertaining

⁷ For more on council and kingship see Watts 1–12 and 13–80.

to his kingship. As described in Chapter One, an important aspect of his kingship is the responsibility to wage just war in order to protect his kingdom from internal and external threats. It then follows that the sword-in-the-stone becomes, both literally and figuratively, a sword of war; that is, declaring war is invested within the raising of Excalibur by Arthur before and during war. Arthur's power to draw the sword of war, to wage war, is instilled within him by his "kyng[ship]," or preordained sovereignty, and this motif recurs in the naming choices before each of his fights: in waging war against Rome, in his encounter with the giant, in his duel against Lucius, and before the walled city. That is, Arthur's name shifts from variants of "Kyng Arthur," "Crowned Kyng," and "Conquerour" when waging war throughout Tale II, into "Syr Arthure" when actively fighting the war. This change is important because it reiterates the themes of kingship and chivalry that dominate the tale. In choosing to name Arthur "Kyng" before his skirmishes, Malory reminds his audience of the power invested within Arthur, as king, justly to declare war. In shifting to "Syr" following the waging of war, the audience is reminded of Arthur's martial prowess, his role as a template for chivalry, and his role as a fellow knight of the Round Table. This is consistently demonstrated in Malory's *Morte* when Malory changes the emphasis on Arthur's character to shift focus from his role as king into his role as chivalric knight, as he simultaneously moves from a position of waging to engaging in war.⁸ One example

⁸ Mark Lambert and Dhira B. Mahoney notice Malory's tendency to switch between Sir and King Arthur in his narrative; however, neither go as far as I do in suggesting that this naming pattern is thematically significant. In fact, Lambert suggests that the naming pattern may be a scribal error (66 and note to text 12), and Mahoney suggests that the naming pattern is accidental: "it seems that Malory as narrator uses 'sir Arthur' when he is thinking of Arthur as

of this shift in naming is demonstrated when Arthur arrives in France and decides to defeat the giant who is pillaging and killing the people of the nearby town. Arthur is named “kynge” when he listens to the people and decides to defeat the giant in single combat and thus save the people from the giant’s horrible deeds: “the kynge seyde, ‘Goodman, pees, and carpe to me no more! *Thy soth sawys have greved sore my herte’*” (*MD* 155.4–5; *O*³ 199.18–19). Before officially declaring war Arthur calls on counsel: for “than the *kynge* called to hym sir Kay in counceyle” (*MD* 155.7, my emphasis), and follows with an order to Sir Bedwere to prepare for battle.

Immediately, Arthur begins to dress himself for war, and here his name switches to “Sir Arthure” (155.13) for the first time in this episode: “Anone *Sir Arthure* wente to his wardrop and caste on his armoure bothe his gesseraunte and his basnet with his brode shyldes” (155.13–14, my emphasis). This is recapitulated by the widow he encounters who calles him “carefull knyght!” (155.31), with his answer focusing on his position as a knight, yet his narrator focusing on his dual nature as knight and king: “‘Dame,’ seyde the *kynge*, ‘I com fro the noble Conquerroure, Sir Arthure, for to trette with that tirraunte for his lyege peple’ ... than [the giant] rored and brayed and yet angurly he strykes, and fayled of *Sir Arthure* and the erthe hittis” (156.4–5; 157.20–21, my emphases). Interestingly, although Malory carefully distinguishes between “Kynge” and “Sir” by only using “Sir” when Arthur is fighting, during the most heated moments between Arthur and the giant this duality of king and knight is emphasised as the giant smites at both “Kynge” and “Sir” Arthur. That is, “Kynge” Arthur is used before the fight, at the beginning of the fight as he

an individual warrior rather than a king. I must stress that this is instinctive rather than deliberate usage ... it is clear that Malory is an unconscious rather than conscious stylist” (651-52).

declares battle and thus draws his sword, and following the fight when he restores peace to the citizens. “Sir” is only used when he is dressing for war and when he is in the midst of battle. In this sense, the ‘Sir’ titles when Arthur fights a personal battle against a monstrous foe emphasise his own potential heroism and prowess, which are good traits for a king (especially in Malory’s *Morte*) and are confirmed by Arthur’s victory over the giant. But the giant fight is part of the larger war with Rome, at least in terms of its narrative location, so Sir Arthur’s prowess and heroism, in trying to protect people and especially women, reflects his larger goal as king, protecting his people from Rome. Thus, the giant’s evil and Arthur’s victory demonstrates his prowess as a skilled knight, but also strengthens his kingship, showcasing him to be a just king and warrior. Arthur’s good kingship is further emphasised in his actions following this skirmish as he takes no treasure from the giant, praises God, and not himself, for his victory saying, “all thanke ye God ... and no man ellys” (123) and restores peace amongst the polity. This naming pattern is important because it adds a dimension of development to Arthur’s character and thus emphasises the bildungsroman genre of Malory’s *Morte* where Arthur’s encounters with plot-contingencies develop his just kingship.

Ultimately, Malory demonstrates how the theatre of war molds or shapes characters’ identities. This is important because Arthur could begin well and develop into a just king, as I have suggested in this chapter, or he could begin well, but turn tyrannical as he accumulates accolades and possessions, which is a position advocated of alliterative Arthur by Peck, Matthews, and others. Malory, however, is careful to preserve the good aspects of Arthur’s kingship from his source-text, the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, yet fine-tunes these character-traits to produce both a more realistic character who must deal with the contingencies of war, and a king who is even better than the one in the alliterative poem. In a sense, Arthur is placed into the

theatre of war, and given freewill to use his power, which has been instated within his role as king, to do either good or bad for his kingdom. As has been shown, Arthur persistently chooses good over evil in these tales by continually turning to counsel and fighting justly for the betterment of his kingdom. Thus, although I contend that both the alliterative *Morte* and Malory's *Morte* present good King Arthurs, much of the scholarship that upholds Malory's Arthur as a poor template for kingship is seemingly sourced out of a misreading of the alliterative *Morte Arthur*. This is especially true of Lexton, who argues throughout her book that Malory's Arthur is a war-mongering tyrant, thereby adopting Matthews' and Peck's critiques of the alliterative poem onto Malory's text. By viewing both texts through the lenses of kingship and warfare, one can clearly see that although neither Arthur is perfect, both aim to make just decisions in war; and in aiming to portray Arthur as a good king, Malory produces an Arthur who is even better than his sources.

* * *

The alliterative poet praises Arthur's ability to rule justly in both war- and peace-times to further accentuate Arthur's position as a just king. According to J. A. Burrow, the alliterative *Morte Arthure* is a panegyric poem (77–88). A panegyric poem is a form of laudatory discourse that has a history stemming from ancient Greek cultures wherein one would offer praise through poetry to someone or something (Burrow 6). Burrow argues that one of the chief functions of poetry in previous times was to praise gods, people, and things: "heroes and kings were glorified in many varieties of praise, and the arts of encomium and panegyric were codified by classical rhetoricians and later by writers on poetry" (i). Despite its classical origins, however, the praise poem is also found in the Middle Ages and Burrow dedicates part of his argument to the alliterative *Morte*, claiming that the poem ends as it begins "in high auxetic style, glorifying

King Arthur and his noble Knights of the Round Table” (87). Burrow notes that the decline of praise in English literature since the seventeenth century has given way to a modern tendency to ignore “poetry of praise.” One example is Peck who claims that the alliterative poet’s praise in the *Morte Arthure* is ironic because the poet holds Arthur in high estate, yet fails to foreshadow his tragic end (156), adding further that even though Arthur’s Roman enemies also praise him, this praise is accidental because it stems from Arthur’s ability to instill magnanimous terror within them, leaving the Romans without a choice but to praise him (160). As I will show, rebutting Peck’s claim that the poet’s praise for Arthur is ironic in the alliterative *Morte* is important because it enables one to trace more plainly the justness of Arthur’s kingship throughout the poem.

Concerning the first part of Peck’s claim that the poet is ironic in praising Arthur’s greatness, when one loosely tracks praise throughout the poem, one can see that the poet’s praise for Arthur consistently corresponds to Arthur’s just actions throughout and especially towards the end of the poem. For example, directly before, as well as following, Arthur’s encounter with the cannibal and rapist giant, Arthur is referred to as “this comlych kynge” and “þe comlyche kynge” (aMA 1053 and 1199, respectively), which can be loosely translated to “noble” or “excellent king.” By exalting Arthur’s character through this distinctive naming pattern, the poet demonstrates his approval of Arthur’s just decision to slay the giant and save the local polity from the giant’s tyrannical threat. Another example comes following Arthur’s defeating of Emperor Lucius when the poet cleverly links praise for Arthur’s war-strength with a reference to his just kingship and a nod to the moral paradigm he strives to live for as represented through the knights of the Round Table. In this scene, Arthur “come with his strenghes/ to reschewe þe ryche men of þe Rounde Table” (aMA 2242–243). Here, the poet’s mention of the Round Table

foregrounds Arthur's dedication to saving his knights, but, more importantly, shows his ultimate commitment to the moral principles of the Round Table.⁹ Another example of how the poet's praise parallels Arthur's just actions follows after Arthur has his dream of the Wheel of Fortune and discovers that he will soon fall from the height of his glory. While Arthur recognises his awful destiny, he continues to serve his kingdom by purging it of the tyrannical Mordred. Here, while the poet continues to praise Arthur by using his noble titles (aMA 3206, 3218, and 3456; 3200–195, respectively), the poet also records the praise given to Arthur by the Lady of Fortune (interpreted by the philosophers), wherein Arthur is numbered amongst the Nine Worthies: "Forethy Fortune þe fetches to fulfill the nombyre,/ allys nynne of þe nobileste namede in erthe" (aMA 3438–439). The Nine Worthies are a grouping of chivalric heroes that were well established as iconographic and literary motifs since the fourteenth century. They represented an ordered view of the past and were subdivided into three groups: pagans, Jews, and Christians. As J. R. Goodman states, "a chivalric history of the world lies behind any reference to the Nine Worthies; under their sway the past becomes a succession of great chivalric movements" ("Malory and Caxton's Chivalric Series" 266), and thus Malory and his source's choice to place Arthur among the Nine Worthies reflects his heroic stature.

⁹ In the *Morte Darthur*, Malory similarly demonstrates Arthur's just kingship through Arthur's commitment to the principles of the Round Table. One way in which Malory emphasises this commitment to make his Arthur an even better representation of just kingship than the *Morte*'s alliterative counterpart is through an oath that records the principles of the Round Table, and which each knight of the Round Table publicly reaffirms each year (97.27–98.3).

Although it is difficult to read Arthur's appointment to chief of the Nine Worthies as ironic, Peck and Matthews manage to achieve this in separate, influential arguments. As Tolhurst and Whetter note,

the modern interpretive tradition of the Alliterative *Morte Arthure* has used the Nine Worthies framework as another means of critiquing Arthur. Critics have tended either to treat the Philosopher's interpretation of Arthur's Dream of Fortune's Wheel as if it were the poet's evaluation of Arthur, or tried to ironize the Worthies themselves. Peck (representing both tendencies) labels the group 'an emblem of Fortune's fools,' ["Willfulness and Wonders" 172] while Matthews (representing the second) asserts that the Alliterative-poet's view of Alexander was negative and his praise of the entire group of nine heroes deeply ironic [*Tragedy of Arthur* 33–93]." ("Memories of War" 100)

Following on Tolhurst and Whetter, if we read the poet's praise as genuine and meaning what is said then Arthur rightly joins "allys nynne of þe nobileste namede in erthe" (3439). This dedication is important because Arthur's subsequent defeating of Mordred is performed in order for Arthur to establish justice in his kingdom and protect it from future tyrannical kingship. In defeating Mordred, Arthur loses his own life, but gains victory for his polity. Hence, Arthur lives up to the expectations and praise given to him by the poet. All of the poet's praise is not ironic, as Peck and Matthews purport it to be, but rather, the poet's praise works to produce a greater separation between Arthur's rightfully exalted estate and achievements versus his fated and tragic ending. This divide is a literary technique to conjure up more *pathos* within the audience for King Arthur, which in turn works to emphasise his just kingship.

Moving for a moment to Malory's version of the Roman War story in Tale II, one observes that Malory cleverly lifts and reinvents the praise that the alliterative poet gives to Arthur in order to produce the same tragic separation between Arthur's glory and achievements and his fated tragic end. Malory's decision to transfer the praise from the alliterative poet into his *Morte Darthur* reinforces Malory's reading of Arthur as a just king, as well as heightens the audience's perception of this justness. Malory's decision to build up Arthur's good and just reputation early on in his narrative serves to generate more *pathos* in the audience later when he, as a tragic hero, inevitably falls victim to Fortune's spiraling wheel. As noted before, Malory augments his version of the narrative by separating Arthur's death from the Roman War story by moving his death to the very end of his book, thus making his Arthur an even more successful king than in the poem. Malory transcribes the praise from the alliterative poet into his own narrative by inserting scenes wherein praise persistently navigates its way towards Arthur. For example, Martin notes that in the opening scene of Tale II (145.2–9), Malory—who is known for naming minor characters and places throughout his tales—leaves out the names of kingdoms that Arthur has conquered in order to move Arthur's glory to the forefront of the narrative (36). Muriel Whitaker similarly claims that Malory's decision to leave out the details of how these kingdoms became Arthur's fealty in this passage allows "the glory of achievement to fall entirely on Arthur" (15). As well, when Arthur is discussing how he should respond to the Roman messengers' demand for tribute, he both initiates and ends the conversation, as well as speaks twice within the conversation, keeping himself, his power, and his kingship at the focus of the conversation and narrative (Martin 42–43; *MD* 147.6–49.28). While some may read Arthur's persistence in recurrently directing praise onto himself as a foreshadowing of his later (purported) selfish ambitions, Arthur's rhetorical technique in this scene instead stems from his

pre-ordained right to exercise higher authority over his subjects. That is, in governing the conversation, Arthur rightly stations himself as the focal point and his counsellors span out from his central position. By engaging with the counsellors in this conversation, Arthur is able to ensure that he as divinely appointed king is entirely responsible for any decisions made concerning the waging of war against the Emperor, and he is able to ensure that the counsellors do not stray away from their task of deriving a just response to the Emperor's threat of war. Another example of praise that emphasises Arthur's just kingship comes in the passage wherein Arthur's subjects freely offer resources to Arthur for his eminent war. Through the breadth and depth of resources that they offer to their king it is easy to recognise their willingness for Arthur to defeat Lucius and maintain his prosperous kingdom (see, e.g., *MD* 147.33–48.3, 148.5–7, 148.9–19, 148.20–27, 148.28–33, 148.34–49.2). It is equally notable that Arthur's counselors come from varied social and geographical backgrounds and so his decision to wage war against Lucius is one that is unanimously supported by his polity. This support is important because it shows that Malory is concerned with showcasing the commons' approval of Arthur's decision to wage just war against an Emperor who desires to seize Arthur's rightfully inherited kingdom. All of this praise works to build a strong foundation for Arthur's just character in the beginning of the narrative and, as we will see later, will produce more *pathos* in the audience when Arthur tragically falls from the heights of his glory.

The "poetry of praise" given to Arthur begins with the alliterative poet and Malory on a meta-level, but also concentrically expands from the nucleus of Arthur's court to the far-away Roman Emperor via Lucius's messengers. For example, as discussed above, praise for Arthur stems from counsellors who while gathered in Arthur's court represent different parts of Arthur's kingdom and thus extend their praise for him throughout the kingdom. Likewise, praise for

Arthur comes in both narratives when the Roman senators—enemies of King Arthur—extend their praise for him to their ruler, Emperor Lucius. In this sense, praise for Arthur travels the Roman roads and extends itself to all corners of the known world. Concerning the alliterative *Morte*, part of Peck’s overall claim that the poet’s praise is ironic stems from his argument that Arthur’s “kingly presence is so overwhelming that, even after [Lucius’s messengers] have returned to Rome to report to Lucius, the Romans are terrified and *spontaneously* praise [Arthur]” (160, my emphasis). The reporting senator’s fear is summed up in the following lines, which precede the lines wherein he praises Arthur: “I somounde hym solempnylye, one-seeande his knyghtez./ Sen I was formyde, in faythe, *so ferde was I neuere*./ In all þe placez ther I passed of pryncez in erthe” (aMA 525–27, my emphasis); the praise then follows with the acknowledgement:

He may be chosyn cheftayne	cheefe of all oþer,
Bathe be chauncez of armes	and cheuallrye noble,
For whyeseste and worthyeste	and wyghteste of hanndez,
Of all the wyes þate I watte	in this werlde ryche:
The knyghtlyeste creatoure	in Cristyndome halden,
Of kynges or of conquerour	crownede in erthe[.] (aMA 530–53)

As is evident in these lines, King Arthur is described by the senators as the chief of all rulers, he has the “whyeseste and worthyeste” meaning that he is the wisest ruler they have encountered, he is worthy to hold his kingship, and he has the “wyghteste of hanndez,” meaning that he is clean from wrongdoing. This latter praise reinforces Arthur’s rightful and just kingship, and is reiterated when the senators declare that Arthur is the “knyghtlyeste creatoure in Cristyndome

halden,” meaning that he is the greatest of knight of the Christian world.¹⁰ The “kingly presence,” which Peck argues is so overwhelming for the senators and which causes them “spontaneously” to praise Arthur in this way stems back to their encounter with Arthur’s inner-court space: specifically, the impressionable grandeur of the inner castle space that structurally resonates with Arthur’s glory and the magnificent feast that Arthur lays before the messengers during the seven-day interim wherein he seeks out advice from his counsellors to discern what his response to the senators should be (140–230).

