TO WRITE: SIR THOMAS MALORY AND HIS CAUTIONARY NARRATIVE OF LEGITIMATION

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England during the fifteenth century should be seen as a nation and a people wrestling with the issue of legitimation. The Wars of the Roses (c. 1437-1509) remain the series of events that marked England during the later Middle Ages; their effects were to be seen in almost every facet of life, both in the town and on the farm, in the politics of the period, and in the secular and religious writing of England, from the early fifteenth century to Shakespeare and his historiographic dramas composed in the late sixteenth century on the Plantagenet, Lancastrian, and Yorkist kings.[1] Examples of the problems of legitimation within the kingdom have been the source for many medieval writers. As Larry Scanlon has argued, exempla appear in nearly every form of serious medieval discourse.[2] The public exemplum was most prominent in the *Fürstenspiegel*, the Mirror of Princes, but it also occurred in other political and historiographical contexts.[3] The public exemplum of the Mirror of Princes addresses issues of lay authority; it is classicizing and political, whereas a sermon exemplum is hagiographical and ecclesiological. The public exemplum had a propensity toward the evil example, toward narratives that demonstrate the efficacy of their *sententiae* by enacting violations of them, in which human history is starkly depicted as an incessant and unerring engine of downfall. The source of authority, which the public exemplum counterposes to history's inherent anarchy, is represented in the figure of the monarch.[4] The king and his actions are to be seen as the fundamental representation of the country's virtues. More often than not, the vices of the king are ruminated upon in the Mirror-for-Princes tradition so as to demonstrate what a ruler should not do and to explore the far-reaching effects of his immoral actions and beliefs.

For writers such as Malory and Shakespeare, the problems of legitimation remained at the forefront of their political consternations.[5] But what exactly is a crisis of legitimation, especially during this time period, and can there be a succinct definition of the term? I would

propose that a crisis of legitimation involves a degree of mistrust over the legality of an individual's ascension to kingship and, thereby, his legal right to govern, along with the implicit question of whether that ruler is able to carry out his duties as a "sovereign king" in a manner that is deemed appropriate under the social and religious mores of the land. From the ascension of the ten-year-old Richard II in 1377 to the Wars of the Roses, all the kings of England faced crises of legitimation.[6] Shakespeare was one of many English writers to examine the problematic nature of kingship and the consequences of questioned legitimacy. His treatments of the Wars of the Roses in his histories are more familiar than Malory's, no doubt because of Shakespeare's fixed place in the canon, the availability of his plays to the public both on the stage and on screen, and his directness in addressing issues of kingship through depicting the "real" kings of England, particularly Henry VI and Richard III, as opposed to the imaginary and allegorical kings of Malory's *Morte Darthur*.[7]

While Shakespeare's history plays sought to create a sense of collective memory for the public as well as for the two reigning monarchs of the playwright's career, Elizabeth I (1558-1603) and James I (1603-25), Malory should be seen as a writer who explored through his own act of writing the political and social upheavals caused by decades of internal and external strife. I will argue that Malory is writing in the chronicle style, a style that can be traced back to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and that the text of the *Morte Darthur*, in the hands of this knight-prisoner, undergoes a dramatic transformation of its rhetorical style as Malory actively comments on the dangers of civil war, engaging the text and the events as he writes. Sir Thomas Malory delineated in his epic *Morte Darthur* that he too was keenly aware of the dangers of usurpation of power in the realm. The *Morte* is a massive text, yet, at particular moments, Malory calls to the reader's attention the issue of legitimation, and, specifically, the Wars of the Roses and their damaging effects on the country. Although Malory is writing a romance, there are encoded moments in the text that warn the reader about the dangers of civil war. While the *Morte* should not be read as a literal representation of the historical events that encompass the Wars of the Roses, it can be read as a metahistorical/metanarrative text in the foreground of which lies the literary life of Arthur and his

realm, and in the background of which are strategically positioned historical events relating to the crisis of legitimation.[8] Thus, Malory comments on these literal and fictive moments while writing in what Roland Barthes would call a "middle voice." Writing in this "middle voice," Malory, in his direct addresses to the reader, is able to take an active role in the historical events of the Wars of the Roses, through references to his own imprisonment and through the fictitious *Morte* creating a narrative in which the author is actively writing and commenting upon his own political situation.

The *Morte* is indeed such a politicized text. This results in large part from its author's actions, his social standing, and his incarceration—the locus of his writing. The identification of the *Morte*'s writer has been, for nearly half a century, taken for granted.[9] However, the work of P. J. C. Field in the early 1990s identified the Malory who wrote the *Morte* as Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel.[10] Unlike William Mathews's candidate, Field's Malory was a person born into the landed class and heavily involved with local and national politics. On October 8, 1441, it was first recorded that Malory was a knight, and, as Field argues, this knighthood suggests political ambitions, perhaps to a level beyond Malory's grasp (84).