It is important to note, as Martin does, Arthur’s occupation of space within his court because through the power and prestige with which he navigates space, Arthur shows the messengers how they need to behave whilst in his presence (38). In the alliterative *Morte*, when the messengers first enter Arthur’s court, they are insolent towards Arthur (taking example from their own leader, Emperor Lucius), which is evident in their appearing “sodanly” (*aMA* 80), in rushing through the courtesies that are required of them towards Arthur, his knights, and Queen Guenevere (*aMA* 82–4), and in their rushed delivering of their message from the Emperor (*aMA* 86–115). Their countenance quickly changes, however, into awe-inspired respect when they realise that Arthur is all that the poet tells us he is. As they approach King Arthur in his court, Arthur manipulates the courtly space to heighten his aura of dominance (Martin 39). Notably, in the alliterative poem there is no separation between the Romans and Arthur, which is evident

¹⁰ Burrow supports this position by contending that Arthur impresses the ambassadors so deeply with his splendour, hospitality, and wealth that “the Roman adversary sings his praises when reporting to the Emperor: Arthur is ‘whyeseeste and worthyeste and wrighteste of handez,’ [532] as well as the knightliest, comeliest and most magnificent in his hospitality [537–41]” (77).

when the king invites them to sit at his high table: “Sone þe senatoure was sett as hym wele semyde/ At þe kynges ownn borde; twa knyghtes hym seruede” (170–71). However, in Malory’s *Morte*, Arthur subtly rejects the possibility of the Romans being equal by leaving out this detail in his tale. Malory’s forging of this hierarchy between Arthur and the Romans is important because it shows Arthur’s power, and this power should not be interpreted as demonstrating Arthur’s purported tyranny. On the contrary, Malory quickly brushes the latter possibility away because although the distinct hierarchy and pressure for the messengers to act a certain way forges a great chasm between Arthur and the messengers, it subsequently heightens the kindness and generosity that Arthur shows through his hospitality towards them. That is, by heightening Arthur’s power and prestige to make his enemies, the senators, lowly, Arthur’s subsequent kindness towards them heightens his own just character, and consequently leads to their later rightful praise of him. Arthur’s kind justice towards the Romans is demonstrated when Arthur states, “and thoughe they have greved me and my courte, yet we muste remembir on oure worshyp” (147.2–3). Here, Arthur recognises that although the Romans have done him wrong, Arthur knows in order for him to honour his Round Table oath, it is his duty to remember his “worshyp,” or reputation, and act justly towards the Romans. Arthur’s generosity towards the messengers is further demonstrated in the magnificent feast that he prepares for them as well as in his kindness in granting the messengers allowance to stay in his court. In both texts, the poem and Malory’s *Morte*, the feast is splendid and the Romans are looked after as if they were royalty. The alliterative poet has Arthur say to the messengers: “Forþi sall þow lenge here and lugge wyth þise lordes/ This seuenyghte in solace to suggourne our horses,/ to see whatte lyfe þat wee leede in thees lawe lanndes” (152–54); in Malory’s version “the noble kyng commaunded Sir Clegis to brynge them to their lodgyng, and to ‘loke that thes men be seteled and served

with the beste, that there be no deyntés spared uppon them, that nother chylde nor horse faught no thyng, for they ar full royall peple ...” (146.34–47.2). The polarity between Arthur’s power and the Romans’ recognition of Arthur’s justness and kindness towards them, who are not of his own court, causes the Romans to respect Arthur even more. However, in Malory’s text specifically, the widening of this polar-gap is important because it heightens Arthur’s glory more than in the alliterative text and thus demonstrates that Malory purposely presents Arthur as a just king.

While the feast emphasises Arthur’s kindness to the undeserving senators, it simultaneously works as a tool for expanding the borders of Arthur’s prestige within his court-space. The view that fear was of great didactic importance flourished throughout the Middle Ages (Johnson, “In dryz dred and daunger” 67) and the writings of Peter Lombard, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas and other scholastic thinkers “influenced how dread was to be viewed in the later Middle Ages” (Johnson 65). Johnson notes that Cicero, the Roman statesman and lawyer, argues that “by using ‘appalling’ and ‘terrible’ imagery ... an orator could win over his audience and make it sympathetic to his argument” (“In dryz dred and daunger” 65); and another common rhetorical device was for an orator to speak “under emotion” in order to stir up the emotions of his audience (“In dryz dred and daunger” 65). The alliterative poet and Malory would have been familiar with using fear as a rhetorical device to “show [their] listeners that the subject of his discourse was ‘important, novel, or incredible,’ and directly influenced their lives” (Johnson 65). Consequently, the Roman senators’ fear of Arthur demonstrates that they understand the seriousness of Arthur’s response to their Emperor’s message. Arthur uses both the court-space and feasting as power tools to incite fear and elevate the prestige of his monarchy.

While the feast in both texts is important for showcasing Arthur's justice and his power in both texts, Malory condenses the feast scene so as to focus on Arthur's counsel and his righteous decision to wage just war against Lucius. In the alliterative poem, the description of the feast continues for forty-nine lines (170–219); however, in Malory's version, the feast spans only seven lines (146.33–47.5). Notably, in the *Morte Darthur*, Malory bookends the feast with Arthur's urgent need to call together council and thus the emphasis is placed not on a feast, but rather on Arthur's desire for peace in his realm. In the line, "the noble kynge commaunded Sir Clegis to brynge them to their lodgyng, and to 'loke that thes men be seteled and served with the beste ...'" (146.33–35), Arthur delegates the task of providing for the messengers to his court, and the audience is given the sense that Arthur's mind is focused on how he will come to give the right and just decision concerning Lucius's request for tribute. Consequently, in Malory's version, Arthur is able to maintain his power and prestige in the court-space through the grandeur of the feast without actually being present. The feast takes on the role of inciting awe-induced fear within the senators, while Arthur leaves to seek the counsel he needs in order to reply to the Emperor's message. Thus, by augmenting this scene, Malory is able to include the feast-scene to showcase Arthur's just kingship and power. He is, however, simultaneously able to underscore Arthur's desire for counsel, which, in turn, further accentuates Arthur's just kingship. Hence, the Romans are not afraid of Arthur in the sense that Peck suggests, but rather, they are awe-inspired by Arthur's success, his ability to empower prestigious spaces with his kingly presence, and the kindness and justice that radiates from him. The poet's panegyric of Arthur and the Romans' fear of him is significant to my argument because it bolsters my case that Arthur is a just king and a fair warrior in the sense that he shows justice to his enemies, even when those enemies are arrogant and threatening the safety of the kingdom. The purpose of having the messengers fear

Arthur in this scene is to emphasise Arthur's just kingship because if he is just towards his enemies, then it follows that he would be even more just towards his own people. Thus, the greatest flaw in this part of Peck's argument is that he fails to qualify what type of fear the senators experience. Although in the alliterative *Morte* the senator only states "so ferde was I neuere" (526) the context of the scene demonstrates that it is more likely that this fear is an awe-induced fear, rather than a terror rooted in Arthur's purported savage rulership.

* * *

It is partly the very greatness of Arthur announced by the poet's panegyrics that enables him to defeat Emperor Lucius in single combat (aMA 2246–256), for Arthur's prowess as "kyde conquerour" (aMA 65; 232; 2261) is another facet of his character that the poet holds up for praise. Following this defeat of Emperor Lucius in the alliterative poem and in Malory, Arthur marches forwards onto Rome to claim his rightful emperorship. As I will demonstrate in the following scenes, the poet and Malory continue to emphasise the justness of Arthur's cause in waging war against the Emperor through their respective treatments of Arthur's character. In both narratives, as Arthur makes his way down to Rome to be rightfully crowned Emperor, Arthur comes across the City of Metz, a city that will not surrender to their conqueror, King Arthur. Peck argues here that

the battle at Metz is not mentioned in the [source] chronicles, which direct Arthur south through Burgundy. By having Arthur turn east to conquer lands along the way, the poet emphasizes Arthur's growing ambition. The episode becomes a symbol of vanity, as Arthur lays siege to the cities of the world while neglecting his own land. (169)

Although Peck is right to state that the siege at Metz is not mentioned in the source chronicles, Arthur is nonetheless rightfully able to claim Metz because he has conquered Lucius and thus

enjoys all the rights and privileges that are accorded to the Emperor of Rome. One such right is the right to rule Metz as a vassal-city of the Roman Empire. As I will show, the siege at Metz is important because the poet and Malory use the siege as another way further to accentuate Arthur's just kingship.

Arthur, as Emperor of Rome, is able justly to siege Metz because Metz does not rightfully recognise Arthur as their sovereign. This claim corresponds to historical understandings of siege warfare because in mediæval times the provisions of siege warfare included rules to make sieges just if the besieging army encouraged the city under siege to surrender unto the conqueror (Keen, *The Laws of War* 119–33). Malory writes that “there was a cité kepte sure defence agaynste Arthure and his knyghtes” (175.30), meaning that the city does not accept that Rome had been defeated and that Arthur now rightfully rules the city. Arthur surveys the town before the siege begins in both texts (*aMA* 2420–423; *MD* 175.32–34); however, the fact that Metz refuses Arthur's terms and prepares for battle means that the city ignores his offer of safety and leaves itself open to rightful conquest by Arthur. Peck again misrepresents the situation because he states that “Arthur lays siege to the cities of the world while neglecting his own land” (169). There are two problems here: first, Arthur only lays siege to Metz, Combe, and Vivyn, not “the cities of the world,” and secondly, Arthur does not neglect his lands, rather he leaves them in the (should be) trusted hands of his nephew, Sir Mordred. Arthur would have no reason to distrust Mordred because he is bonded to him through family-ties, and a mediæval audience would recognise the importance of this father-son bond.¹¹ Thus, Arthur rightly believes his lands are being controlled by good governance because a rebellion

¹¹ Malory would be familiar with many successful historical cases of regencies.

from Mordred would mean that Mordred is breaking a familial tie. In the case of Malory's *Morte*, Malory was a fighting knight who had fought in sieges himself before authoring the *Morte*,¹² and so his positive characterization of Arthur in this scene, as well as throughout the *Morte*, shows that he thinks Arthur is just to besiege the city.

Using the Battle of Sesseine and Arthur's defeat of Lucius as the fulcrum of his argument, Peck argues that what linearly follows this pivot-point in the poem is "a sequence of progressively vain actions marked by lack of judgement" (168). For Peck, the second half of the alliterative poem contains a series of instances wherein Arthur fails to act justly causing him to place his kingship and kingdom into states of jeopardy. For example, Peck reads the urgency in Arthur's command for counsel before these sieges to be representative of his reading of Arthur's rash kingship (168, referring to *aMA* 2392ff). Peck argues that Arthur's command here is in stark contrast to the opening council scene at Carlisle where he calmly listens to his counsellors and weighs what they say against his own understanding of the causes (168). Peck misreads Arthur's call for council here because Arthur's quick act of assembling his counsellors reveals his strong dependence on counsel. The fact that Arthur summons council urgently shows that he is not calling upon counsel as a ceremonial act before entering battle, but rather that he understands counsel to be of the upmost importance before engaging in just war. Peck's idea that Arthur is too hasty and reckless stems from the scene wherein Arthur presents himself to the City of Metz with no armour (*aMA* 2420–447). Arthur's lack of armour in this scene, however, is arguably a sign that Arthur wishes to occupy his role as king in front of the city walls, and not warrior. This is evident in the wording of the poet: he consistently addresses Arthur as "kyng" in this section,

¹² See Field, *Life and Times* 129 and 142, and Whetter, "Historicity" 261–62 and 266–67.

rather than “Sir Arthure,” or simply Arthur. Because Arthur has already earned the City of Metz as his own vassal-city, there is no reason for him to approach Metz with warring clothes as he is not there to wage war; rather he comes in peace because the city is his by just conquest. Only when Metz refuses to acknowledge Arthur’s sovereignty does he approach the city as a warrior with his armour donned, bearing a declaration to siege the city. Thus, Peck’s claim that Arthur acts with a lack of judgement following the Battle of Sesoine does not hold up to careful analysis, because Arthur’s decisions are justifiably qualified by his commitment to acquiring counsel before fighting and by his choice to approach Metz—his vassal-city—as a just king and not as a warrior.

An important lacunæ in Peck’s argument is his failure to discuss the Duchess scene in his analysis of the City of Metz. Peck skips over Arthur’s interaction with the Duchess, thereby ignoring the textual evidence that most obviously demonstrates Arthur’s justice, moving instead to the end of the siege when Arthur claims victory and establishes peace in the city. In the alliterative poem, after Arthur surrounds the City of Metz and warns it that he will soon begin siege, the city fails to surrender and Arthur begins his siege of the city:

The kynge þan to assawte he sembles his knyghtez,
With somercastell and sowe appon sere halfes;
Skiftis his skotiferis and skayles the wallis,
And iche wache has his warde, with wiese men of armes.
Thane boldly þay buske and bendes engynes,
Payses in pylotes and proues theire castes:
Mynsteris and masondewes they malle to þe erthe,
Chirches and chapells chalke-whitte blawnchede—

.....
The pyne of þe pople was peté for to here! (aMA 3032–043)

Although the violence of the siege offers critics a chance to characterise Arthur as a warmonger, Tolhurst and Whetter note that “violence and atrocity [in mediæval sieges] were regarded as commonplace by combatants and noncombatants alike” and that the destruction of the city ensues because an “artillery’s function is to hit targets and help secure victory” (“Memories of War” 97).¹³ When the city starts to feel the strain of its eminent destruction, the Duchess appears on behalf of the people and pleads with Arthur not to continue sieging their city (3044–53). Arthur immediately and graciously grants her wish and commands his troops not to destroy the people and city:

He weres his vesere with a vowt noble,
With vesage verteuous, this valyante bierne;
Meles to hir myldly with full meke wordes:
‘Sall no[n] myssedo zow, ma dame, þat to me lenges!
I gyf zow chartire of pes, and zoure cheefe maydens,
The childire and þe chaste men, the cheualrous knyghtez.

¹³ Tolhurst and Whetter also note that a mediæval audience may “take the realistic destruction resulting from the siege as the Alliterative-poet’s equivalent of Homer’s Shield of Achilles with its portrait of life and death, war and peace, glory and destruction [Homer, *The Iliad* XVIII.478–607]. Part of what makes the *Iliad* such a powerful meditation on the nature and cost of heroism is Homer’s focus on glorious life and inglorious death, heroism and potential tragedy. ... the destruction of Metz serves a similar purpose in the Alliterative *Morte*, so it merits interpretation within a heroic context. Martial heroism is not aestheticized in either poem, but neither is it presented in a way that encourages readers’ condemnation” (“Memories of War” 98).

The duke es in dawngere, dredis it bott littyll;

He sall i[n]deue þe full wele, dout zow noghte elles!’ (aMA 3054–061)

Here, the poet once again uses panegyric language to express Arthur’s goodness, emphasizing “his vesere with a vowt noble,/ with vesage verteuous,” and having Arthur speak to the Duchess “myldly with full meke wordes,” demonstrating his change from powerful warrior to chivalric knight. In forgoing the pillaging of Metz that mediæval siege laws allow (Bradbury 296–334; M. H. Keen 119–36), Arthur both offers to protect the Duchess and to protect the city. This showcases Arthur as a good king and a just warrior, not the tyrant Peck claims.

Although Arthur, in both narratives, is presented as a just king for attempting to circumvent the horrors of siege warfare at the City of Metz, Malory emphasises his Arthur’s justness by augmenting the duchess scene during the siege to show a more companionate and loving king. Malory directly lifts some of the lines from the alliterative *Morte* in his account of the siege of Metz. Malory’s decision to use these lines not only demonstrates their importance within the poem, but further emphasises the just nature of Arthur’s character. These lines, which are marked by an asterisk in Vinaver’s edition and inserted into the quotation that follows, are directly taken from the alliterative *Morte* by Malory and reveal Arthur’s mercy towards his enemies, the people of Metz. It is important for my purposes that Malory keeps this positive portrait of Arthur at the siege of Metz. Malory maintains the Duchess’s plea and Arthur’s response, for when the Duchess pleads with Arthur to stop the siege, Malory notes how

the kynge avalyd his vyser with a knyghtly countenaunce, and kneled to hir
myldely with full meke wordes and seyde, *‘Shall none myssedo you, madam,
that to me longis,* for I graunte the chartyrs and to thy cheff maydyns, *unto thy
chyldern and to thy chyff men in chambir* that to the longis. *But thy deuke is in

daunger, (my drede ys the lesse),* But ye shall have lyvelode to leve by as to
thyne astate fallys.’ (*MD* 185.29–35; *O³* 241.22–242.5)

It is important that the text mentions “kynges” Arthur when Arthur speaks to the Duchess because Arthur, in lifting up his “vyser with a knyghtly countenaunce” (185.29) figuratively moves from his position as warrior into his position as king in order to accept a parlay from the Duchess and establish a peace treaty. This movement from knight to king is also demonstrated when Arthur establishes laws in the city, with the poet and Malory referencing Arthur’s crown: “*Than the kynges with his crowne on his hede recoverde the citeé* and the castell, *and the captaynes and connestablys knew hym for lorde,* and there *he delyverde and dalte byfore dyverse lordis* a dowré for the deuches and hir chyldryn. Than he made wardens to welde all that londis” (*MD* 186.7–11; *O³* 242.13–18). It is also important to notice in the above quoted lines that in Malory’s version, Arthur “kneled to hir myldely” (185.30). Although both Arthurs act courteously towards the Duchess, Malory increases his Arthur’s goodness by having Arthur kneel before the Duchess when he grants her and her city safety. Here, Malory demonstrates to a greater degree Arthur’s just kingship, as well as his chivalry, through his moral treatment of the Duchess.