While Malory himself was not a soldier in the Wars of the Roses, the constant upheaval of rival political factions seemed to frame his life.[11] As Field writes,

> All over the country private quarrels were polarizing into political ones. . . . [A] new parliament was summoned on 5 September [1450], and met on 6 November [1450]. The magnates brought small armies to London to support them, and there were riots there among their partisans. . . . Over the three sessions of parliament, 6 November-18 December 1450, 20 January -29 March, and at least 5-24 May 1451, York's supporters gained control of the Commons, and on 24 May they presented the government with an ultimatum, refusing to transact any more business unless the duke was given succession to the throne. Within a week, parliament was dissolved. (*Life and Times* 97-98)

The effectuality and legitimacy of the monarchy of Henry VI had been subject to question even before this. As Christine Carpenter notes, the period from the late 1430s to 1500 must be seen "primarily as a crisis of kingship." Carpenter argues that while few historians still believe that the Wars of the Roses were retribution on the House of Lancaster for the removal and death of Richard, some contend that the Lancastrian line was always under a threat of contestation for the throne if it faltered.[12] The instability of the English government had a profound impact on Malory, for it is during this time that Malory's political interests appear to shift. From the time of his arrest on January 4, 1450, on a charge of murder and robbery, to his initial imprisonment in 1455, and up to his death in 1471, Malory's allegiance seemed to be directed towards whichever rose was in control of the crown. This is not to say that Malory received any special treatment from either York or Lancaster, for both sued him for debt and both refused to grant him bail on several occasions.[13] Malory's final period of imprisonment in 1469 was presumably the consequence of a failed rebellion led by a man named Cornelius, a servant of the then-exiled Lancastrian king, Henry VI. Cornelius was eventually captured and after he was "put to torture in the Tower of London by means of hot irons to his feet, [he] accused a number of people, including a sheriff and an alderman of London, and John Hawkins, a servant of Lord Wenlock," all of whom were involved with the conspiracy.[14] Malory, it appears, was involved in the plot, and it is during this imprisonment that he is believed to have completed the *Morte* (Field, *Life and Times* 142-47). These tumultuous final years of Malory's life allow him to incorporate his own personal recollections and attitudes towards the civil strife into his reworking of the Arthurian legend.

The historical backdrop to Malory's life and its influence on his text has been subject of several investigations, one of the earliest by Nellie Slayton Aurner.[15] However, many current scholars see Aurner's literary historical parallels as exceedingly general, and therefore any kind of coincidence between the literary and historical figures should be treated as such, that is, as coincidence. What Field alludes to is of particular interest here, especially the question of *why* Malory decided to include such real-life historical elements in a quasi-allegorical epic. Field sees that Malory's motivation for changing his sources (and his

characters) from historical to fictional was strictly a matter of readability, of making his story more coherent and consistent. Field suggests that Malory constructs his story in a particular way so as to make a lasting connection with his readers. [16]

The construction of the *Morte* makes it easy to read. If we forget about its length, the main narrative and the multiple smaller narratives are fairly easy to follow. Even the Middle English is highly approachable. This chronicle style of the *Morte* allows for a greater sense of immediacy in the narrative, in its characters, and, as we will see, in Malory's own direct addresses to the reader. Malory's prose style has been seen as one dependent upon the French romance. As Eugène Vinaver has commented, Malory at times restructured the syntax of his French originals through the English prose technique of coordination, replacing the hierarchical structure of a section with an egalitarian one. [17] Malory's style, narrative techniques, and concerns over issues of legitimacy are tied to that of French romances such as the thirteenth-century *Queste del Saint Graal*, and also to his own Roman War episode. In Malory's "The Tale of the Sankgreal," his revision of the *Queste*, the author's revisions reveal his concerns regarding the political uncertainty of fifteenth-century England. As Martin B. Shichtman has commented, "In Malory's 'Sankgreal,' the assurances offered by the *Queste*—designed to repair fissures between clerical and knightly communities—become subjected to the skepticism and doubt of an age troubled by constant political disruption." [18] The Roman War episode, one of the sections of the *Morte* routinely passed over as being tedious, has in recent years become a focal point for intense scholarship: Arthur's political struggles for conquest and sovereignty appear to resemble England's own fifteenth-century military difficulties. [19] In the sections of the *Morte* that are concerned with matters of warfare, battle, destruction, and identification of participants, as in portions of the Roman War episode, I find Malory's style at times more akin to the Anglo-Saxon chronicles in terms of phrasing and sentence structure. Below are the first eight lines from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* relating the Battle of Ashdown:

> 871. Hēr cuom se here tō Readingum on West Seaxe, ond þæs ymb ·iii· niht ridon ·ii· eorlas up; þa gemette hie Æþelwulf

> aldorman on Engla felda, ond him þær wiþ gefeaht, ond
> sigenam; þæs ymb ·iiii· niht Æþered cyning ond Ælfred his
> broþur þær micle fierd to Readingum gelæddon, ond wiþ þone
> here ge|fuhton; ond þær wæs micel wæl geslægen on
> gehwæþre hond, ond Æþelwulf aldormon wearþ ofslægen;
> ond þā Deniscan ahton wælstowe gewald.[20]

In structure and style the above extract is very similar to the following section from Book I of the *Morte Darthur*:

> So his wyf dame Igrayne he putte in the castell of Tyntagil,
> and hymself he putte in the castel of Terrabyl, the whiche had
> many yssues and posternes oute. Thenne in all haste came
> Uther with a grete hoost and leyd a syege aboute the castel of
> Terrabil, and ther he pyght many pavelyons. And there was
> grete warre made on bothe partyes and moche peple slayne.
> (*Works* 8.1-7)[21]

As we can see, both excerpts have similar stylistic conventions, and while the *Morte* should not be read as pure chronicle, it does have several characteristics of such texts. These characteristics include a listing of all the principle participants of the episode at hand, reminding the reader not only who took part, but indicating the nature of their performance in the battle, joust, or test, as well as their ultimate fate. One can also see the similarities between a chronicle and the *Morte* in that each enumerates how many men and women were involved, how many died, and how many were injured. Malory also supplies place-names in his text; an individual is always connected with a particular kingdom or castle or town. There are, of course, other genres of medieval English writing that approach the same level of historicity as chronicles. Medieval annals, diaries, parliamentary rolls, and the registries of guilds, parishes, or monasteries all may contain factual information and employ literary devices such as emplotment and tropology. But unlike these semi-historical texts and most chronicles, the *Morte* reads like a series of events that are woven together to form a story.[22] As Hayden White comments,

> The chronicle, by contrast, often seems to wish to tell a story, aspires to narrativity, but typically fails to achieve it. More specifically, the chronicle usually is marked by a failure to achieve narrative closure. It does not so much conclude as simply terminate. It starts out to tell a story but breaks off *in medias res*, in the chronicler's own present; it leaves things unresolved, or rather, it leaves them unresolved in a storylike way. (*Content* 5)

There is a narrative flow to the *Morte*, and it is this aspect that keeps the reader's attention: there is a story to follow after all, not a series of names and places with a record of who won and who lost.[23] Yet, there is something to be said about the impact of a chronicle in its ability to present the facts. Stylistically, the portions of the *Morte* that possibly address issues of fifteenth-century legitimation are less figurative, contain fewer instances of literary amplification, and are concerned less with the metaphysical and the symbolic character of romance. An example of the opposite of Malory's stark chronicle style can be seen in the *Tale of the Sankgreal*, where Malory explores through the use of extended metaphors the mysterious qualities of the grail and how one can "lead a life worthy of partaking of the true Eucharist which is contained in the Grail" (Ihle, *Grail Quest* 51). Even though there is a narrative to the *Morte*, and even though there are modes of emplotment working within the story that contain figurative language, the chronicle-like nature of the text hearkens back to the many chronicles written, not only during the Anglo-Saxon period, but also during the Wars of the Roses, in which the stylistic nature of the text is less elaborate.[24] One of the battles that relates to the narrative in the *Morte* is the battle of Towton in 1461. Edward IV was recently elected king of England, and he, on the advice of John, Duke of Norfolk, decided to follow the retreating Henry VI and the queen northward with a force led by the Earl of Warwick. What follows is an excerpt from the chronicle of the battle, from the text of the *Thomae Sprotti Chronica*. The style is similar to Malory's in passages examining the inherent problems of war and legitimation:

[O]n the ninth day of March . . . the forprickers [scouts] came to Ferrybridge, there was a great skirmish in which John Ratcliff then Lord Fitzwalter was slain. And thereupon they advanced themselves until they came to Towton eight miles out of York upon a Friday at night. . . . And about four o'clock at night the two battles joined and fought all night till on the morrow in the afternoon. About noon the aforesaid John, Duke of Norfolk, with a fresh band of good men of war came to the aid of the newly elected King Edward. This field was sore fought; for there were slain on both sides 24,000 men, and all the time it snowed. There were slain the Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland with Sir Andrew Trolloppe and others, and the Earls of Devonshire and Wiltshire were taken and beheaded there. And the deposed King Henry and his queen with Harry, Duke of Somerset, and others, in great haste fled to Scotland. When this victory had been obtained, King Edward followed the chase for a little while, but shortly he returned to York where he kept his Easter.[25]

Malory's account of Arthur's final battle appears to echo several key elements in the chronicle of the battle of Towton. Towton was fought on Palm Sunday, March 29, 1461, and it was a battle between king and "a pretender who was a close kinsman, in which at least one of them distinguished himself in the thick of the fray."[26] Edward IV was the one who fought in Towton while Henry VI was hiding out in York. Both the fictitious final battle of Arthur and Mordred and the battle of Towton produced an exorbitant number of casualties. In order to demonstrate just how catastrophic the body count was at Towton, Field compares the population of Wales and England at the time of the battle with its late-twentieth-century equivalent. The population of England and Wales combined is about twenty times higher now than it was in the mid-fifteenth century, and therefore a modern equivalent to the battle at Towton would amount to 760,000 individuals killed in a single day of battle.[27] Malory, in his account of the final battle, puts the number of dead much higher than those killed at Towton:

> And thus they fought all the longe day, and never stynted tylle
> the noble knyghtes were layde to the colde erthe. And ever
> they fought stylle tylle hit was nere [ny]ght, and by than was
> there an hondred thousand leyde dede uppon the [downe].
> Than was kynge Arthure wode wroth oute of mesure, whan he
> saw hys people so slayne frome hym. (*Works* 1236.6-11)

This is clearly an exaggeration, yet it is a powerful reminder to the
reader of one of the bloodiest battle fought on Britain's soil. And
although it is placed in a mode of emplotment, that of a tragedy, it
seems appropriate.[28]