Following the siege of Metz Arthur continues to demonstrate justice by establishing laws in the city. Peck, however, argues instead that the poet emphasises “the satisfaction Arthur gets in his victory,” using the following passage for his evidence:

Thus in Lorayne he lenges, as lorde in his awen,
Settez lawes in the land, as hym leefe thoghte.
And one þe Lammese Day to Lucerne he wende
Lengez thare at laysere with lykyng inowe. (3076–79)

Peck claims that in this scene, “Arthur’s actions have become a kind of idleness, a self-indulgent lingering[;] ... as he sets laws according to his pleasure, what he is really changing is his own definition of king. In becoming a tyrant, he dispossesses himself” (170). In order to understand this passage better, I think it is important to refer back to the opening episode of the poem wherein Arthur has finished conquering and rests after building the City of Cærlyon (12–63). In the opening scene Arthur establishes government in the lands, provides for the needs of his polity, and convenes with his knights at the Round Table—all actions that a good mediæval king was expected to undertake. At the City of Metz, once Arthur has ended the siege, following the Duchess’s request, Arthur likewise deals first with the royal polity of the city, wherein “he deuyse and delte to dyuerse lordez/ A dowere for þe duche and hir dere childre” (3072–73), ensuring that the Duchess and her children are looked after properly. Arthur then turns to aid the polity as a whole by establishing a legal system: he “wroughte wardaynes be wytte to welde all þe londez/ that he had wonnen of werre thorowe his wise knyghtez” (3074–75). Here, Arthur does not, as Peck would argue, rule the city as a tyrant, but rather establishes rules to enable the city to prosper. Furthermore, the text states that Arthur had “wonnen of werre thorowe his wise knyghtez,” demonstrating that Arthur did not win these lands through selfish ambition, but rather through the wise actions of his knights. Where Peck argues that Arthur is “self-indulgent” and idle because the poem writes that he rests following his establishment of justice in the city, it is perhaps useful to return to the opening scene. Following a siege or battle, Arthur rests as would be normal for a warrior. However, it is important to notice that he only rests after he has established order in the land. Thus, Arthur thinks of his polity before thinking of his own need for rest. Again, this is entirely what was expected of a good mediæval ruler. Thus, Peck misses

the point that although Arthur rests, he ensures that all of his work is finished before taking his rest.

Although Malory's changes to the siege of Metz are relatively minor, they help to make Arthur even more kingly and heroic than in the source. The minor changes also typify Malory's handling of his sources, wherein he sometimes copies things closely, sometimes makes minor adjustments, and sometimes makes major adjustments. One of the more substantial changes Malory makes to the Roman War story has to do with when the war occurs. In the alliterative *Morte* the Roman War is Arthur's final great victory before Mordred revolts back in England. When Mordred usurps the throne Arthur must abandon his continental campaign to return home to reclaim his throne. Although he defeats Mordred, he dies as a result of the wounds sustained in battle. The Roman War is thus at the end of Arthur's career in the poem. In Malory's version of the Roman War, Arthur travels down to Rome and is made Emperor over the Roman Empire.

Whilst I contend that both Malory's and the poet's Arthurs are presented as good kings, Malory moves his Arthur's imperial successes from the end of the king's career in the poem to the beginning of his career and the near beginning of Malory's book in order to fashion an Arthur who is, from the beginning, a much stronger representative of good kingship. As noted in Chapter One, Tale I of the *Morte Darthur* recounts Arthur's coming to the throne and fighting a just war to defend his new kingship against rebels. Then, in Tale II (of eight), Malory presents the Roman War where Malory's Arthur wages just war and is shown persistently to rely on council, as a good mediæval king was expected to do. There is no question that Arthur is anything other than successful in this battle, which is evidenced by the "poetry of praise" (Burrow) that he receives. Further, Malory demonstrates that through war Arthur is able to develop his just kingship, which is especially demonstrated in Malory's changes to the siege of

Metz scene. Malory further chooses to aggrandize Arthur's success by having Arthur travel down to Rome and claim his Emperorship. This is different to his source, the alliterative *Morte*, which has Arthur hear of Mordred's revolt and subsequently return back to England before reaching Rome. This is important, because in both cases Arthur is not portrayed as a tyrant: in Malory's version, Arthur is rightfully crowned Emperor; and in the alliterative poem, Arthur forgoes his crowning in order to save his polity from the destruction of the traitorous usurper Mordred. Thus, whilst both Roman Wars end with Arthur trying to do the right thing, Malory's choice for Arthur's success makes way for all of the subsequent successful adventures by Launcelot, Gareth, and Tristan which are to come in the following tales. It is fundamental for Malory to change the order of his narrative, because, in doing so, he produces a better King Arthur. Arthur's greatness as king and knight in Malory's version prefaces and parallels the greatness of his knights.

CHAPTER THREE

Arthur's Tragic Fall and His Wars Against Traitors

As I established in the preceding chapters, Arthur's reign is, in Malory's retelling, dominated by war. For all the prevalence of war in mediæval life and in Malory's sources, Malory seems to have gone out of his way to begin and end the *Morte Darthur* in warfare: the opening tale ignores the prehistory of Merlin or the Grail or even Uther to start with the war leading to Arthur's conception and then his kingship, the second tale cements Arthur's kingship by establishing his power abroad, and the final tale (Tale VIII) charts the collapse of those achievements, concluding with Arthur's death, Guenevere's death, and the deaths of the few remaining Round Table knights. In light of Malory's emphasis on the inevitability of this final destruction, Malory's Tale VIII, the "Morte Arthure" proper or "Tale of the Death of Arthur," is at its core a tragedy. Wilfred L. Guerin argues that it is "the fall of an ideal society, ... a series of deaths and frustrations, caused on the one hand by a conflict of often ironic, yet always supremely human, circumstances, and on the other by an inscrutable fortune or chance which man alone can never dominate" (233). K. S. Whetter argues further that the tragic genre of the *Morte Darthur* is "more pervasive, pronounced and significant" than other critiques have allowed it to be, and this tragic "presence throughout the narrative qualifies and alters the Arthurian's romance elements" (*Understanding Genre* 105). These inevitable and tragic deaths will be investigated in relation to Arthur's personal tragic fall from his rightfully exalted high estate to his bitter ending. In this chapter, it is my contention that Arthur through his good kingship in the midst of war ultimately manages to avoid the inevitable human folly to which W. Guerin partly attributes the Round Table's collapse. Although Fortune, as W. Guerin notes, "can

never [be] dominate[d]” by humanity, Malory’s exploration of what makes a good king and what makes a war justifiable mean he consistently characterizes Arthur in a positive light. As I established in the previous chapter with Arthur fighting as both king and knight against the giant, Arthur’s good qualities stem from his enduring commitment to uphold the principles of the Round Table—those emphasised in the High Order of Knighthood—even after the physical semblance of the Round Table fellowship has been sundered and destroyed. Equally importantly, Arthur consistently abides by the principles that mediæval thought associated with good kingship. These positive traits all work to make Arthur’s tragic fall at least as sympathetic as it is inevitable; in my view, the audience’s sympathy for Arthur helps to foreground his good kingship.

Malory’s “Tale of the Death of Arthur” is based on the Old French *Mort le roi Artu*, the last romance in the Vulgate Cycle (circa 1215–30), and—especially—on the corresponding part of the English stanzaic poem with the similar title of *Le Morte Arthur* (circa 1400; Field, ed., Vol. II, p. 768). What is important for my purposes is the extent to which Malory in his adaptation of his sources consistently aggrandizes Arthur. W. Guerin, for instance, notes that “although Malory borrows considerably from the French, he grafts these borrowings on to the framework taken from the English poem” (240–1); the result is that “in Malory Arthur is less selfish than in the French” (250).¹ Further, Edward Donald Kennedy convincingly argues that Malory chose the ending of the stanzaic *Morte* over the ending to the alliterative *Morte* because

¹ The position that Malory modifies aspects of the French sources to make Arthur less selfish and a better king is also supported by David F. Johnson (32).

the stanzaic poem presents Arthur as a more victorious king (“Malory, the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*” 53).

In this final tale, Malory makes the last wars far more complicated than any of King Arthur’s other campaigns. As I have attempted to show in the preceding chapters, Malory’s chiasmic composition, or ring structure, begins with Arthur in Tale I learning how to become a just king and proving his kingship by justly resolving internal conflicts. Here, Arthur learns to accept counsel in both martial and sovereign affairs, and constructs the High Order of Knighthood, which is represented figuratively and literally in the Round Table and which becomes his source for counsel in Tale II. In the second tale, Arthur further cements his kingship through the just counsel of the Round Table by extending his sovereign power to resolve an external conflict in his defeat of Emperor Lucius in the Battle of Sesseoine. Notably, in this war Malory makes Arthur’s military prowess and his subsequent successes greater than those in his sources, showing Arthur to be balanced in the interconnected arts of martial duty and kingship. This brings us to Tale VIII wherein the audience observes the unravelling of Arthur’s kingship as he is forced to resolve complicated issues of a civil war against Launcelot where questions of right and wrong are extremely complicated and a civil war against Mordred that is cleaner in terms of who is good and who is bad but that nonetheless sunders the core principles of the Round Table and ultimately leads to Arthur’s death. While Raluca L. Radulescu and Ruth Lexton argue that Arthur’s actions in the final tale are “oute of mesure” and thus point to an irrational king who is unfit to govern his kingdom, I argue that Arthur remains an exemplar for

chivalry and just kingship during war.² In what follows, I intend to show that Arthur is neither a war-monger nor a tyrant; rather, his actions are governed by a deep concern for justice and the good fortune of his kingdom. While some critics, such as Lexton and Laura Bedwell, argue that Arthur willfully engages in the destructive wars of the eighth tale, I argue that Arthur chooses to engage in these wars because they are the only paths toward securing a greater good for his people and maintaining a future in his kingdom. I begin by discussing the tragic form to demonstrate that the tragic nature of the narrative helps to reveal Arthur's favourable kingship. Subsequently, I investigate Arthur's actions in the final tale through the lenses of human folly and inevitable fortune, as described above, and show how his good kingship in these last wars predominates through his challenging of these destructive forces.

King Arthur's fall from rightfully exalted king to his death at the hand of his tyrannical son in the final tale of Malory's *Morte* is tragic. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines the English noun "tragedy" in its first sense as a "medieval narrative or narrative poem, written in an elevated style and dealing with sorrowful or disastrous events, typically the downfall or death of a powerful or important person" ("tragedy," 1. a.). The noun in its second sense relates to Classical or Renaissance verse drama and is similar to the former definition, however, the dictionary adds that in the latter sense tragedy deals with the "downfall or death of the

² Raluca L. Radulescu argues that Malory acts "Oute of Measure" in her essay "'Oute of mesure'" 119–31, and in her lecture "Portable Arthur." Perhaps unconsciously, Radulescu echoes Russell A. Peck's argument about the Arthur of the alliterative *Morte* starting out as a good king but becoming a bad king. Ruth Lexton makes the argument that Arthur is a poor king throughout her book *Contested Language*. Laura Bedwell is perhaps also influenced by Peck (or Radulescu, or both) in arguing that Arthur is a bad king throughout *Le Morte Darthur*.

protagonist ... who is brought to ruin because of his or her own error or fault, or because of a conflict with a greater force (such as fate or the gods)” (*ibid*, 1. b.). The latter definition is perhaps more useful for the following discussion because it implies that the sense of *pathos* that the audience experiences is centred around the unjust fall of a good character. Furthermore, this definition allows for the weight of the protagonist’s fall to be placed on the ramifications of human folly and the destructive inevitability of fortune, which is what I centre the discussion in this chapter upon. My argument that Arthur’s tragic fall does not negate his good kingship is supported by Aristotle’s classic analysis of tragedy in his *Poetics*, whose analysis is the source of the *OED* definition of tragedy. Although Aristotle focuses on Classical drama’s production of tragedy, whereas this thesis focuses on Malory’s *Morte*, which is a mediæval prose narrative, Aristotle argues that tragedy is “a representation of an action which is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude ... [that arouses] pity and fear effecting the *katharsis* of such emotions” (37). That is, tragedy aims to leave the audience “not depressed, but relieved, or even exalted” (Abrams, 322) after watching a character fall from the height of glory into unexpected disaster. As Abrams notes, Aristotle argues that

the tragic hero will most effectively evoke both our pity and terror if he is neither thoroughly good nor thoroughly bad but a mixture of both; and also that this tragic effect will be stronger if the hero is ‘better than we are,’ in the sense that he is of higher than ordinary moral worth. (322)

Further, Aristotle claims that the plot-construction “should be complex, not simple, and, moreover should portray fearful and pitiful events[.] ... [The hero is] one who falls into affliction not because of evil and wickedness, but because of a certain fallibility (*hamartia*)” (44) Likewise, Abrams notes that “the events develop through complication to a *catastrophe* in which

there occurs (often by an *anagnorisis*, or discovery of facts hitherto unknown to the hero) a sudden *peripeteia*, or reversal in his fortune from happiness to disaster” (322). Although there is no evidence that Malory read Aristotle, the association of a good character’s downfall with pathos, error, and larger forces is equally applicable to *Morte Darthur* as to Sophocles.³ Mark Lambert rightly argues that “in ‘The Tale of the Death of Arthur’ we first experience the destruction of the Round Table as something sudden and overwhelming, rather than as the long-expected consequence of certain failings of character” (161). Arthur’s sudden turn in fortune affects the audience because, as Kennedy, following on Fanni Bogdanow’s remarks about the Post-Vulgate Cycle, shows, “the Post-Vulgate cycle is, like Malory’s book, ... on the whole, sympathetic to Arthur[:] ... ‘Arthur ... [is] a tragic hero whose destiny will arouse in us ‘pity and fear’” (“Malory’s *Morte Darthur*” 161; following Bogdanow 97). Arthur moves his audience to pity because he is not an evil king, his misfortune is greater than he deserves, and this misfortune is in a large part due to the inevitable even if undeserved turn of the Wheel of Fortune; but Arthur’s tragic fall also moves the audience to fear because his fall is in part due to a series of decisions he makes in an attempt to remedy the poor decisions of other characters. Since Arthur is a good character whose attempts to do the right thing fail, the audience experiences fear because they recognise similar possibilities of error in their own lesser and fallible selves.

³ Edward Donald Kennedy notes that “like most medieval writers, Malory would in all likelihood not have been familiar with Aristotle’s *Poetics*. At times, however, there are coincidental similarities between Aristotelian and medieval tragedy such as reversal and recognition” (“Malory’s *Morte Darthur*” 169). See also, Victoria Guerin, *The Fall of Kings and Princes*, p. 6.

Malory deepens the audience's experience of *pathos* in the final tale by focusing on the individuality of characters to a greater extent than in the previous tales. By this I mean that Malory becomes much more precise about the details relating to his characters' personalities, their emotions, and the circumstances that continue to press in upon them.⁴ As W. Guerin argues, "Malory shows a deep concern for the full and detailed development of his situations and characters, and an equal concern for avoiding any slowing of the dramatic movement of his plot" (258). That is, the overall tone of the final tale is "dominantly sorrowful" both "in external battle and in internal or psychological problems" (W. Guerin 236). For example, we learn about the public lives of the characters through "the ambush at Guenevere's chamber [874.5–77.20]; her rescue from the fire [884.21–85.25]; the sieges at Joyous Garde and Benwick [889.8–96.9 and 906ff]; the single combats involving Lancelot, Arthur, Gawain, and Mordred [906–14] and the

⁴ Part of the move to emphasise details in the final tale comes from its narrative style, which is closer to the chronicle form than the regular prose of the previous tales. Kenneth Tiller suggests that the final tale is written in a distinctively chronicle discourse, which aids in foreshadowing the collapse of the kingdom and in making that collapse more realistic: "Malory's adroit use of chronicle discourse in the eighth book, I maintain, distances readers from previously held perceptions of Arthur, Lancelot, and knighthood in general, compelling a rethinking of the chivalric paradigm" (11). Here, I differ from Tiller because I argue that Arthur is a good king throughout the *Morte*, that is, in his early and final wars. Helen Cooper also comments on the written medium of the final tale: "prose was not the natural medium that it seems with hindsight: it was deliberately chosen, and, it would seem, chosen to accommodate just such a generic shift away from romance, to civil war, treachery, and murder within the fellowship and the kin-group" ("Counter-Romance" 150). For more on the genre of the *Morte Darthur*, see K. S. Whetter's *Understanding Genre and Medieval Romance*.

war against Mordred [916–24]” (W. Guerin 236). Yet, we learn about the interiority of the characters through the “subtle conflicts within Lancelot, Arthur, Guenevere, Gawain, and even Bors, and the debates between Lancelot and his followers, between Gawain and Arthur, and between Lancelot and the combination of Arthur and Gawain” (W. Guerin 236). Learning about the interiority of characters through their actions, and in response to the actions of those around them heightens the tragedy in Malory’s final tale because tragedy primarily deals with character and with the effect of a character’s fall on one’s emotions. As W. Guerin notes,

tragedy, with its focus on human emotions, its dependence on rational decisions, and its relation to the moral order, necessarily concerns people as individuals first, and people as members of society second. It is understandable, then, that however much Malory was concerned with the story of an ideal society in a non-ideal world, he chose to build his tragedy around the central personalities of Arthur, Lancelot, and Gawain. Through these characters, and others like Guenevere, Bors, and the brothers of Gawain, Malory shows the tragedy simultaneously in human terms and in its social implications. We cannot say that one level is more important than the other; but the larger implications of the story are better considered only after the characters themselves are discussed.