The Wars of the Roses decimated the population and underscored
how disastrous a civil war might be. A chronicle form is able to
communicate to the reader the most basic of facts, for sometimes the
most basic are the most believable and the most easily remembered.
And while Malory exaggerated the number of casualties for Arthur's
final battle, I believe that he did so to shock readers into attention, to
make them aware of the dangers of usurpation and the bloody battles
that result from such carelessness and greed. How to record such an
event or series of events remains a central question for historians and
cultural theorists addressing the calamities of our own times. Berel
Lang, while not going as far as Adorno in saying that all poetry after
Auschwitz would be barbaric, does believe that limits should be placed
on how one should write of an incongruous historical event that defies
comprehension because of its extreme decimation of people and land.[29]
While Lang is referring specifically to the genocide of the Holocaust,
there is a sense that any event that affects a collection of individuals
and that is of a serious, incongruous, or devastating nature should be
represented in the most literal of ways. According to Lang, only the
most literal chronicle of the facts of genocide comes close to passing
the test of "authenticity and truthfulness"; only the barest of facts must
be recounted, and only a chronicle of the facts is warranted because
otherwise one opens oneself up to the dangers of narrativization, i.e.,
revisionism (140-50). Again, this is what we see in the above excerpt
from the chronicle of the battle of Towton—bare facts. With Malory
we read of the barest facts that, at times, may relate to actual, historical
events. Lang would see the notion of "characters" in these medieval

chronicles of events as being highly problematic and he would also take issue with the depiction of some of these characters, most notably Arthur and Lancelot, as having feelings and thinking about their actions, thereby causing readers possibly to identify and empathize with them. For Lang, these "additions" would misrepresent the subject at hand (the Battle of Towton), and thus *"diminish* it" (143). The application of post-structuralist thought to medieval literature can be useful, but it can also, at times, be dismissed on account of historicity and the relativity of theoretical applications. Malory was writing about a much different event, at a much different time; Lang's notions of how one may misrepresent an act of horror such as the Holocaust through narrativization may not apply directly to Malory, the Wars of the Roses, or the nature of Malory's characterization. But comparison of the rhetorical similarities between Lang's view of how to record the historical events of a genocide and Malory's ability to follow the style of the chronicle in reporting the most basic facts potentially demonstrates the medieval writer's understanding of the power of such stark numbers of dead.[30] Moreover, Malory's rhetorical strategy should be seen as further evidence of the relevance of the *Morte* to contemporary postmodern theories, particularly ones where the "linguistic turn" has been so useful in understanding past and present histories through discourse.[31] The *Morte* appears in many ways to be built on a chronicle, the characters of which are given personalities so that the readers may identify with them; thus readers may see a connection between Arthur and Henry or Mordred and Edward.

The likelihood that Malory is warning his readers against the dangers of usurpation through writing in chronicle style is further strengthened before the description of the final battle between Arthur's and Mordred's forces. In a clear warning to the readers of his day, Malory writes,

> Than sir Mordred araysed muche people aboute London, for they of Kente, Southsex and Surrey, Esax, Suffolke and Northefolke helde the moste party with sir Mordred. And many a full noble knyght drew unto hym and also [to] the kynge; but they that loved sir Launcelot drew unto sir Mordred. (*Works* 1233.5-10)

Vinaver notes that this passage "connects the counties of Kent, Sussex, Surrey, Essex, and Norfolk with the traitor's cause [and seems] to suggest that [Malory] had in mind a situation similar to that . . . at the time of the Wars of the Roses when the strength of the Yorkists lay to a large extent in the south-eastern countries [and shows Malory's] anti-Yorkist feelings at the time when he wrote this part of the story" (*Works* 1649). Mordred, who is so often seen as a representation of the Yorkists, is found "leanyng uppon hys swerde amonge a grete hepe of dede men" (*Works* 1236.23-24). Chronicles are a decisive way to put forward the bare facts, and I believe that Malory, although many of his chronicles are encoded, was aware of this ease of accessibility inherent in the style. Chronicles are direct, and Malory's prose style helped to engage the reader in specific textual areas, showing them the horrors of battle and the problems of legitimation. But Malory also used other literary devices to show the reader the nature of kingship and its crises during the fifteenth century.

Malory rarely steps forward in the text to communicate directly with the reader. Most often his thoughts are hidden behind characters and their political situations. But Malory himself was such a person, embroiled in highly political circumstances, serving jail time for his possible involvement in the Cornelius plot. At specific times in the *Morte* Malory's personal voice is heard, emploring the reader to pay attention and heed his words of warning or sympathize with his situation. After all, Malory the man is an example of the ramifications of the crisis of legitimation: he is in prison for taking sides. One such passage takes place in the middle of the *Tristram* book, where Malory reflects on the experience of an imprisoned knight:

> So sir Trystram endured there grete payne, for syknes had undirtake hym, and that ys the grettist payne a presoner may have. For all the whyle a presonere may have hys helth of body, he may endure undir the mercy of God and in hope of good delyveraunce; but whan syknes towchith a presoners body, than may a presonere say all welth ys hym berauffte, and than hath he cause to wayle and wepe. Ryght so ded sir Trystram whan syknes had undirtake hym, for than he toke

71

such sorow that he had allmoste slayne hymselff. (*Works* 540.28-36)

This act of writing connects Malory's time in prison with that of Tristram, a knight who was also betrayed by a series of persons, including King Mark and Gawain, who were once seen by the standards of the Pentecostal Oath as legitimate.[32] In this episode and in a few others like it, which I will examine shortly, the reader is allowed to see the writer as immediately connected with the text. Thus Malory engages the reader and encourages interaction with the text. What I am referring to is Roland Barthes's idea of "intransitive writing."[33] According to Berel Lang, "intransitive writing" can be defined as follows:

> "Intransitive" (in Barthes's term), [is] where an author does not write to provide access to something independent of both author and reader, but "writes-himself." This concept of writing denies the distance among the writer, text, what is written about, and, finally, the reader; they all converge on a single point. In the traditional account, the writer is conceived as first looking at an object with eyes already expectant, patterned, and then, having seen, as representing it in his writing. For the writer who writes-himself, writing becomes itself the means of vision or comprehension, not a mirror of something independent, but an act and commitment – a doing or making rather than a reflection or description. (xviii)

To make an analogy, intransitive writing is very akin to jazz, an art form where, in live performance and, at times, in the studio, there is an instantaneous connection among the artist, the "text," what is produced, and the audience: it is, as witnessed in the works of John Coltrane, or Ornette Coleman, immediate. More recently, aspects of intransitive writing can be seen in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, where the author is writing (and drawing) himself into his graphic novel so as to try to understand the relationship among his work, his father's experiences in and after World War II, and his sense of artistic duty and integrity in representing his father's story.[34] Barthes sees this intransitive quality

of language in the modern world as neither an active nor a passive voice, but rather a middle one:

> Thus, in the middle voice of *to write*, the distance between *scriptor* and language diminishes asymptomatically. We could even say that it is the writings of subjectivity, such as romantic writing, which are active, for in them the agent is not interior but *anterior* to the process of writing: here the one who writes does not write for himself, but as if by proxy, for an exterior and antecedent person (even if both bear the same name), while, in the modern verb of middle voice *to write*, the subject is constituted as immediately contemporary with the writing, being effected and affected by it: this is the exemplary case of the Proustean narrator, who exists only by writing, despite the references to a pseudo-memory. ("To Write" 19)

Thus, in intransitive writing, the writer-subject places himself or herself into a state of composition in which the act of writing is contemporaneous with the conditions of writing. Barthes uses the term "intransitive" because, of the three classifications of verbs (transitive, intransitive, and linking), intransitive verbs do not require objects. Transitive verbs require objects to complete the predicate, while linking verbs link the subject to the noun or adjective. As Barthes comments, the writer writes intransitively when the writer is "no longer the one who writes something" (for example, a book or a poem, in the transitive sense), "but one who writes—absolutely: this shift is certainly the sign of an important change in mentality" ("To Write" 18). The concept of intransitive writing should not be identified with stream-of-consciousness writing, for the stream-of-consciousness style involves reliance on the internal mental and emotional state of the narrator and often a sense of free psychological association between emotions and thoughts. Furthermore, Barthes identifies writing in the intransitive with the use of the middle voice, not the active or passive voices. According to Barthes, the middle voice can be defined as follows:

> The middle voice corresponds exactly to the modern state of
> the verb *to write*: to write is today to make oneself the center
> of the action of speech, it is to effect writing by affecting
> oneself, to make action and affection coincide, to leave the
> *scriptor* inside the writing – not as a psychological subject, ...
> but as agent of the action. ("To Write" 18)

While Malory did exist in real life, it is the text of the *Morte* that has
brought him into our consciousness, and above all it is his ability to
write in a middle voice that further diminishes the distances among his
political situation, the text, the Wars of the Roses, and the reader. In
Malory's work there is a strong sense of anteriority: the external stimuli
of war and imprisonment seem to influence his writing and, just as
significant rhetorically, what it is that he writing about and how he
chooses to communicate his concepts with us, the readers.[35]

    There are two prime examples of Malory's writing in this middle
voice. One of the most striking appears prior to the final Day of
Destiny for Arthur and Mordred. It is here that Malory addresses his
reader regarding the direct relationship between what will occur in his
narrative and what is happening as he is writing:

> Lo ye all Englysshemen, se ye nat what a myschyff here was?
> For he that was the moste kynge and nobelyst knyght of the
> worlde, and moste loved the felyshyp of noble knyghtes, and
> by hym they all were upholdyn, and yet myght nat thes
> Englyshemen holde them contente with hym. Lo thus was the
> olde custom and usayges of thys londe, and men say that we of
> thys londe have nat yet loste that custom. Alas! thys ys a
> greate defaughte of us Englysshemen, for there may no thynge
> us please no terme.
>
> And so fared the peple at that tyme: they were better pleased
> with sir Mordred than they were with the noble kynge Arthur,
> and muche people drew unto sir Mordred and seyde they wold
> abyde wyth hym for bettir and for wars. And so sir Mordred
> drew with a greate oste to Dovir, for there he harde sey that
> kyng Arthur wolde aryve, and so he thought to beate hys owne

> fadir fro hys owne londys. And the moste party of all Inglonde
> hylde wyth sir Mordred, for the people were so new-fangill.
> (*Works*, 1229.6-23)

Taken as an aside from the text, it can also be seen as a call for
governmental and societal reform, and for the readers to see themselves
as these new-fangled types, fickle, willing to follow what is fashionable
rather that what is just and lawful. The excerpt lacks distance: for once
in the text Malory is addressing the reader directly in second person
and calling for the reader to see what results when a country is involved
with a question of legitimacy. But by far the best example of Malory's
middle voice is seen in his final explicit, where he instructs the reader,

> Praye for me whyle I am on lyve that God sende me good
> delyveraunce. And whan I am deed, I praye you all praye for
> my soule.