(258–59)

This is important because Arthur’s character and kingship are interconnected. Further, W. Guerin argues that Malory develops Arthur’s inner character by emphasising psychological dilemmas, which are not emphasised to the same extent in Malory’s source material:

Arthur finds himself condemning to death his wife and fighting her lover [O² p. 1163.12–19, 1174.12–18, 1175.27–33, 1194.21–22, 1196–99 (*passim*), 1213,

1218], for both of whom he still feels deep affection [O² 872.24]. Lancelot must fight the forces of the honored king who made him a knight [O² 892–94], return the woman he loves after he has risked his life for her [O² 903.10], and fight in single combat with one of his most respected fellow knights [O² 893–94]. Gawain is caught between the opposing forces of his loyalty to Lancelot [O² 1161, 1162, 1174–75, 1176, 1230–32] and his monomaniac desire for vengeance against Lancelot [O² 1186, 1191, 1200, 1200–1, 1213]. (251–52)

This discussion of character and tragedy shows why the audience feels more *pathos* towards Arthur. Malory adds details about his inner character, allowing the audience to connect to him on an emotional level, and thus allowing the audience to share the experience of his tragic fall; the *pathos* generated by that fall furthers the characterization of Arthur as an inherently good king.

Malory heightens the sense of destruction at the end, and thus increases the *pathos*, by adding details to Arthur’s final battle that emphasize the brutality of battle and the suffering of both victors and victims.⁵ Significantly for my purposes, Malory also heightens the achievements of Arthur while concurrently diminishing those of Mordred in the final battle:

the stanzaic poem has Mordred do what above all the medieval heavy cavalryman was there to do: he rides right through formed bodies of enemy troops to break them up. Malory briskly transfers that achievement to Arthur: he ‘rode throrwoute the batayle of sir Mordred many tymys.’ (Field, “Battle of Towton” 71)

Thomas H. Crofts similarly notes that “in the description of the [final] battle itself, Malory favors the stanzaic version [over the French source], which[,] ... unlike the French, has the virtue of

⁵ See Plate IV for the final battle between Arthur and Mordred as recorded in the Winchester Manuscript.

giving Mordred a central place in the battle” (*Malory’s Contemporary Audience* 146). Although Mordred is central, Malory increases Arthur’s military prowess through his defeating of Mordred. Malory’s heightening of Arthur’s achievements in the final battle, which follows in the same vein as his choice to heighten Arthur’s character throughout the *Morte*, adds to the *pathos* of Arthur’s fall, but also reveals Malory’s portrait of Arthur as a good king throughout the *Morte*. Malory’s consistently positive treatment of Arthur throughout the *Morte* shows that although forces relating to human folly and fortune cause Arthur’s colossal decline, Malory continues to treat Arthur as a successful, powerful, and righteous king. Just as Arthur’s good kingship in the opening civil war against Lot and the rebels is linked to Arthur’s prowess in battle, so is Arthur’s prowess in the final civil war against Mordred a reflection—and reminder—of that continued good kingship.

Part of the greatness of Arthur’s fall as well as the revelation of how far Arthur is willing to go in order to save his polity and his kingdom are emphasised by the historical elements Malory chooses to include from his own experiences with war.⁶ P. J. C. Field claims that some of what Malory writes “was influenced by various events in his own time[:] ... sometimes he seems to intend a political allusion, ... at [other times], the historical event may be no more than raw material for a more vivid story, with no significance at all for the reader” (“Malory and the Battle of Towton” 68). Concerning Arthur’s final battle, Field claims that the “verbal echoes show

⁶ In *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory*, P. J. C. Field writes about the wars in which Malory, a fighting knight, would have participated. Most notably, Malory probably fought in the Battle of Towton, one of Britain’s bloodiest battles. See Field’s “Malory and the Battle of Towton” for how Arthur’s last battle resembles that of the Battle of Towton.

beyond dispute, [that the battle] is based on the corresponding episode in the Middle English stanzaic *Le Morte Arthur*, [and] it may also draw on the stanzaic poem's source, the French prose *Mort Artu*;" however, "despite this clear literary derivation ... Malory's story has a surprising amount in common with one of the decisive engagements of the Wars of the Roses, the Battle of Towton" (69). Amongst the many possibilities for why Malory may have chosen to include such glimpses into the battle scenes of his own era are two important reasons that relate to my present argument. The first is, as Field contends, that the brutality of war makes Arthur's fall all the more colossal. Field states that

like Malory's [final] battle [between Arthur's forces and Mordred's], Towton lasted from dawn to dusk, with hard fighting all the time. Both battles also produced great numbers of casualties. In Malory and in his sources, Arthur's battle leaves a hundred thousand dead [O³ 1236.9]; Towton is said to be the bloodiest battle ever fought on British soil[:] ... the bishop of Salisbury said that the heralds had counted 28,000 bodies, and large though it is, that number seems to have been an underestimate[.] ... [T]he Croyland chronicler records that those who organised the burials said that they had buried not 28,000 corpses, but 38,000. The provenance of that number would be difficult to improve on, and 38,000 is not one of those suspicious round figures that medieval writers loved to pick out of the air. ("Malory and the Battle of Towton" 70)

By giving insight into what is considered to be Britain's bloodiest battle, Malory both makes Arthur's death more horrible, but also makes Arthur's successes in defeating Mordred's army more commendable. This is especially so because Arthur's battle has roughly three-fold the

number of casualties as the Battle of Towton, which would have been well known to Malory's audience.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the bloodiness of the battle shows how far Arthur is willing to go in order to deliver peace unto his kingdom. This is not to suggest that Arthur will fight "oute of mesure" or past all logic (contrary to Radulescu, "'Oute of mesure'"). Rather, Arthur fights for causes that a mediæval audience would understand as acceptable and good: to defend his people and to defend his kingship. The wars in Tale VIII are worse than those in Tales I and II, though, because in the last wars, "Malory no longer presents the glory to be won in war, merely the destruction" (Whetter, "Warfare and Combat" 179). One of Malory's most gruesome scenes occurs after the battle when "Sir Lucan felle in a sowne, that parte of hys guttis felle oute of hys body, and therewith the noble knyght hys harte braste. And whan the kynge awoke he behylde Sir Lucan, how he lay fomyng at the mowth and parte of his guttes lay at hys fyete" (924.31–35). Here, Lucan's injuries and vivid death symbolise both the gruesomeness of the war and the depth of sacrifice Arthur has to give in order to secure peace. The longevity of Arthur's battle against Mordred is demonstrated through Arthur's long endurance and experience in sorrow, which in turn exposes the expression of love that he has for his people and kingdom: "and thus they fought all the longe day, and never stynted tylle the noble knyghtes were layde to the colde erthe" (922.29–30). Field further points out aspects of the final battle that correspond to the Battle of Towton: the "colde erthe" (922.30) references the major conflict in the Wars of the Roses, which was characterised by the extremely cold weather in which it was fought; pillagers and robbers come by moonlight, both emphasising the longevity and horribleness of this war, but also drawing a line to Towton, which also lasted a whole day ("Battle of Towton" 73). To what extent these references also carry with them partisan political

allusions is contestable and not germane to the present argument, however, Malory's decision to use references from a war that would be recent in the minds of his audience adds to the realism and violent depth of the scene. This realism and depth work to heighten the *pathos* felt for Arthur as he fights to attain peace for his kingdom.

Arthur's enduring sorrow is further demonstrated through the sense of great toil that characterises each opposing side in the final battle. This is evidenced by the image of Mordred at the end, who leans on his sword amongst the many dead knights: "Than Kynge Arthur loked aboute and was ware where stood sir Mordred leanyng upon hys swerde amonge a grete hepe of dede men" (923.9–11). Field argues here that "exhaustion complete enough to make a fighting man lean on his sword suggests a long and continuously fought battle" ("Battle of Towton" 72), using this detail as further evidence for his parallel between Malory's battle on Salisbury Plain and the Battle of Towton:

Towton was notable for its heaps of dead and dying bodies, which broke up the opposing lines and made the fighting even more difficult and dangerous. These heaps were produced by a combination of three factors special to this battle: the huge number of casualties; the long, bitterly contested, almost stationary fighting, and the constricted battlefield. ("Battle of Towton" 72)

By incorporating similar details into his narrative, Malory emphasises the brutality of Arthur's last war, as well as the extent to which Arthur chooses to go in order to deliver peace unto his kingdom. Significantly, Arthur only turns to war after his attempt to negotiate a diplomatic peace settlement fails; but when peace does fail, he takes the necessary steps to protect his polity from further machinations by Mordred. The fact that he is willing to go this far is important because it demonstrates his commitment both to the doctrines of the Round Table and his commitment to

his kingdom and polity. By combining literary source material with historical detail and experience, Malory produces a scene that is more than the sum of its parts. As Field argues, this scene is and is not the Battle of Towton; however, the historical evidence heightens the reality and gruesomeness of the battle, likewise increasing the *pathos* the audience experiences for Arthur.⁷ Part of this heightened sense of reality is, as Whetter points out, so that Malory can forgo showing the glory of war and instead demonstrate to us the destruction and loss that is a result of war when Arthur fights former friends rather than rebels or invaders (“Warfare and Combat” 179).⁸ This is important because amongst the realism that Malory presents in the last tale, he also clearly gives the last tale a tone of pastness, which establishes that Arthur’s world is not the present world. This tone coalesces into an elegiac tone, or a longing for the things that are past, which is where I turn to next.

⁷ Field argues that although information about the Battle of Towton was widely available following the battle, it appears that Malory did not read any of these accounts. Rather, Field suggests, “despite the confusing mixture with material from Malory’s sources, [the vivid imagery] appear[s] to provide pictures by a participant—the only such pictures we are ever likely to have—of what it felt like to take part in the bloodiest battle ever fought on British soil” (“Malory and the Battle of Towton” 74).

⁸ Arthur Rackham’s painting of Arthur’s final battle, Plate V. “How Mordred Was Slain by Arthur, and How by Him Arthur Was Hurt to the Death,” By Arthur Rackham (1917). Reproduced by kind permission of The Camelot Project, University of Rochester. vividly demonstrates the dreadfulness of Arthur’s fight against Mordred. The painting also shows the setting of the sun, which draws reference to the length of the battle, being one whole day, and the overcast skies reference the cold and damp battleground, giving the viewer a sense of the exhaustion felt by both camps: “and thus they fought all the longe day, and never stynted tulle the noble knyghtes were layde to the colde erthe” (922.29–30). (Plate V reproduced by kind permission of The Camelot Project, University of Rochester.)

It is important that Arthur's fall is as great as it is because it emphasises the destruction of the Round Table paradigms and intensifies the loss of Britain's ideal society. W. Guerin argues that "as the tragedy draws to its end, the style shifts to careful use of an elegiac tone" (235), by which the audience is prodded to feel a sense of loss for an ideal kingdom with its ideal king. Whetter furthers this idea of Arthur's goodness and tragedy by claiming that "Malory takes pains to modify the traditional close of the legend by dwelling on the finality of Arthur's end, and one crucial effect of this is to exacerbate the sense of loss" (*Understanding Genre* 106; see also his *Manuscript and Meaning* 193–210).⁹ Lambert notes that Malory consistently uses the past-tense in the closing tale, whereas his sources make free use of the historical present (131). Although, as previously mentioned, Malory inserts clear references to the Battle of Towton—a battle his audience would be very familiar with which—to make his narrative seem more realistic, Malory employs language that temporally distances the audience from the narrative. That is, he gives the sense that the events happened a long time from his fifteenth-century contemporary world in order to augment the mood of the narrative to produce a sense of pastness. This sense of Arthur's kingdom being both very realistic and very distant is important because "the tone indicates circumstances not unlike those found in Old English poetry" (W. Guerin 235), what W. P. Ker calls "[t]he transience and uncertainty of the world, the memory of past good fortune, and of things lost" (Ker 215). Ker specifically compares *Beowulf* to Malory's *Morte* when he writes: "*Beowulf* is invaded by *pathos* in a way that often brings the old English verse very nearly to the

⁹ Whetter further contends that the elegiac tone of the narrative bleeds into the marginalia found on the Winchester manuscript. These marginalia, he contends, symbolically act as tombstones throughout the narrative (*Manuscript and Meaning* 86–87).

tone of the great lament for Lancelot at the end of the *Morte d'Arthur*" [sic] (Ker 215; also quoted by W. Guerin 235–36). I would go further than this by adding that the *pathos* Ker and W. Guerin observe invading both *Beowulf* and the *Morte*'s Lancelot can also be likened to the *pathos* that the audience experiences for Arthur.¹⁰ The presence of this heightened *pathos* towards Arthur, the existence of which I have already endeavored to demonstrate, works to establish that Arthur is indeed a good king despite his choices during the wars of his tragic fall. This is important, for as Robert Henry Wilson long ago argued, Malory's changes to his sources regarding Arthur's character all make Arthur appear as a just king (65–83). Hence, this Chapter now turns to explore Arthur's maintenance of just kingship despite the tragedy of his last wars.

* * *

Malory's opening passage to Tale VIII, a recapitulation and modification of the famous May Passage, briefly summarises the plot trajectory of his "Hoole Book" (940.17), which follows the Wheel of Fortune, a symbolic wheel that demonstrates the inevitable turning of good into bad fortune following a season of joy and achievement. Malory begins the passage with the joys of May and its associations with new growth, fecundity, and general gladness and rejoicing: "IN MAY, whan every harte floryshyth and burgenyth (for, as the season ys lusty to beholde and

¹⁰ The elegiac tone of the narrative, which gives way into the *pathos* that we as an audience experience for the loss of Arthur's kingdom, resonates through the battle-space in Arthur and Mordred's final encounter. Molly Martin notes that unlike other warring encounters within the *Morte*, the final battle-space, "these downs between Salisbury and the seaside[,] are not attached specifically to any castle. The uncertain distance between the city of Salisbury and this point of meeting—soon to be battleground and graveyard—unhinges battle from castle space ... the ruins of Old Sarum speak to its past as a military stronghold and administrative centre, and thus recall the similar apex of Arthur's reign. These same ruins also reflect the current state of the Arthurian kingdom and fellowship" (257).

comfortable, so man and woman rejoysyth and gladith of somer commynge with his freyshe floures” (870.3–6). Malory, though, quickly alters the narrative tone from pastoral or romance joys to tragic woes with the lines, “so thys season hit beffelle in the moneth of May a grete angur and unhappe that stynted nat tylle the floure of chyvalry of alle the worlde was destroyed and slayne” (870.7–10). Malory alludes to the Lady of Fortune in these opening lines who arguably presides over the darkness that will destroy the “floure of chyvalry” (95.31), who is King Arthur, and his knights. My contention that Malory is evoking Fortune in these lines is supported by Lambert who argues that the words “hit befelle ... a grete angur and unhappe ... that stynted nat tylle the floure of chyvalry of alle the worlde was destroyed and slayne” (870.8–10) “present the destruction [of Arthur] as an occurrence of unknown or at least impersonal causation rather than as a human action[.] ... Malory is pointing to luck, fate, fortune, chance, rather than moral responsibility” (162). Yet part of the tragedy and complexity of the close of the *Morte* resides in the fact that, as Lambert also notes, “causation is multiple and complex” (160), meaning it is no longer clear what is right and wrong. Thus Malory moves from alluding to Fortune to directly placing part of the blame for Arthur’s fall onto human folly in the next lines when he writes that “all was longe uppon two unhappy knyghtis whych were named sir Aggravayne and Sir Mordred, that were brethirn unto sir Gawayne” (870.10–12).¹¹ In these and the previous lines,

¹¹ For more on why Malory emphasises Mordred’s role in the breaking down of the Arthurian kingdom, see Megan Leitch’s *Romancing Treason*, pp. 107–14. Here she argues that although Guenevere and Lancelot play a part in the destruction of the kingdom through their adultery, Mordred’s part is more destructive because of his special bond to Arthur. That is, although Malory does not excuse the adultery between Guenevere and Lancelot, he focuses on “the nobility of the[ir] love ... [and their portrayal] as honourable characters caught in a tragic conflict of loyalties”

Malory gives us the two-part answer to the cause of Arthur's tragic fall: one is Fortune, which humankind can never dominate, and the other is the evils resulting from human conflict. Where some scholars argue that it is Arthur's selfishness that leads to his own destruction,¹² I argue that Arthur's fall is partly due to his actions in response to the poor decisions of others in his kingdom and partially due to the destructive inevitability of Fortune. It is Arthur's decisions in the final tale, especially his concern for his kingdom, that help to illustrate his good kingship.

As Malory's second May Passage makes clear, the final destruction of Arthur's kingdom is primarily caused by "too unhappy knyghtis," Aggravain and Mordred (870.10–11).¹³

Aggravain and Mordred ignore Gawain, act out of their own evil nature, and tell Arthur of the love between Lancelot and the Queen, thereby causing the last war in the *Morte Darthur*.

Although Aggravain and Mordred pretend to be acting out of loyalty to Arthur (870.16–23), a pretense partly supported by Kenneth Tiller (3–4),¹⁴ the objections of Gawain, Gaherys, and

(108–09); whereas concerning Mordred, Malory focuses on the familial connection between Arthur and Mordred, and "by stressing that Mordred is Arthur's son, Malory does give Mordred a plausible claim to regency; however, his emphasis is then on how Mordred treacherously exploits this claim" (116).

¹² For example, see Lexton's *Contested Language*. Lexton may be influenced by Peck who argues that the alliterative Arthur is selfish.

¹³ Helen Cooper supports this contention by arguing that "the whole weight of blame can therefore be thrown first on the jealousies and hatreds of Gawain and his brothers, then on the 'unhappy' [870.10] Mordred" ("Counter-Romance" 154).

¹⁴ Tiller argues that "although Malory places the blame squarely (and justly) on Mordred and Aggravayne, two 'unhappy' knights, it is difficult to overlook the possibility that they are fulfilling their duty to King Arthur as

Gareth, as well as Malory's language, make it clear that Aggravain and Mordred are in the wrong to publicize Lancelot and Guenevere's affair. As Helen Cooper notes, the Middle English word "unhappy" can mean "the sense of being doomed to misfortune, almost accursed" ("Counter-Romance" 154). This is important because Mordred is the evil and tyrannical son of King Arthur, begotten through Arthur's incestuous relationship with his sister, Morgawse. Malory begins Tale VIII by stating that Sir Aggravayne and Sir Mordred hated the Queen and Sir Lancelot (673). Lambert argues that these lines cannot be ignored as

it is clear Malory does want this strong initial emphasis upon the responsibility of Aggravain and Mordred [*sic.*], for he stresses that responsibility not only in the second paragraph of the eighth tale, but in the *Explicit* of the seventh: 'And bycause I have loste the very mater of Shevalere de Charyot I departe from the tale of sir Launcelot; and here I go unto the morte Arthur, and that caused sir Aggravayne [O² 869.11–13].' (162)¹⁵

Mordred's hatred for Arthur stems, as we later see, from a selfish and tyrannical desire to rule Arthur's kingdom. Although Sir Gawain counsels Sir Mordred and Aggravain not to tell Arthur about Lancelot's and Guenevere's affair, their wickedness prevails, and they reveal the secret to Arthur anyway. Although a modern audience may argue that Mordred is in the right because he

vassals and advisers by informing on the adulterous and potentially treasonous activities of Lancelot and Guinevere" (3–4).

¹⁵ Blame for the destruction of the kingdom is cast upon Mordred and Aggravain several more times throughout the *Morte* and especially in the final tale: 887.4–8; 923.29–30; and when Arthur says, "'now, gyff me my speare,' ... 'for yondir I have aspyed the traytoure that all thys woo hath wrought'" (923.12–14).

is telling the truth by revealing the affair between Lancelot and Guenevere,¹⁶ Radulescu rightly shows that although Mordred and Aggravain are truthful, they are nonetheless in the wrong for revealing the love affair between Guenevere and Lancelot:

both Aggravain and Mordred prove themselves unworthy of belonging to the Round Table fellowship: their envy is not only a moral sin, but also a fault that is universally condemned in the Arthurian court. Motivated by envy, Aggravain and Mordred disclose that which is supposed to stay hidden, the affair between the queen and Lancelot. (*Gentry Context* 113–46, quoting 123)

Further, Radulescu suggests that Aggravain and Mordred are driven by “prevy hate” (870.13) and “there is no political explanation for their actions; seemingly, there is no sense of what political outcome they are working towards” (124). Radulescu also notes that Aggravain and Mordred’s evil is emphasised by the noise they make concerning Lancelot and Guenevere’s affair: “Aggravain speaks loudly, so that he can be heard by everyone present” and, she continues, “the resulting image is one of discord within the royal council, since two members, instead of advising the king for the best governance of the realm, appear to be plotting against the king’s peace” (*Gentry Context* 124). Thus, Aggravain and Mordred play a huge part in the destruction of the Arthurian court because they are driven by their own interests, and, as royal counsellors, should have had the interests of the court at heart (*Gentry Context* 132) and should have desired to protect the queen’s honour. As Kennedy following on Derek Brewer points out, “honor is not the same as moral goodness and the ‘distinction between right and wrong must go when honor is at stake’” (Kennedy, “King Mark and King Arthur” 153; Brewer, ed., *Morte*

¹⁶ See my previous note on Tiller, pages 3–4 in his unpublished, “Narrative Distance.”

Darthur, 23–35). Brewer’s point is further supported by Helen Cooper when she writes that “the whole issue of feudal loyalty, with its associated principle of the upholding of the common weal, seems to matter far more to Malory in the apportioning or withholding of blame than the problematics of adultery, or indeed of incest” (“Counter-Romance” 154).¹⁷ Thus, Mordred’s and Aggravain’s actions in this scene decidedly set the course for the troubles that ensue and ultimately destroy the kingdom.

Although wrong, Mordred and Aggravain are successful and so before Arthur fights the selfish usurper Mordred he must fight Lancelot. In contrast to the wars between Arthur and the rebels discussed in Chapter One, or the wars against Arthur and Lucius discussed in Chapter Two, Arthur is now not fighting rebels or threatening invaders, but his own best knight, Lancelot. Arthur does not willingly fight Launcelot but is forced to take action due to the decisions of others, as well as the strength of Fortune’s violent turning of the Wheel. These forces are demonstrated to Arthur (and the audience) in a number of instances in this final tale.

In the final battles that follow Aggravain’s and Mordred’s selfish decisions, Arthur’s justice as king and warrior is demonstrated through his activeness in attempting to prevent war as well as his efforts to maintain the core values of the Round Table. While Arthur does all that he can not to fight, he must act as a noble king ought to and thus respond through warfare to uphold

¹⁷ For more on how Malory diminishes the “problematics of adultery” see Leitch, *Romancing Treason*. Here she claims that “since Lancelot and Guenevere’s perfidious consummation of their affair and its consequences are major components of the Arthurian story, Malory does of course treat them; however, the *Morte* seeks to emphasize not their guilt but rather the ways in which they are *not* culpable. The text conceals the adultery as much as possible without denying its existence” (108).

the Round Table's system of values and protect his kingdom. Hence, where this chapter later investigates Fortune's role in the precipitation of Arthur's tragic fall, I first turn to show how Malory emphatically tells his audience that Arthur's downfall is in part caused by the poor decisions of others. Specifically, I discuss how the poor decisions of Lancelot, Guenevere, and Gawain contribute to Arthur's battle against Lancelot and the sundering of the Round Table knights and morals, and how Arthur maintains his just kingship throughout this tragic fall.

Lancelot is Arthur's best knight, yet quickly becomes Arthur's enemy following Mordred's and Aggravain's revealing of his adulterous affair with Queen Guenevere. Here, I argue that although Lancelot's affair with the queen is serious, it is more the complex ties that Lancelot shares with both Guenevere and Arthur that lead to Lancelot's contribution to the sundering of Arthur's kingdom. Whether or not one argues that Arthur's kingdom is Christian or secular, both belief systems rightly view adultery as morally wrong; however, in the Middle Ages, in real life as well as in Arthurian romances, "adultery against the king was considered to be treason" (Radulescu, *Gentry Context* 130). Thus, Lancelot and Guenevere were not only committing adultery, but also committing treason against the king.¹⁸ Arthur's reaction upon hearing that Lancelot has betrayed him is important because he does not respond immediately in

¹⁸ Leitch notes that "to the popular medieval English mind, 'traitor' meant 'someone who had betrayed a trust,' [Green, *Crisis of Truth* 214] especially the trust expected 'between members of the same family or household' [214]. This less institutional, more personal understanding of treason and social bonds was subject to a continuing process of erosion by centralized authority. ... But it could retain ideological influence as a nostalgic standard, as in the *Morte* ... the *Morte* defines treason as almost any underhanded action, to anyone" (*Romancing Treason* 104). Hence, Guenevere, Lancelot, and Mordred all stand as traitorous figures in the final tale and are consequently rightly admonished by Arthur.

anger, but rather tests Lancelot, showing justice unto him (872.34–73.4). In allowing Lancelot to speak, Arthur allows the audience to hear Lancelot’s version of the story and to decide for themselves whether or not he is in the right. This is important because Malory complicates his source’s explanation of their adultery. For Malory’s story, the audience is and is not certain of Lancelot’s and Guenevere’s behaviour and this has the result of placing more emphasis on Mordred’s and Aggravain’s deceptive behaviour, giving the audience an opportunity to believe that the accusation of adultery is simply a made-up rumour spread too loudly by the traitors.¹⁹ When Lancelot speaks, he claims that when Aggravain and Mordred arrived at Guenevere’s chamber, “in their quarell they preved nat hemselff the beste, nother in the ryght” (899.4–5). Although we may believe that Lancelot is in the wrong for having an adulterous relationship with the queen, Malory leaves his audience with room to believe that Lancelot may be innocent.

As Radulescu writes, Malory makes Guenevere’s and Lancelot’s affair ambiguous “as Arthur himself does not have any evidence of the affair, although the reader is told that he has ‘a demyng of hit’ [872.24]” (*Gentry Context* 128). Although Lancelot is committing two acts of sin against King Arthur by loving Guenevere—that of adultery and treason—Kennedy makes the case that Malory pushes Lancelot’s and Guenevere’s adultery to the peripheral edges of the plot and appears to focus more on Lancelot’s and Guenevere’s role in the deaths of thirteen knights

¹⁹ The ambiguity surrounding Lancelot and Guenevere’s adultery is a common thread throughout the *Morte* as Malory “conceals the adultery as much as possible without denying its existence” (Leitch 108); however, another common thread is the clarity with which Malory emphasises the wrongdoings of Mordred and his camp: “Malory removes ambiguity from Mordred’s actions and presents him as the dark background against which other characters are sympathetically defined” (Leitch 117–18).

and the wounding of Mordred outside Guenevere's chamber ("King Mark and King Arthur" 161). This is important because it means that there is more reason for Lancelot and Guenevere to receive the punishment that they deserve, and this ensures that Arthur is making a just decision in condemning them. This point is further strengthened by the evidence, given by Kennedy, that Malory gives legal justification for this sin even though this is not found in Malory's sources: Malory would have known that trial by combat was distrusted in the Middle Ages ("King Mark and King Arthur" 160) and because Malory writes that "the law was such in tho dayes" (882.13–14), "it is doubtful whether the audience would have questioned Arthur's judgement of Guenevere" ("King Mark and King Arthur" 160). Leitch uses this same observation about "the law was such in tho dayes" (882.13–14) to claim that Malory's *Morte* has a "nostalgic yet thoroughly contemporary ideology" (105). By returning to "resonant older customs" (Leitch 105) Malory positions Arthur's world as "the (flawed) golden age from which the present is declining" (Leitch 105). Through portraying the Arthurian world as a golden age Malory preemptively closes any debates about whether or not this rule was just, but also comments on his contemporary society which is his "present" and is, by contrast to Arthur's world, "declining." Thus, by giving ample reason for Arthur's actions in condemning Guenevere and Lancelot for their sins, Malory ensures that Arthur is upheld as a model for just kingship.

Arthur, who is not tyrannical like his son, Mordred, does not wish to punish Lancelot, his best knight. Nevertheless, he is forced to do something because Mordred and Agravain have turned the domestic and private spheres of his court inside out. Following the attack on Lancelot by Mordred and his company, although Lancelot is Arthur's best knight, he is still committing treason and adultery, and so Arthur has no choice but to deal justly with both Lancelot and Guenevere (882.5–11). Dealing justly means abiding by the law of the land and thus sentencing

Guenevere to be burned at the stake: “thes previs and experyenses caused Kynge Arthure to commaunde the quene to the fyre, and there to be brente” (882.20–21). Although Lexton argues that Guenevere should not have been sentenced to death because “the conceptual groundwork for killing a queen through an accusation of treasonous adultery lay not in legal or historical precedent” (“Reading the Adulterous” 223), Edward Donald Kennedy makes the more thoughtful and textually justified claim that Malory must have Arthur sentence Guenevere to death because he is bound by his sources to do so:

Malory was bound by his source, for Lancelot’s attempt to rescue the queen from the flame, the ensuing combat, Lancelot’s accidental slaying of Gawain’s brothers Gaherys and Gareth, and the subsequent downfall of the realm are all dependent upon the consequences of the condemnation of Guenevere. (“King Mark and King Arthur” 159)

Accordingly, Guenevere’s sentencing to death by the King is just because Arthur follows the laws of his land in justly dealing with one who has committed both adultery and treason against his person and kingship. Leitch notes, “in Malory’s representations of treason . . . his contemporary readers would recognize especially the part of their own social organization that was being eroded” (105). This is important because through sentencing Guenevere, Arthur rightly protects both his kingship and his honour, but also presents a picture of just governance over the social organization of his court. Therefore, although Arthur’s chivalric world is in a moribund state, Arthur is not, and thus his good kingship moves him to follow through with the laws of the land. His initial reluctance to condemn Guenevere demonstrates his good character and love towards his traitorous wife, yet we see in this scene that his love for the statues of his land and doing the honourable thing is rightly stronger. Lastly, Malory cannot forgo the

condemnation of Guenevere without compromising the plot; thus, as I have tried to show, Malory does what he has done throughout the *Morte* and presents Arthur in the best light possible—as a just and good king—even amidst difficult and less than ideal circumstances.

Although Lancelot's affair with Guenevere acts as a catalyst for the events that cause Arthur to sentence Guenevere to death and that then lead Gawain to wage war against Lancelot, the resulting cascade clearly shows that complex ties between characters play a part in the final destruction of the Round Table. When Guenevere is sentenced to the fiery stake, Lancelot rides in to save her and unintentionally slays Sir Gaherys and Sir Gareth, two good knights, one of whom Lancelot knighted himself: "Sir Launcelot smote Sir Gaherys and Sir Gareth upon the brayne-pannes, wherethorow that they were slayne in the felde. Howbehit in very trowth Sir Launcelot saw them nat. And so were they founde ded amonge the thyckyste of the prees" (885.7–11). In choosing to save Guenevere, Lancelot chooses to disobey Arthur's will to have Guenevere punished, and thus further severs his ties to the king. Tiller argues that "dissonance comes, first (and obviously), from the fact that Launcelot plans to rescue Guenevere *from* Arthur rather than on his behalf" (8), and consequently, Lancelot's war with Arthur is a conflict of love and loyalty. For Lancelot both loves Guenevere and is wholly indebted to Arthur. Tiller explores the destructive potential that can occur when characters are caught in the midst of conflicts of love and loyalty:

Launcelot displays two different, contradictory, concerns in this segment: he regrets the harm he might do to his friends, as fellow members of Arthur's chivalric community. At the same time, he realizes that an attack on Arthur's men will reduce the number of his potential followers in the inevitable civil war against Arthur, an overt challenge the king's authority. [Lancelot and other] characters

view themselves and their actions through two interpretive lenses—one linked more to the “romance,” based on bonds of personal love and loyalty, and the other, a “chronicle”—based reading, which calculates political consequences and potential alliances. The emergent (and somewhat darker) portrayal does not diminish Lancelot as a hero, but rather shows him functioning in a world where ideals of knighthood and the terms of worship are different. (8)

Although Tiller goes too far in arguing for a contrast between knighthood and worship, the complex causation and tragic conflicts of duty are apparent through Lancelot’s words and actions. This is evident through his words and actions towards King Arthur: Lancelot refers to Arthur as “that moste noble kyng” (894.18–19); and Lancelot places Arthur back on his horse during the siege (894.20–21). Lancelot, however, is also bound by an oath to protect Guenevere. Radulescu claims that because Lancelot has promised always to be on Guenevere’s side, evident in his explanation “my lorde Arthure, I promysed her [Guenevere] at that day ever to be her knyght in ryght othir in wronge” (802.21–23), he “opposes the prerogatives of the Round Table oath, and sets the scene for the ensuing clash of loyalties” (*Gentry Context* 133). A knight who made an oath did not break his oath as that would be equivalent to casting away his knighthood along with all its honours and privileges. Furthermore, Leitch claims that “Malory writes about and valorizes an imagined period when oral oath underpinned society, yet he also traces fifteenth-century legality onto it, bringing it closer to contemporary experience” (105). This situation illustrates both just how important keeping oaths and ties were to a mediæval audience and how difficult it is for Lancelot—and by extension, Arthur—to do the right thing in these circumstances. Hence,

in Malory, the greatest chivalric fellowship ever known is brought down, not so much by the moral and religious shortcomings revealed by the Grail Quest, as happens in the French Vulgate cycle, but by the splitting of the kingdom into viciously hostile magnate affinities in a manner analogous to his own age of the Wars of the Roses. (Cooper, “Counter-Romance” 150)

This brings us back to Jill Mann who claims that morality in Malory is rarely clear and thus not the best subject for critical analysis.²⁰ Malory seems to make clear that more important than morality are oaths and ties that when sundered cause catastrophic eruptions, which in this case destroy the Round Table fellowship and the Arthurian chivalric world. The destruction, though, does not negate Arthur’s greatness.