> For this book was ended the ninth yere of the reygne of Kyng
> Edward the Fourth, by Syr Thomas Maleoré, Knyght, as Jesu
> helpe hym for Hys grete myght, as he is the servaunt of Jesu
> bothe day and nyght. (*Works*, 1260.22-29)

This passage, written in the middle voice, ends the *Morte*. After all of
the bloodshed of the epic we are left only with Malory, still in prison
for his political involvements during the Wars of the Roses. When one
considers the contexts of Malory's imprisonment, the years of civil war
and concerns over legitimation and the specific passages in the *Morte*
that are concerned with kingship, this final explicit, like the other
asides, can be seen as a warning to readers about getting involved in
politics, but it can also be seen as a much broader cautionary piece of
advice. Kings are fickle.

The masses (the nobility included here as well) are fickle, ready to
follow what is deemed fashionable. The *Morte Darthur* can thus be
seen as a cautionary tale, whose author knew from experience the
dangers of civil war, the problematic nature of kingship, and how issues
of legitimation can create an atmosphere of disorder and uncertainty.
However, the *Morte* should not be read as an historical document, for it

is a narrative layered with figurative language. While one can make connections among historical people and events of the fifteenth century and characters and locales within Malory's text, these connections should be viewed as an interpretation of history by the writer, not as *the* history, as many are wont to do. However, as Judith Ferster astutely notes, in a manner that appears to satisfy both new historicists and postmodernists, "When the tale appears to be referring to contemporary politics, it probably is. And when it appears *not* to be referring to contemporary politics, it may still be" (104).

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Notes

   [1] These dates for the Wars of the Roses are taken from Christine Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the Constitution in England, c. 1437-1509* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997) 1-3. Carpenter does not use the traditional dates of 1455-85 when discussing the wars, for she believes that the political events from the late 1430s need to be recounted and explained as well as Henry VII's reign and his solidification of the Houses of York and Lancaster prior to the unchallenged ascension of Henry VIII.
   [2] Larry Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority and Power: The Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucerian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 107.
   [3] The origins of the *Fürstenspiegel* tradition in medieval literature arise in the various texts of the *Secretum Secretorum*. The primary texts of the *Secretum Secretorum* can be found in M. A. Manzaloui, ed., *Secretum Secretorum: Nine English Versions*, vol. 1, EETS os 276 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977); and Robert Steele, ed., *Three Prose Versions of the Secreta Secretorum*. Part I. Text and Glossary. EETS es 74 (London: Kegan Paul, 1898). For studies in the *Fürstenspiegel* tradition, see Judith Ferster, *Fictions of Advice: The Literature and Politics of Counsel in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1996); and Stephen Burr Stallcup, "Counseling the King: Scenes of Monarchic Instruction in the Age of Richard II," diss., Princeton U, 2000.
   [4] Scanlon 81. Scanlon has commented upon the importance of *The Parson's Tale* as being "the place where authority seems less discursive, and most closed and static. Exposing the hidden marks of its discursive construction will suggest an alternative view of Chaucer's

relation to it, both in terms of the cultural materials he inherits, and in terms of what he passes on to his fifteenth-century posterity" (5).

[5] The chronology of the composition of Shakespeare's plays, according to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans, et al., 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton, 1997) 77-87, is as follows: *1 Henry VI* (1589-90, revised 1594-95); *2 Henry VI* (1590-91); *3 Henry VI* (1590-91); *Richard III* (1592-93); *Richard II* (1595); *1 Henry IV* (1596-97); *2 Henry IV* (1598); *Henry V* (1599).

[6] For a formalist examination of the history of England during these years when the legitimacy of the king was under question, see A. R. Myers, *England in the Late Middle Ages* (1991; London: Penguin, 1952) 15-53 and 115-47, where the Ricardian and Henrician realms are examined respectively. See also Paul Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399-1422* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1998). While examining a series of texts during the first of the Lancastrian decades, Strohm focuses on the symbolic nature of kingship, an activity which contributed to Lancastrian self-legitimation as well as instances where the crown's subjects were able to elude the king's power (xiii).

[7] There has been recent reevaluation of the three parts of *Henry VI* and their literary, cultural, and political importance. For recent studies of *Henry VI*, in particular the text's historical context and the production of the play in the context of the Wars of the Roses, see *Henry VI: Critical Essays*, ed. Thomas A. Pendleton (New York: Routledge, 2001), especially the following essays: Steven Urkowitz, "Text With Two Faces: Noticing Theatrical Revisions in *Henry VI, Parts 2* and *3*" 27-37; Harry Keyishian, "The Progress of Revenge in the First Henriad" 67-77; Naomi C. Leibler and Lisa Scancella Shea, "Shakespeare's Queen Margaret: Unruly or Unruled" 79-96; Maurice Hunt, "Climbing for Place in Shakespeare's *2 Henry VI*" 157-76; M. Rick Smith, "*Henry VI, Part 2*: Commodifying and Recommodifying the Past in Late-Medieval England" 177-204; and H. R. Coursen, "Theme and Design in Recent Productions of Henry VI" 205-18. Other recent studies of *Henry VI* include Lois Potter, "Recycling the Early Histories: 'The Wars of the Roses' and 'The Plantagenets'," *Shakespeare Survey* 43 (1990): 171-81; Norman J. Myers, "Finding 'a heap of Jewels' in 'Lesser' Shakespeare: *The Wars of the Roses* and