Malory complicates the plot further by only partially severing the ties between Lancelot and Arthur. Outwardly, Lancelot is cast away from the Round Table and Arthur through his war against Arthur and Gawain. However, on an emotional level, the ties between Lancelot and Arthur are still very much intact, which is something Malory emphasises from his sources (Kennedy, “King Mark and King Arthur” 150) and uses further to reveal Arthur’s inherent goodness. As mentioned before, Lancelot continues to offer accolades towards Arthur throughout the first of the last two wars by referring to Arthur as “that moste noble kyng” (894.18–19). The emotional tie between Lancelot and Arthur is emphasised when Lancelot orders his knights to save Arthur and Gawain if they should engage in war and does all that he can to save those fighting for Arthur: “And ever Sir Launcelot charged all hys knyghtes in ony wyse to save Kynge Arthure and Sir Gawayne (893.32–33); “ever Sir Launcelot ded what he

²⁰ See Mann’s “Knightly Combat in Malory’s *Morte Darthur*.”

myght to save the people on Kynge Arthurs party” (894.6–7); “and ever was Kynge Arthur nyghe aboute Sir Launcelot to have slayne hym, and ever Sir Launcelot suffird hym and wolde nat stryke agayne” (894.10–12). Lancelot’s commitment to ensuring that King Arthur does not die while fighting against him testifies to his loyalty towards Arthur and also testifies to Arthur’s good kingship. There is a parallel here to the Roman War, because there, too, the Roman Embassy on the brink of war emphasise Arthur’s greatness. The situation in the final Tale, however, is more complex.

Arthur reciprocates this love when Malory’s text states that all wept at Lancelot’s departing except Gawain, implying that Arthur also wept (903.11–13). Coupled with the elegiac tone of the narrative, one can see that Arthur longs for peace with Lancelot and for the peace that he once had in the kingdom, but will never again experience. The near-breaking tension of the emotional tie between Lancelot and Arthur resonates through to the audience because Arthur not only weeps at Lancelot’s departure, but also weeps because Lancelot’s departure represents the first irredeemable crack in the Round Table. This resounding crack is made worse as Arthur faces a full-scale war with Lancelot in France. Because Lancelot is still vassalled unto King Arthur, Lancelot’s lands are still Arthur’s lands, making this war a civil war. Consequently, although Lancelot’s and Guenevere’s adultery is a contributing factor to the sundering of the Round Table, Malory shows that the breaking of ties between Arthur and his Round Table knights is far more detrimental to the unity of the knighthood and kingdom than the ties Arthur holds between himself and his wife, Guenevere, and himself and his own son, Mordred.

More destructive than her adultery with Lancelot is Guenevere’s damaged honour. Guenevere, King Arthur’s wife and queen to Arthur’s kingdom, has an adulterous affair with Lancelot, as has just been discussed. Malory, however, moves Lancelot’s and Guenevere’s

adultery to the periphery of the narrative, and it becomes apparent that Malory figuratively uses Guenevere's tarnished honour as a representation of the sundering of the Round Table.

Radulescu argues that the queen's honour is a symbol of the Round Table unity, and thus when her honour is shattered, so too is the unity of the Round Table (*Gentry Context* 133). Viewing Guenevere as a symbol of unity works because the Round Table has its genesis when Arthur forms his High Order of Knighthood which is consolidated through a physical Round Table given by Guenevere's father, previously given by Uther, at Guenevere's and Arthur's marriage feast (77.7–15). Guenevere's greatness and her association with the Round Table—like Lancelot's greatness and love for Arthur—greatly complicate the issue of who is in the right during this civil war.

Just as the final destruction is worse because Arthur (and Malory) loves both Guenevere and Lancelot, so is Gawain's role both good and bad. Gawain is Arthur's favourite nephew and one of the most chivalric knights of the Round Table, however, like Lancelot and Guenevere, he is also partly culpable for Arthur's fall because he leads Arthur astray through his poor counsel. Following Lancelot's accidental slaying of Gawain's brothers—Sir Gaherys and Sir Gareth—Gawain's wrath is stirred, and he swears to take revenge against Lancelot (888.24–33), demonstrating a poor attitude towards justice and leadership. Gawain does not seek counsel, but rather acts in the heat of his anger against Lancelot. Here, Radulescu accuses Gawain of being a bad influence on Arthur, but also calls Arthur to account for listening to Gawain's counsel (134–35).²¹ The implication by Radulescu and others is that Arthur is now a weak king, but I argue otherwise. What is important to note here is that Arthur is not the main instigator of the war

²¹ This is a position supported by Lisa Robeson in her "Malory and the Death of Kings," pp. 137–38.

between himself and Lancelot, rather it is Aggravain and Mordred, Lancelot and Guenevere themselves, and then Gawain. As Lambert observes, “Gawain, Lancelot, and Guinevere each take absolute responsibility for the disaster because each could have prevented it, not because each entirely caused it” (160). It is important to recognise that because Arthur’s High Order of Knighthood has been sundered, he does not have a sturdy body of council to rely upon. Whether or not Arthur should have taken the advice of Gawain before involving himself in what was to be the Battle of Benwick is contestable. Fundamentally, however, Arthur takes the advice from Gawain because “getting advice from others ... is what a mediæval English king, limited by Parliament, was expected to do” (Kennedy, “Malory, SMA, AMA, and Chaucer,” note 12 to text, p. 62). Notably, Malory emphasises the bonds between Arthur and Gawain in the *Morte*, and Kennedy shows that although Arthur becomes overly reliant on Gawain in the final wars, an audience steeped in the Wars of the Roses would not necessarily condemn a ruler for following the advice and wishes of a powerful family member (“Mark and King Arthur” 153–57) The strength of the oath between Gawain and Arthur is underscored in the formality of Gawain’s oath of vengeance against Lancelot where he calls on Arthur as “My kynge, my lorde, and myne uncle” (888.23) and declares, “I shall make you a promyse whych I shall holde be my knyghthode, that frome thys day forewarde I shall never fayle Sir Launcelot untyll that one of us have slayne the othir” (888.24–27). Gawain is honour-bound to pursue his oath (Whetter, *Understanding Genre* 139–41) especially because he does so against his own knighthood. Through Gawain’s and Arthur’s bond, Arthur as a good king is honour-bound to abide by Gawain’s oath too. This is especially important because Lancelot and Guenevere have proven to be false unto Arthur. Thus, even though Arthur does not want to fight Lancelot, because of a complex web of oaths, which he is bound to honour since he is a good king, Arthur is revealed to

be a king who is trying to do the right thing in circumstances where right and wrong are no longer clear.

Through each of these three characters, Lancelot, Guenevere, and Gawain, Arthur's goodness as king and knight is demonstrated through his ability to deal justly with their mistakes and honour his oaths towards them. Arthur shows himself to be a just king attempting to do the right thing in tricky situations and without the stability of his Round Table governance that had always acted as a moral compass in any of his previous situations (Tales I and II, especially). Lambert demonstrates that in each of the final speeches that Malory gives these characters each takes the responsibility for the destruction of the kingdom. Guenevere reveals that "for all the love that ever was betwyxt us" (933.4), that is, herself and Lancelot, Arthur was slain. Lambert notes that these quoted words are the same lines as the ones in Gawain's letter to Lancelot asking him to come from France and help defeat Mordred (919.3-4). Here the parallel is that "both the queen and Gawain are bidding farewell to Lancelot and looking back on the ruin of the Round Table. And there is a similarity in reaction as well as in situation" (Lambert 160). Here, both Gawain and Guenevere take the blame for the destruction of Arthur and his kingdom and "the parallelism of the two scenes creates symmetry of blame. Both Gawain and the queen see themselves as responsible. Both are right, but obviously neither is entirely right, since each leaves out the explanation given by the other" (Lambert 160). Lancelot, like Guenevere and Gawain, also addresses his role in the destruction of the Round Table, and Lambert argues that "Lancelot's explanation does not replace Guenvere's; hers does not replace Gawain's" (160). Rather, it appears that collectively, the foolish or tragic and confused actions of each of these characters, and their unwillingness to prevent the foreseeable outcomes, leads to the demise of Arthur's kingdom. Thus, concerning Lancelot, Gawain, and Guenevere, the rational explanation

for Arthur's tragic fall is "the conflict of love and loyalty" (Lambert 159). However, this is *a* cause rather than *the* cause, for as I established earlier in this chapter, the majority of blame actually resides with Aggravain and Mordred.

For those who argue that Arthur is from the outset a tyrant, or at least becomes one as the narrative develops, there is sufficient evidence when one compares Arthur to Mordred, a true tyrant, to prove that Arthur is not the poor ruler some purport him to be. Leitch points out that "while in earlier Arthurian narratives Mordred is characteristically a villain, he becomes especially sinister in Malory's *Morte*. Malory deviates from his sources to create a darker portrayal of Mordred" (114–15). Malory's choice to augment his sources when characterising Mordred heightens Arthur's good kingship when presented against the backdrop of Mordred's evil tyranny. As Robeson notes, Mordred "represents a perversion of legitimate succession" ("Malory and the Death of Kings" 144–45). For example: in the final tale we see that Mordred makes himself king through deception by producing letters that announce the death of Arthur who is in fact still quite alive fighting against Lancelot in France (915.1–5). Secondly, Mordred attempts to kill the Archbishop (916.13–14), who is a representative of God on Earth, "a noble clerke and an holy man" (915.27–28), and one who provides counsel to kings. Mordred's kingship here is markedly different to Arthur's kingship who, throughout the *Morte*, listens to advice. Thirdly, Mordred swears no oath to serve his people as Arthur did when he became king (11.6–9). Finally, Mordred willingly wishes to commit incest with Guenevere by forcing her to marry him (915.9–10), whereas Arthur's incest was the workings of Fortune and Malory chooses to retell the version where his sister's identity was unknown to him (34.7–8). Malory complicates the narrative in the last-mentioned item because the Archbishop tells the audience that Mordred is committing incest, however, he does not say the same for Arthur, and so Arthur is and is not in

the wrong for his sin. Thus, even if we, the audience, believe that Arthur is wrong for committing incest, the text explicitly tells us that Mordred is in the wrong, not Arthur.²² Mordred's illegitimate rule is further underscored by the fact that both the Archbishop and Guenevere reject his power: the Archbishop as a member of the "higher clergy in the church" would have been one of the "chief political officials of the realm" and so his denouncement of Mordred (916.3–4) negates the possibility of Mordred being a rightly ordained king (Robeson, "Malory and the Death of Kings" 137 and 145). Guenevere too is a "powerful political player" who rejects Mordred by refusing to marry him (Robeson, "Malory and the Death of Kings" 145). By contrast, King Arthur is rightfully made king by Uther's dying proclamation, drawing the sword from the stone, and by the commons' public acclamation (as was discussed in the first chapter). Unlike Mordred, Arthur is a good character and king who attempts to do the right thing, with heroic courage, as his kingdom falls apart through poor decisions of other characters and the impersonal forces of Fortune. Although the people's initial willingness to support Mordred makes them look fickle, Malory's criticism is for their lack of loyalty, not Arthur's qualities as king.

Arthur's final actions in his decision to forgo the counsel of Sir Lucan (923.15–26) and defeat Sir Mordred demonstrate his ultimate devotion to his polity and kingdom. Robeson argues that although both Arthur and Mordred are crowned kings at the end of the *Morte Darthur* ("Death of Kings" 137), "Arthur provides a portrait of weakened kingship ... [, whereas]

²² For more on how Mordred's attempted incest emphasises his villainy and how Malory downplays Arthur's guilt in order to heighten Mordred's guilt see Kennedy, "Malory's *Morte Darthur*," pp. 162–67; Cooper, "Counter-Romance," p. 154.

Mordred illustrates a much darker version of perverted kingship” (“Death of Kings” 143). Suggesting that Arthur’s kingship is weakened through the strenuous civil wars is not the same as saying that Arthur is a poor ruler. As Robeson notes, in Tales I and II Arthur possesses a strong (and just) royal will; however, by Tale VIII he no longer “seems to direct policy” (“Death of Kings” 140). Here, Robeson draws on K. B. McFarlane’s argument that unruly nobles are a sign of weak kingship: Arthur lacks “strong executive will” that fails to “transform counsel into polity that would benefit the commonweal” (“Death of Kings” 139; referencing McFarlane 231–61). Robeson, however, qualifies her argument by emphatically stating that although usurpations usually only happened if a king was inept, Arthur is not inept in the final tale: “Arthur, although less effective in exercising authority during the wars against Lancelot and Mordred than he was earlier in his reign, is not inept” (“Death of Kings” 143). One reason that Robeson suggests proves that Arthur is not inept is through his ability to rally strong and successful forces against both Lancelot and Mordred in the final tale (“Death of Kings” 143). A more convincing example, however, is Arthur’s decision to spear his son, the traitorous Mordred, at the end of the battle to restore justice and protect his kingdom from any future tyranny. While Robeson and others argue that in killing Mordred Arthur fails “to heed good counsel” (“Death of Kings” 147) because he ignores the advice of Sir Lucan and slays Mordred even though it is already evident to Arthur that he has won the battle,²³ I contend that Arthur does the right thing here because he protects his kingdom from Mordred’s possible tyrannical revival in the land.

²³ See Lexton’s *Contested Language*, p. 170. See also Radulescu’s *Gentry Context* for the breakdown of counsel and governance in Arthur’s court in Tale VIII of the *Morte*, pp. 113–46. Also, see Radulescu’s “‘Oute of Mesure.’”

Indeed, Malory himself does not condemn Arthur for this act; as Helen Cooper points out, “to Malory’s Arthur ... Mordred is ‘the traytoure that all thys woo hath wrought’ [O³ 1236]; and here it is emphasized that the greatest treachery and sin is Mordred’s deed of parricide, not the initial sexual transgression that made it possible” (“Counter-Romance” 154–55). Instead, Malory preserves Arthur and although he is mortally wounded, he does not die at this battle scene. Instead, he is transported away to die away from the horrors of the battlefield, and his death is followed by a holy burial with the famous words “*Hic iacet Arthurus, Rex quondam Rexque futurus*” (928.28)²⁴ inscribed onto his tombstone. This is important because it shows that other characters as well as Malory believe that although Arthur is not perfect, he fought with courage for the good of his kingdom. As W. Guerin notes, “the protagonists die holy deaths, after which important secondary characters die fighting the infidels” (258). Larry D. Benson even suggests that the possibility that Arthur is once as well as future king gives a degree of hope to the *Morte*’s conclusion by implying not only the hope of Arthur’s return but the certainty that this return can only occur because God forgives and favours Arthur (240–41). For my purposes, what is especially important is the fact that Malory “gives Mordred the most gruesome death of his entire work, and of all versions of the final combat” (Cooper, “Counter-Romance” 155), thereby emphasising that Mordred is a traitor and ultimately the cause of the collapse of the Round Table.

where she argues that acts “‘oute of mesure’” throughout the *Morte* are performed in order to seek justice or revenge.

²⁴ “Here lies Arthur, the once and future king.”

Mordred's villainy emphasizes Arthur's greatness and good kingship. In fact, Malory emphasises the elegiac tone of the narrative surrounding Arthur's death by having all of the remaining Round Table knights weep for his loss: Guenevere becomes a nun and the narrative tells us that she is never merry again (929.1–6); Lancelot spends the last of his days "groveling" at the tombs of Guenevere and Arthur (937.11–13); Excalibur is cast into the lake to be kept by the Lady of the Lake (926.13–17); Arthur is placed onto a barge where "there resceyved hym thre quenys with grete mournyng" (926.28–29); and lastly Malory's praise for Arthur—of which there is no evidence for its being ironic—following his death-stroke via Mordred, states "and noble Kynge Arthure felle in a swoughe to the erthe" (924.6, my emphasis). The elegiac tone is further deepened for the audience because "although war once again brings glory—both to the knights and to God—this is not sufficient compensation for the loss of Arthur and the Round Table" (Whetter, "Warfare and Combat" 182). Thus, although Arthur following his last two battles is given the same praise from his wife, his knights, the polity, and from Malory himself as he has been given throughout the *Morte*—which demonstrates that he is indeed the just king that I argue he is—his goodness is further developed in the final scene by the elegiac tone of the narrative. Malory's ability to weave in elegiac threads only works because Arthur's fall is a tragedy, and the tragic form only works in the *Morte* because Arthur is such a good king who falls because he is given more misfortune than he deserves.

* * *

Lady Fortune bookends and disperses herself throughout the folios of the *Morte*. She engages with all of Arthur's fighting adventures, at times bringing him immense glory, such as in his battle against Emperor Lucius, and at other times dragging him down into the depths of tragedy. Fortune can be seen at the beginning of the *Morte* when circumstances arise causing Arthur to

pull Excalibur from the stone, herein ennobling him with success (8.20–29); yet, misfortune is also alluded to from the beginning when Merlin chastises Arthur for his incestuous relationship with Morgawse, his sister, and warns him that his son and nephew, Mordred, will destroy Arthur and all the knights of his realm (36.15–17). After a long group of tales that separate Arthur’s first wars from his final wars (Tales I and II, and VIII, respectively), Lady Fortune revisits Arthur in a dream warning him that he has tarried in good fortune too long and must now face misfortune. The Wheel is suddenly turned, and Malory’s Tale VIII shifts into an immensely tragic and sombre mood. This dream scene is important because Malory seems to have lifted the scene in its entirety directly from the stanzaic *Morte Arthur* rather than from the French *Mort Artu* which Malory uses elsewhere and which is the stanzaic-poet’s source (*sMA*, lines 3168–191). David F. Johnson argues that, in contrast to the author of the French *Mort Artu*, “who presents Arthur as being punished by Fortune for his pride,” the English stanzaic *Morte Arthur* presents Arthur in the Wheel of Fortune scene as “an Arthur who, [like the audience,] will be judged by God, and whose fate, like theirs, will be determined by his individual merits” (27). For Johnson, Arthur in the stanzaic *Morte* is found partly wanting and the Dream of Fortune’s Wheel “suggest[s] the imminent advent of Arthur’s postmortem judgement” (note 34 to text, p. 32). This, however, is not the case in Malory’s version. As I show, part of Fortune’s function in Malory’s narrative is to emphasise Arthur’s commitment to his kingdom by underscoring his ability to remain a just king even as he is pulled down by Fortune’s forceful Wheel.

Fortune presents herself at the opening of Arthur’s last battle when Arthur calls for a truce and the two sides swear not to fight unless a sword is drawn. An adder, which nods to the

dream scene with its pit containing “all maner of serpentis and wormes” (920.20–21),²⁵ appears from nowhere at the attempted peace-treaty, and an unnamed knight draws his sword (922.15–16). Malory generally gives names even to minor characters, so he possibly chooses not to name the knight here because this scene appears to be driven by the hand of Fortune.²⁶ While the troubles facing Arthur at this moment in his kingship are of course undergirded by Mordred’s malicious intents, this scene also shows the workings of Fortune due to the unpredictable appearance of the adder. These examples draw us back to W. Guerin’s argument that Malory’s *Morte*’s final tale is characterised by “a series of deaths and frustrations, caused on the one hand by a conflict of often ironic, yet always supremely human, circumstances, and on the other by an inscrutable fortune or chance which man alone can never dominate” (233; see also Kennedy, “Malory’s *Morte Darthur*” 168). Thus, although Arthur’s misfortune will inevitably happen, and there is nothing he can do to stop it, his decision to counter misfortune with what J. R. R. Tolkien termed “Northern Courage” (20–21) will reveal the goodness of his kingship and character.

²⁵ The “dream scene” in Malory refers to 920.15–25: “So uppon Trynyté Sunday at nyght Kynge Arthure dremed a wondirfull dreme, and in hys dreme hym semed that he saw uppon a chafflet a chayre, and the chayre was faste to a whele, and thereuppon sate Kynge Arthure in the rycheest clothe of golde that myght be made. And the kynge thought there was undir hym, farre from hym, an hydeous depe blak watir, and therein was all maner of serpentis and wormes and wylde bestis fowle and orryble. And suddeynly the kynge thought that the whyle turned up-so-downe, and he felle amonge the serpentis, and every beste toke hym by a lymme. And than the kynge cryed as he lay in hys bed, ‘Helpe! helpe!’”

²⁶ Furthermore, the text states that knight raises his sword at *the* adder and not *an* adder. The specific reference to *the* adder suggests that this adder was purposely placed there by Fortune to initiate the war between Arthur and Mordred (922.15–16).

Northern Courage means that the hero faces inevitable destruction without despair.²⁷ Arthur's decision to accept his fate and persevere with Northern Courage is demonstrated in his decision to fight, to his death, for his kingdom. Arthur does not want war, as is evident in the words he declares before his final battle: "alas, this unhappy day" (922.20), and in his listening to Gawain's ghost and subsequent attempts to avoid both the final battle and his death. Here, Arthur's listening to Gawain's ghost and attempting to avoid the final battle is a change Malory makes to the French source, where Arthur ignores Gawain's advice (Kennedy, "Malory and His English Sources," 49–51). Only after Arthur's attempts to avoid war have failed does he willingly engage in the war he knows will destroy the kingdom. However, being the good and just king that he is, Arthur chooses to wage war against his son and nephew, Mordred, for the sake of his kingdom, for the sake of Guenevere, and to uphold the doctrines of the Round Table. Arthur's love for his wife and polity is most explicitly demonstrated through his anger, which only appears to present itself in times when his Round Table knights are forcibly torn apart during battle: "than was Kynge Arthure wode wroth oute of mesure, whan he saw hys people so slayne frome hym" (922.33–34). In pursuing Mordred, Arthur turns to fight whole-heartedly "as a noble kynge shulde do" (922.27); he then chooses to ignore Sir Lucan's counsel (923.24) and spears "the traytoure [Mordred] that all thys woo hath wrought" (923.7–8), costing himself his own life when Mordred "threste hymselff with the might that he had up to the burre of Kyng Arthurs speare, and ryghte so he smote hys fadir, Kynge Arthure (923.35–24.2). Consequently, "warfare is one of several narrative features or strands used by Malory to highlight the

²⁷ J. R. R. Tolkien defines Northern Courage as "the theory of courage, which is the great contribution of early Northern literature ... [that is,] the creed of unyielding will" ("*Beowulf*" pp. 20–21).

irredeemable loss of an ideal kingdom, ruler, and fellowship” (Whetter, “Warfare and Combat” 171). Warfare is neither condemned nor celebrated by Malory in the final tale, rather Malory states that King Arthur “ded full nobely, as a noble kynge shulde do” (922.27). That is, Malory unifies the horrors of war with Arthur’s glory to accentuate the loss of Arthur’s ideal court and kingship and heightens the *pathos* that the audience experiences for this loss.

Just as Malory amplifies the horror of the final war with details echoing Towton, so too, according to Crofts, is the

moment in which Mordred and Arthur close ... also amplified by certain details, at turns quotidian and nasty, of Malory’s own invention. ... Details remind us on the one hand that Malory was a writer who had seen swords and spears, and knew what they did do: a ‘foyne’ under the shield, the cubit measure of the spear poking out of a back, ‘burre’ of the spear, the anatomic specificity of ‘tay of the brayne’. These details are gory, but quotidian. On the other hand, these details lend the scene its tragic (and, to some degree, transcendent) power. We are, finally, allowed to witness a cathartic shuffling-off of mortalities and of hatreds: Mordred’s pulling himself up to the ‘burre’ of Arthur’s spear is Malory’s own detail and one of the most memorable in the book. ... That the painful journey which Malory causes Mordred to undergo, up the length of a spear, ends with a successful (if not instantaneous) parricide makes it a journey worthy of a Sophoclean protagonist. The same may be said of Arthur, who does implicitly what Mordred ... does explicitly: he too has chosen death and vengeance.

(147–48)

What is significant in terms of kingship is that Arthur again attempts to follow good counsel in avoiding pitched battle against Mordred, but that when war becomes inevitable Arthur demonstrates his unfailing love for his people and kingdom by ensuring that his land is wholly free from evil. He does so even at the risk of his own death. The crescendo of brutality towards the end of the final tale culminates with the death of Arthur and “with him dies his political power and political apparatus, the Round Table, both eviscerated as Sir Lucan de Butler after the battle” (Robeson, “Death of Kings” 149). The awful and realistic detail in this scene not only gives us a sense of toil that Arthur has to wade through in order to bring peace to his kingdom, but emphasises the loss we as an audience are meant to feel for the destruction of this ideal kingdom with its ideal king.

As has been discussed, Arthur’s tragic fall is not wholly to blame on Fortune, because Malory tells us on a number of occasions that other fallen characters share in the cause of his fall, with Malory telling us most often that Agravaine and Mordred are the root of this evil. Malory strays from the French *Mort Artu* source here, which attributes Arthur’s failure as resulting from fortune and his own pride. As Kennedy points out, Malory augments his sources to demonstrate that “accidents can unleash catastrophes” and that in Malory’s version of the Arthurian tragedy “the emphasis, while not upon God punishing for sin or even upon Fortune, is upon mistakes, such as the begetting of Mordred, that are disastrous” (“Malory’s *Morte Darthur*” 165). Although I place more emphasis on Fortune than Kennedy does, I agree that the fall of the kingdom is complex and that the collapse does not condemn Arthur. Arthur, who like his knights is not perfect, remains a good and just king because he strives to make the right decisions with the ultimate aim of attaining peace. Arthur’s actions in response to other characters’ fallen natures instigate Arthur’s final wars and become the decisive factors for Arthur’s ultimate glory

and his re-affirmation of good kingship; for Arthur, the battle space becomes a place to win honour in death.²⁸

Despite all of the evidence for Arthur's goodness in the final tale of Malory's *Morte*, critics still argue that there is a failure of justice on Arthur's part that leads to this moment in the narrative.²⁹ However, as Kennedy argues, "Arthur's kingdom falls, but this was inherent in the story and was not due to Malory's re-creation of Arthur as an inadequate king" ("King Mark and King Arthur" 161). While some argue that Arthur's selfishness leads to his own destruction, I place the weight of his fall entirely on the destructive inevitability of Fortune and the ramifications of human folly as epitomized in the bad characters. Throughout his fall, Arthur continues to be a template for good kingship as he accepts his fate and fights with courage for the paradigms of the Round Table: although Arthur is powerfully drawn to make poor decisions by the Wheel of Fortune's strong downward movement, Arthur pushes against his fortune to fight for the establishment of peace in his kingdom; and similarly, despite the poor circumstances of the final tale, the complex ties Arthur is honour-bound to keep, and the temptations that follow from the mistakes of other Round Table knights and his wife, the text shows that Arthur maintains his just kingship and delivers his kingdom from evil at the expense of his own life. As I have illustrated throughout this thesis, Malory not only presents a just king in Arthur's character, but goes beyond what is expected to showcase Arthur as a perfect king, even amongst a failing order of chivalry. Cooper notices that "the closing sections of Malory's work that

²⁸ Whetter argues that "war is seen as a means to win glory or die with honour, [which is] a sentiment as familiar to the heroes of the *Iliad* as to the knights of the Round Table" ("Warfare and Combat" 173).

²⁹ See Bedwell, Lexton.

recount the collapse of the Round Table show a qualitative shift in the generic character of the work, not only in their emphasis on civil war and destruction, but in their avoidance or rejection of magic and the supernatural” (“Counter-Romance” 155). Perhaps Malory’s decision to deprive Arthur of any supernatural forces that could prevent his destined fate, together with Arthur’s attempts to do the right thing by acting justly and with Northern Courage, in the final tale serve to further heighten Arthur’s glory and present him to the audience as an ideal and just king.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis I show that King Arthur is fundamentally a just king, and that part of his justice comes from his choices to engage in wars that are justified rather than tyrannical or merely aggressive. Broadly, this thesis explores the subjects of kingship and warfare through the character of King Arthur to demonstrate that it is not only right, but also necessary for Arthur to fight in war for his kingship and his polity. As has been discussed, although older scholarship argues that Arthur is presented positively, recent scholarship is more sceptical.¹ The reason for these sceptical contentions is partly due to modern audiences' reading of the text. That is, modern audiences often judge all warfare to be bad, and thus contend that Arthur is bad because he engages in warfare. William Matthews' and Russel Peck's influential readings of the alliterative *Morte Arthure* are built on precisely such a circular and unhistorical logic. As has been discussed in this thesis, however, a mediæval audience would not necessarily treat all warfare as wrong because war was an integral part of their culture (Keen, *The Laws of War* 64). Rather, warfare in real life as in Malory's text, "has both beneficial and destructive consequences, for although war and individual combat are the principal means by which a knight establishes worship, they are also the principal means by which he encounters injury or death"

¹ As I have shown, older scholars who read King Arthur in a positive light include Robert Henry Wilson and Edward Donald Kennedy. Scholars who read King Arthur in a poor light include William Matthews, Elizabeth T. Pochoda, Russell Peck, and, most recently, Laura Bedwell and Ruth Lexton; although less severe than these others, Raluca L. Radulescu is also critical of Arthur.

(Whetter, “Warfare and Combat” 171). Keeping in mind that Malory does not aestheticise warfare (Whetter, “Warfare and Combat” 173) I establish in Chapter One how Malory focuses less on the awfulness of war and more on its ability to bring glory to the fledgling warrior and king, King Arthur; however there is an important distinction to make concerning what constitutes glory in war. Many scholars who refute the position that Arthur is a just king rest their contentions on the fact that they read him to be tyrannical (e.g., Matthews; Peck; Ruth Lexton). Although gaining glory on the battle-field inevitably meant demonstrating one’s military prowess, and thus fighting in the “thycke of the prees” (29.18) and killing many, the mediæval Arthurian court was more concerned about a knight’s honour, which stems from a philosophical and theological attitude to just war. The importance of honour and justice in mediæval war are underscored by Malory in the subject of counsel that runs throughout the *Morte*. Malory focuses on the historically grounded importance of counsel that is necessary for just kingship by introducing Merlin and Kings Ban and Bors in Tale I who serve as ideal role models for Arthur. Ban and Bors especially demonstrate to Arthur how to fight with prowess and how to earn worship, yet most importantly, Ban and Bors teach Arthur how to be a just king. As one tracks Arthur’s interactions with Ban and Bors in the war-space throughout Tale I, one notices a crescendo effect as Arthur readily accepts counsel and consequently emerges “with the beste fyghters of the worlde” (30.1–2), becoming an exemplar for just kingship by the end of Tale I. Equally obvious by the end of Tale I, however, is the idea that being a just and well-loved king in the *Morte Darthur* involves the king also being a good warrior.

Arthur thus reaches the height of his glory within his own kingdom by protecting his kingship and polity from internal aggression. Turning to Tale II, Arthur is now faced with having justly to protect his kingship and kingdom from threat of foreign invasion. In Chapter Two I

examine Malory's Tale II alongside its major source, the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, to contend that although both texts present positive affirmations of Arthur's kingship, Malory augments his source to present his Arthur as even better than his alliterative counter-part, giving no reason for doubting Malory's Arthur's just and good kingship. I investigate both of these texts concurrently because a parallel can be made between the relationship of the alliterative poem's influence on Malory's *Morte* and the relationship that currently exists concerning the influence of alliterative *Morte* scholarship on Malorian scholarship. That is, literary analyses of battle scenes and kingship in the alliterative poem have bled into the scholarly analysis concerning King Arthur's conduct as a king and warrior in Malory's *Morte*. Specifically, most scholarship of the alliterative *Morte* views Arthur as a failed king or outright tyrant, and this scholarly consensus has influenced recent readings of Arthur's kingship and conquests in Malory's *Morte Darthur*. Through close textual analysis and by viewing both texts through the lens of historical attitudes to kingship and warfare, one can clearly see that although neither Arthur is perfect, both aim to make just decisions in justified war; and in aiming to portray Arthur as a good king, Malory produces an Arthur who is a stronger example of just kingship than his alliterative source. Malory's consistent attempts to portray his Arthur as even better than the sources carries over into his final Tale.

Chapter Three wrestles with the most difficult of Malory's tales, Tale VIII. I argue that in this Tale Arthur attempts to maintain his just kingship amidst a failing chivalric order of knighthood, complicated oaths and ties to friends and family, necessary but unwanted civil war, and the awful and fated downward pull of the Wheel of Fortune. In the first part of the chapter I argue that Arthur's fall is tragic and that it can only be tragic because he is a good king, meaning both the characters and the audience lament Arthur's downfall. In the second part of the chapter,

I argue that Arthur's fall is partly due to the poor decisions of his closest knights and partly due to the irredeemable hand of Fortune. The tragedy and the *pathos* that the audience experiences for Arthur during his downfall are made stronger by Malory's important decision to modify his sources by separating the Roman War from Mordred's rebellion.² Traditionally, as presented by the alliterative *Morte* and its sources, the Roman War is the last successful action of Arthur before Mordred's revolt and Arthur's death. Significantly, however, Malory temporally separates the Roman War from Arthur's battle with Mordred by literally hundreds of pages. As Wilfred L. Guerin argues, this means that "the whole of the book up to the 'Tale of the Death of Arthur' serves as foundation for Malory's tragedy" (234). Whetter similarly argues that "by making the Roman War an early, successful episode in Arthur's career and story, [Malory] emphasises Arthur's achievements and glory, concomitantly exacerbating the tragedy of the final destruction of such achievements in Arthur's downfall" ("Warfare and Combat" 178). Thus, the audience learns about all of Arthur's great deeds in the first seven tales, which has the effect of heightening King Arthur's good kingship because the idea is that everything that happens after Tale II and the Roman War is a by-product of Arthur's successful wars to defend and expand his kingdom in the first two tales. Even though Arthur's knights dominate the narrative between Tales II and VIII, Malory makes clear in Tales I and II that Arthur's own successes as king and knight are what draw others to him. Thus Arthur, his knights, and the greatness of his kingdom continue to heighten until everything is then juxtaposed by a steep and fast-paced tragic decline, which is further hastened by Malory's choice to make Arthur's destruction more terrible through the clear and brutal war imagery that characterises his end.

² I owe this observation to K. S. Whetter.

Although Malory's changes to the Wheel of Fortune scene are slight, they are significant; there are two major revisions in this scene as presented in Malory's *Morte*. One is Malory's choice to make the pit at the bottom of the Wheel more detestable than in the stanzaic *Morte*: Johnson notices that Malory alters "'dragons' and 'fiends' into a veritable catalogue of fearsome creatures: 'serpentis and wormes and wyld bestis fowle and orryble [920.21]'" (note 34 to text, pp. 31–32). Johnson argues convincingly that Malory's alteration here makes his version "devoid of any of the infernal undertones present in the Stanzaic *Morte*." In Malory's version, unlike the stanzaic, Malory is not concerned "with the fate of Arthur's soul." On the contrary, Malory's "Fortune really is simply an impersonal force bent on Arthur's (physical) destruction, and nothing remains that might . . . complicate the idea that the king really is 'relatively blameless'" (Johnson note to text 34, pp. 31–2). Although Johnson is concerned primarily with the *Morte's* stanzaic source, this conclusion can be applied to Malory's Tale VIII because of Malory's choice to use this source over the *Mort Artu* Fortune scene. Where Johnson's reading of the stanzaic *Morte* suggests that Fate is part of God's divine providence so that the fate of one's soul is determined by individual merits, his suggestion opens up questions about the notion of free will. The concept of free will in the final tale comes to the audience's attention when Lancelot states that "fortune ys so varyaunte, and the wheele so mutable, that there ys no constaunte abydyng" (902.7–8), suggesting that Fortune's decisions are not wholly for us to know, nor completely to understand. This is important because Malory appears to be presenting Arthur as a good king who is rewarded for fighting against the destruction of his kingdom. Although the Wheel will inevitably turn, Arthur's end is arguably better than it could be. For example, Arthur does not die as the wicked Mordred does, amongst the thousands dead in the last battle that appears to resemble "the bloodiest battle ever fought on British soil," the Battle of Towton (Field, "Battle of

Towton” 74); he is not attacked by grave robbers, nor is he buried in a mass grave as the rest would most certainly be buried (Field “Battle of Towton” 70); his time in misfortune is temporally much shorter than his time spent in good fortune; he is numbered with the Nine Worthies, and he is ultimately given a holy burial next to Guenevere, suggesting that Malory, as well as his knights, believe Arthur to be a good king.