Richard Duke of York," *New England Theater Journal* 7 (1996): 95-107; Elspeth Parker, "*The Wars of the Roses:* Space, Shape, and Flow," *Shakespeare Bulletin* 13.2 (1995): 40-41; and MacD. P. Jackson, "*The Wars of the Roses:* The English Shakespeare Company on Tour," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40 (1989): 208-12. For a concise study of aspects of the problems of legitimation in Early Modern English and Renaissance literature and society, see David Morse, *England's Time of Crisis: From Shakespeare to Milton: A Cultural History* (New York: St. Martin's, 1989).

[8] The issue of historiography is one that has been examined from time to time in Malory's work. There is a tendency to see the *Morte* as a massive political allusion. For historical parallels between the literary and figurative worlds of Malory's text and of late-medieval Europe, see Richard R. Griffith, "The Political Bias of Malory's 'Morte Darthur,'" *Viator* 5 (1974): 365-86; George R. Stewart, "English Geography in Malory's *Morte Darthur,*" *Modern Language Review* 30 (1935): 204-09; E. K. Chambers, *English Literature at the Close of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1945) 204-05; Edward D. Kennedy, "Malory and the Marriage of Edward IV," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 12 (1970): 156-62; and Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman, *King Arthur and the Myth of History* (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2004). While mostly historical speculation, these studies show that the political climate of fifteenth-century England did shape Malory's prose. The argument concerning Malory's allegiance, Yorkist or Lancastrian, has not been settled, and it may be appropriate to assume that Malory's ties to both parties shifted continually during the Wars of the Roses. Edward Donald Kennedy has argued that Malory's text is politically neutral and that while there are inherent weaknesses in arguments that attempt to uncover contemporary political allusions in the *Morte,* nonetheless Malory was "writing a version of the Arthurian story that might have pleased the king because it was an English version of the story based upon French romances that were popular with the English upper classes, but that had been available for the most part only in French" ("Malory's *Morte Darthur:* A Politically Neutral English Adaptation of the Arthurian Story," *Arthurian Literature XX,* ed. Keith Busby and Roger Dalrymple [Cambridge: Brewer, 2003] 147-48).

[9] See William Mathews, *The Ill-Framed Knight: A Skeptical Inquiry into the Identity of Sir Thomas Malory* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1966) 3-35. Because Field's groundbreaking scholarship on the identity of Thomas Malory as Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel was over two decades away, Mathews incorrectly argued that "when the hypothesis that Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel was the author of *Le Morte Darthur* is subjected to skeptical examination, almost nothing is left to support it. The man's career seems morally discordant with the book" (73).

[10] P. J. C. Field, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory.* Arthurian Studies 29 (Cambridge: Brewer, 1993). See in particular the first five chapters, in which Field examines eight possible "candidates" as the person who wrote the *Morte.* Most convincing are Field's examinations of ancestry (36-53), politics (83-104), and prison (105-25). It should be noted that while Field's study presents us with the most likely candidate for Thomas Malory, that of Newbold Revel, nonetheless Malory's current biographer admits that Malory's true identity may never be determined: "Much remains obscure. Our state of knowledge of Malory's coat of arms is one example: his coat of arms represented him to his peers, and was plainly important to him as such, yet we cannot say exactly what it was. And beyond the uncertain areas of Malory's life are others, including much of his public life, of which we know nothing at all" (170).

[11] Terence McCarthy, *An Introduction to Malory.* Arthurian Studies 20, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Brewer, 1996) 157.

[12] Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses* 66-67. Carpenter goes on to examine what Henry IV and Henry V did *not* do as a king, including keeping themselves physically and emotionally well before the court, suppressing rebellions, maintaining success abroad in foreign conflicts, and keeping their lords in check. In Henry V's case the lord in question, of course, would be Gloucester (68-86). See also Anthony Tuck, "Henry IV and Europe: A Dynasty's Search for Recognition," *The McFarlane Legacy: Studies in Late Medieval Politics and Society*, ed. R. H. Britnell and A. J. Pollard (New York: St. Martin's, 1995) 107-26.

[13] In *The Life and Times*, Field suggests that while scholars and historians know little about how Malory felt in prison, the final explicit and a passage in *The Book of Sir Tristram de Lyones* both reflect

Malory's prison experiences. I will return to both of these passages later in my discussion of Malory's use of intransitive writing (120-21).

[14] J. R. Lander, *Government and Community: England, 1450-1509* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1980) 247.