As I also argued in Chapter Three, part of what defines Arthur’s heroism in Malory’s *Morte* is, to borrow J. R. R. Tolkien’s notion of “Northern Courage,” the fact that he faces the knowledge of his inevitable defeat with courage rather than despair (Tolkien 20–21). As stated previously, it is significant that Malory moves Arthur’s final battle with Mordred, and thus the accompanying Wheel of Fortune scene, to the near end of his book because one effect of this change is that it makes Arthur’s fighting for good all the more commendable. That is, with the knowledge that he is going to die, Arthur could easily give up and forgo fighting for his kingdom at the end of the narrative; however, instead we see that although he knows that his end is near, Arthur fights Mordred with renewed courage and zeal. It is important that Arthur knows his fate before encountering Mordred because it heightens his goodness by demonstrating the extent to which he will go in order to secure peace. Thus, because of his goodness, his ending is not as tragic as it could be (reasons why are described above), and he does not appear to receive all of the misfortune that he was predicted to receive in his dream.

Throughout this thesis I have rebutted scholars who are sceptical of Arthur’s justness in an attempt to show how Malory not only presents Arthur as a just and good king in the war-space, but that he purposely augments his sources to present Arthur in an even better light than

other mediæval authors allow.³ In presenting Arthur as a good and just king in the midst of complicated wars (Arthur's civil war against traitors in Tale I, his external war against the Roman Emperor in Tale II, and his civil wars first against friend and secondly against usurping son in Tale VIII), Malory opens up a larger debate on the subjects of just war and just kingship.

³ For example, the *Suite du Merlin*, the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, and the stanzaic *Morte Arthur*.

PLATES



Plate I. The Round Table and the Great Hall in Winchester, Hampshire, England. Reproduced by kind permission of The Great Hall, Hampshire County Council (photograph by Madeleine Killacky).

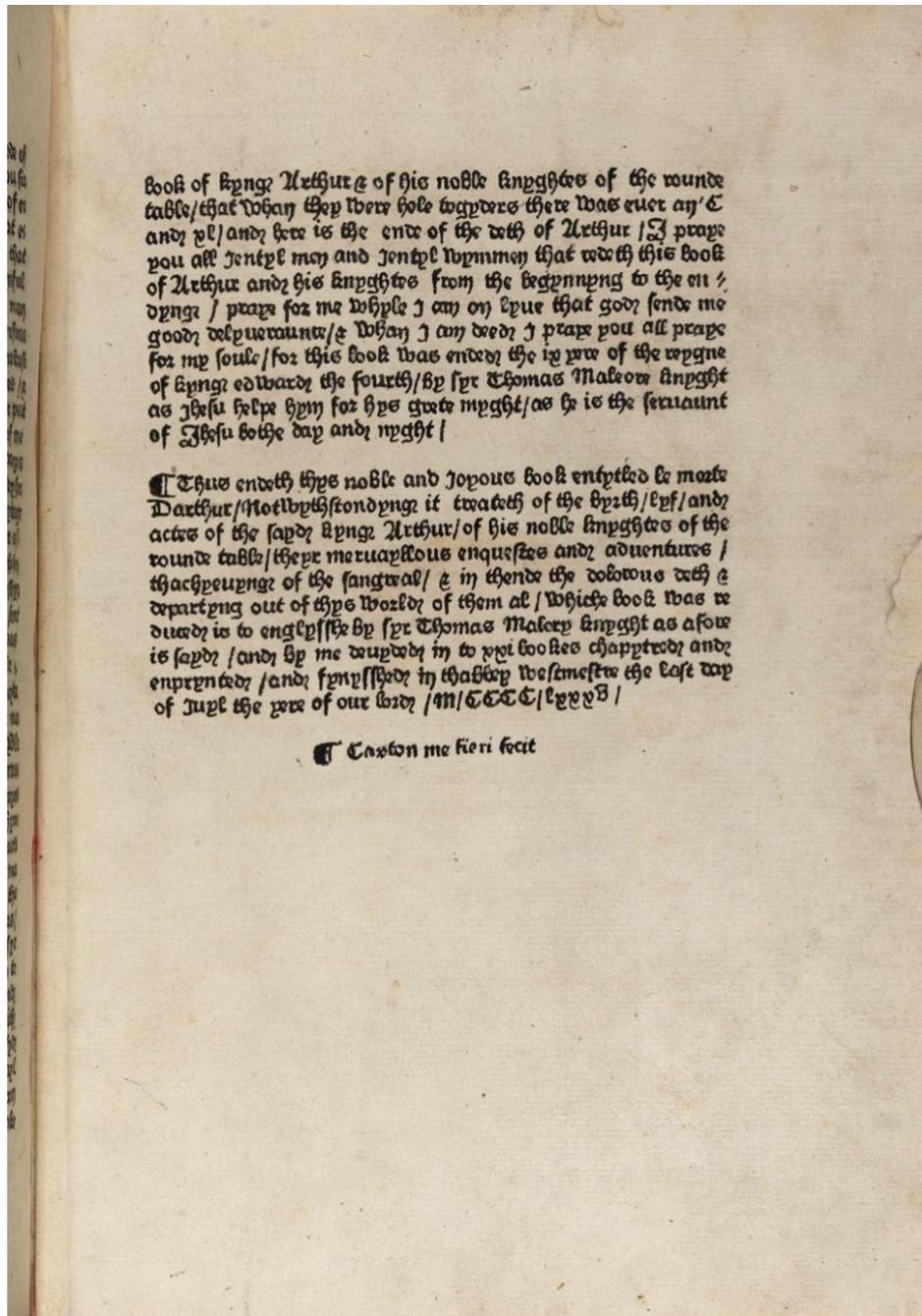


Plate II. The final folio of Caxton's *Le Morte d'Arthur* with the inscription, "this book was ended the ninth yere of the reygne of kyng Edward the fourth, by Syr Thomas Maleoré, knight" (first paragraph): The Malory Project, Caxton facsimile, Book XXI, Chapter 13 (C XXI.13).

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Etor. Fayns. Lucas de butler. Gryfflet la fise de den. Hamys de la roche. Gady
 nass de bloy. & Bayaunte de la foreytre sauvage. & Sellans. Aquians of p castel
 maydyns. Flaundeens of p castel of ladres Ameeans) that was kynge & Sous
 god son a noble knyght & Ladmas de la vouse. Eueranf. Canlas. Graiens
 le castillon. & Lorse de la case. And Sir Colgredaunce de Soore. all þis knyght
 rode on be fore With spere on there thynges and forred p horses myghty
 And the xi knyght With yte of hie knyght rushed furthe as faste as they
 myght With hie spere and there they did on botte ytes merveylous dede
 of armys. So there com into the thycke of thes woods. **Arthur** & **Ban** & **Bors**
 and saw done ryght on botte hondis that hie horses wente in blood up to þe
 saddle. But on the xi knyght and the othe was en in the visage of **Arthur**
 where fore knyght **Ban** & **Bors** had grete merveyle considering p grete
 slanghter that p was. But at the laste they were dyden a backe on a litle
 ryder. & that that com **Averlion** on a grete blacke horse and seide vnto
 knyght **Arthur**. thou hast neu done that you nat done. I nede of m. stors
 thousande thys day hast you lesse on fyde but. & d. there fore hit ys
 tyme to sey. Woe for god ys wroth With the for þis. With neu hane done. for
 pondir a xi knyght at thys tyme. Wroth nat le on thys. But and you turne
 on them any longer thy fortune wold turne and they shall enaue. And p
 fore vnto drado you vnto ponce led kynge and vnto you as sone as ye may
 and rewarde pnce good knyght With golde and With syll for they hane
 well deserved hit there may no vches be to dere for them for of so fewe
 men as ye hane there was neu men did more dourlyfully in pnces
 than ye hane done today for ye hane maached thys day With p beste
 fyghters of the worlde. That ys twentye seide knyght **Ban** & **Bors**. Chan
Averlion bade hem With drado where ye hste for thys. m. pere. I dave vn
 durtale they shall nat dere you and by that tyme ye shall hys nedde
 tydynge. Chan **Averlion** seide vnto **Arthur** thes xi knyght hane more
 on hande than they ar. Woe off for the swerynes ar. bonded in p contractes
 mo than forty thousande and drewe and fle and hane leide spege
 to the castell **Wandesborow** and make grete destruction there fore drude
 you nat thys pere. Also sir all the gadis that be gotyn at thys lityle lette

Plate III. Folio 15^r in the Winchester Manuscript-Text of *Morte Darthur* showing the
 rubrication of “**Arthur Ban & Bors**” (line 9): London, British Library, Additional MS 59678,
 fol. 15^r. © The British Library Board, Add. 59678, fol. 15^r.

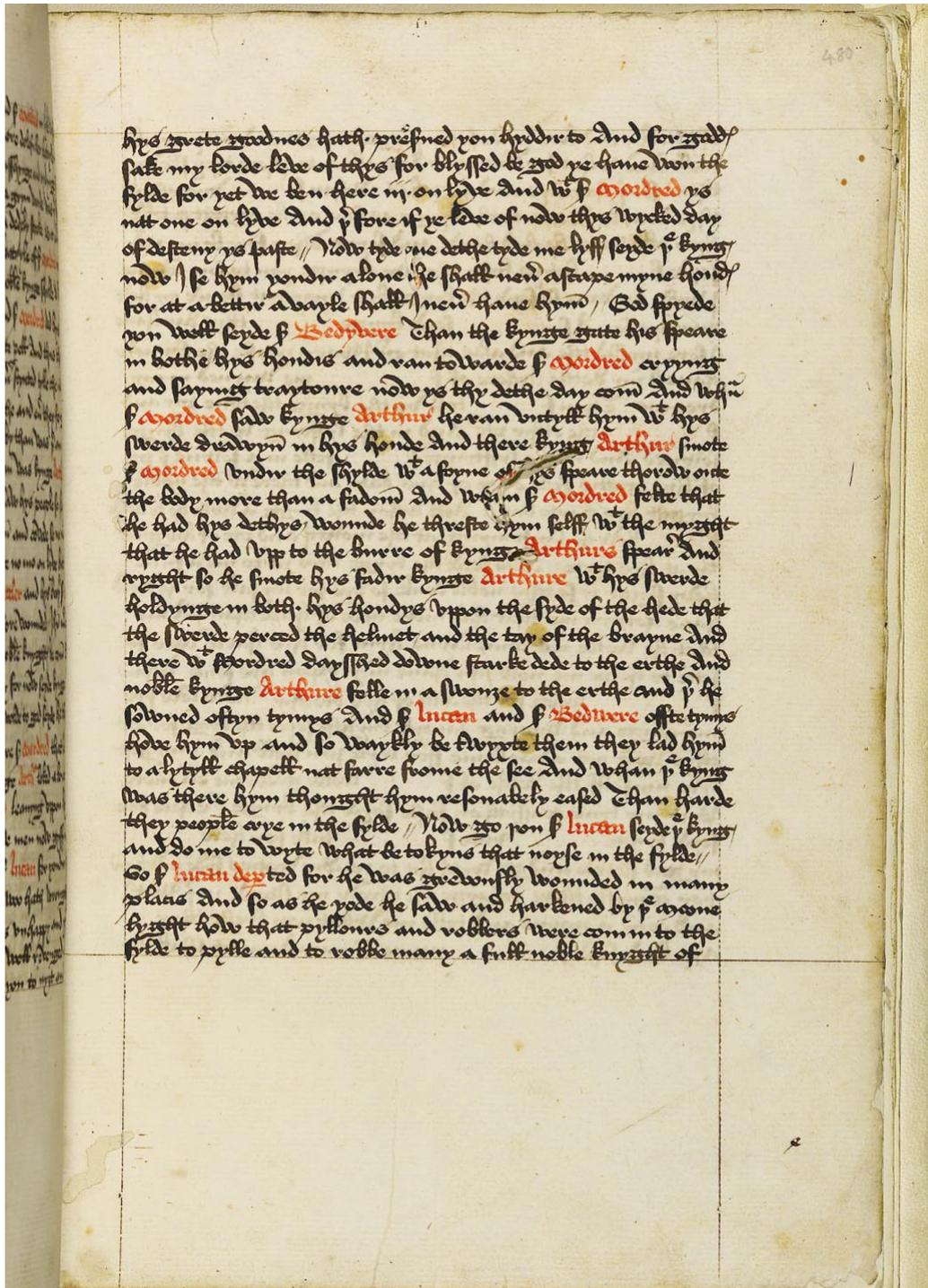


Plate IV. Folio 480^r of the Winchester Manuscript-Text of *Morte Darthur* describes King Arthur's final battle against his son, Mordred: London, British Library, Additional MS 59678, fol. 480^r. © The British Library Board, Add. 59678, fol. 480^r.

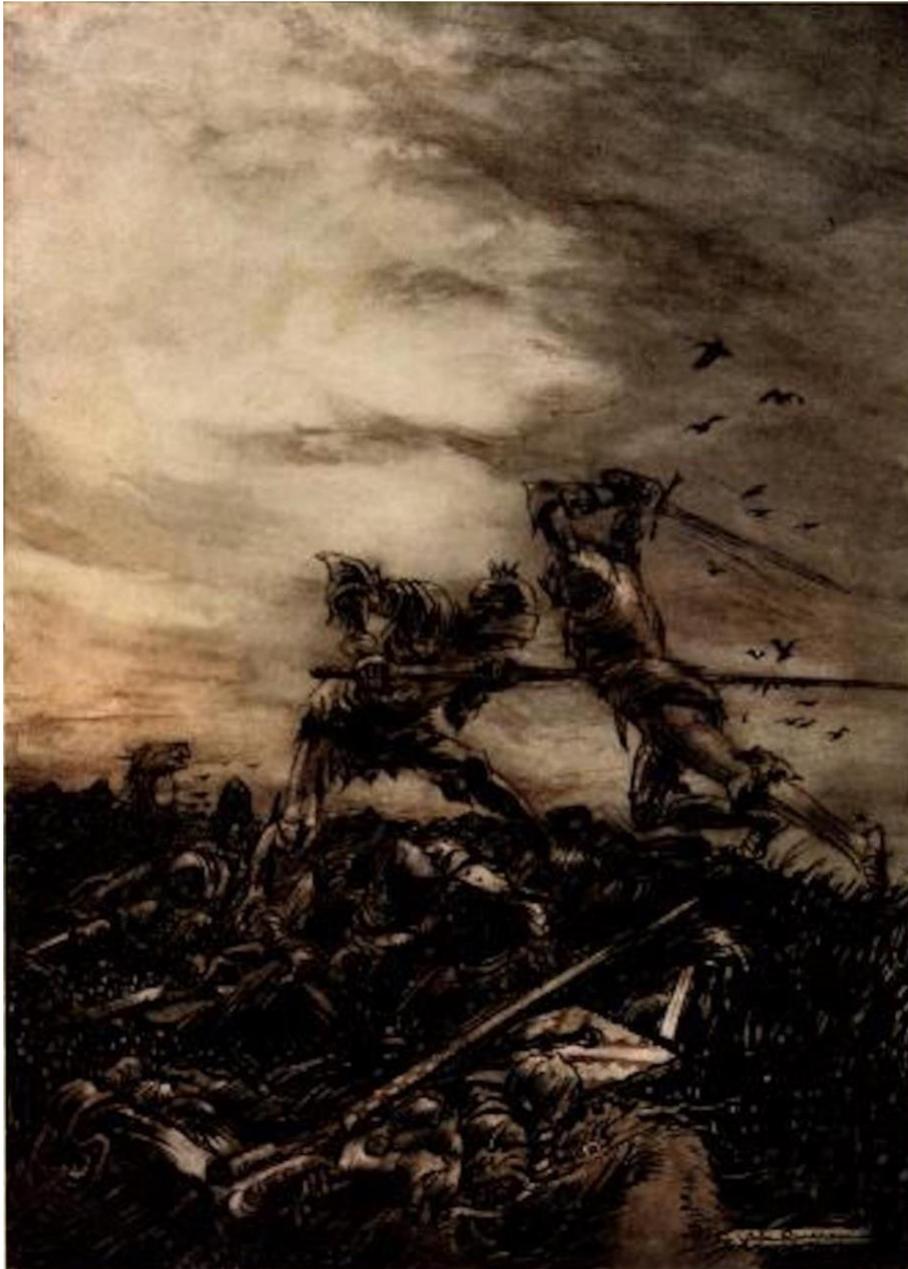


Plate V. “How Mordred Was Slain by Arthur, and How by Him Arthur Was Hurt to the Death,”
By Arthur Rackham (1917). Reproduced by kind permission of The Camelot Project, University
of Rochester.

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The Malory Project, directed by Takako Kato and designed by Nick Hayward
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