[15] Nellie Slayton Aurner, "Sir Thomas Malory—Historian?" *PMLA* 48 (1933): 362-91. For Aurner, all three of the Lancastrian Kings, Henry IV, Henry V, and Henry VI, represented Arthur at different stages of the tale. Henry IV was seen as a valiant and forceful leader who established a new dynasty, yet whose planning and judgment were flawed. Henry V was viewed as the Arthur who conquered Europe in book 2 of the *Morte*, and Henry VI was seen as the weakened Arthur who is ignored by his knights. Arthur's relationship with Lancelot and Guenevere resembled that of Henry VI, the Duke of Suffolk, and Queen Margaret of Anjou. Aurner saw the crisis of kingship in the Wars of the Roses as represented in Henry V and Henry VI, the Lancastrian Kings, with Arthur himself and Mordred seen in the personages of Richard, Earl of Cambridge, Richard, Duke of York, and Edward IV. The destruction of the Round Table is seen in the dissolving of the Lancastrian kingdom under Henry VI. Aurner also saw connections between King Mark, Tristram, Isolde, and the various French and English kingdoms in the *Morte* and the many familial factions groping for power during the years of monarchical uncertainty. In her opening section, Aurner states that "the *Morte Darthur* gives an unmistakable reflection of the impressions which would have stamped themselves on the consciousness of a man living through the events which this Malory of Warwickshire must have experienced. As one of the retinue of Richard Beauchamp, Earl Warwick, he would have had his youthful enthusiasm enlisted in the efforts of Henry IV to establish his royal title and quell rebellions against it; he would have had a share in the continental victories of Henry V and have gained a vivid impression of the terrible conditions in France resulting from the savage feuds of the Burgundians and Armagnacs; he would have witnessed the crowning of Henry VI in Paris and probably have been on duty in Rouen at the burning of Jeanne d'Arc" (362). This fantastic speculation on Aurner's behalf would later prove just that, mere speculation. Aurner identifies her candidate as Sir Thomas Malory of Fenny Newbold in Warwickshire, and Field makes it clear that while

the location known as Fenny Newbold was in the process of being renamed and displaced by Newbold Revel in the fifteenth century the same location is associated with two persons who were named "Thomas Malory." The Fenny Newbold Malory entered into Fleet Prison in October, 1452, and as Field notes, the Newbold Revel candidate was also on the threshold of a London prison. Field concludes that the Fenny Newbold Malory is not the author of the *Morte* because his public record ends and begins with this lone prison entry, while Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel is well documented and, as Field rightly concludes, is the Sir Thomas Malory who wrote the *Morte Darthur* (*Life and Times* 4-7).

[16] P. J. C. Field, *Malory: Texts and Sources.* Arthurian Studies 40 (Cambridge: Brewer, 1998) 48-49. Field here comments that "[m]any of the alleged historical parallels [in the *Morte*] involve plot and characterization. This suggests that we will be safer explaining changes by the urge to consistency than by the urge to create historical parallels unless there is solid urge to the contrary" (49). What Field fails to examine is the nature of emplotment in literature that has historical value. Many theorists believe that to impose a plot structure (such as romance or satire) on a historical event that is in itself a catastrophic, multifaceted occurrence, such as the Holocaust, or the French Revolution, or the Wars of the Roses, would reduce the actual events to a fictitious narrative, possibly leading the reader of such a narrative (or the viewer of such a film) into revising the true historicity of the event into a new, false representation. For two important studies of the problems of historical representation, see Hayden White, *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999), esp. 27-42, where White examines Barthes's and Jacques Derrida's notion of writing in the middle voice in modernist literature and the Holocaust; and Berel Lang, *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide,* rev. ed. (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 2003), esp. 81-102.

[17] Eugène Vinaver, "A Note on Malory's Prose," *Aspects of Malory,* ed. Toshiyuki Takamiya and Derek Brewer, Arthurian Studies 1 (Woodbridge, Eng.: Brewer; Totowa, N.J.: Rowman, 1981) 9. On the comparison of Malory's style to that of the French romances, see also Jennifer R. Goodman, *Malory and William Caxton's Prose Romances of 1485* (New York: Garland, 1987), particularly chapter five.

[18] Martin B. Shichtman, "Politicizing the Ineffable: The *Queste del Saint Graal* and Malory's 'Tale of the Sankgreal,'" *Culture and the King: The Social Implications of the Arthurian Legend, Essays in Honor of Valerie M. Logorio*, ed. Martin B. Schichtman and James P. Carley, SUNY Series in Medieval Studies (Albany: State U of New York P, 1994) 163. For other studies of Malory's treatment of the French *Queste* see Dhira B. Mahoney, "The Truest and Holiest Tale: Malory's Transformation of *La Queste del Saint Graal*," in *Studies in Malory*, ed. James W. Spisak (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1985) 109-28; Sandra Ness Ihle, *Malory's Grail Quest: Invention and Adaptation in Medieval Prose Romance* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1983); John F. Plummer, "The Quest for Significance in *La Queste del Saint Graal* and Malory's *Tale of the Sankgreal*," *Continuations: Essays on Medieval French Literature and Language in Honor of John L. Grigsby*, ed. Norris J. Lacy and Gloria Torrini-Roblin (Birmingham, AL: Summa, 1989) 107-19; and Dorsey Armstrong, *Gender and the Chivalric Community in Malory's Morte d'Arthur* (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2003) 144-72.

[19] For recent studies of the Roman War episode, see Field, *Texts and Sources* 126-88; and the following articles in Bonnie Wheeler, Robert L. Kindrick and Michael N. Salda, eds., *The Malory Debate: Essays on the Texts of Le Morte Darthur*, Arthurian Studies 47 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000): Masako Takagi and Toshiyuki Takamiya, "Caxton Edits the Roman War Episode: The *Chronicles of England* and Caxton's Book V" 169-90; Edward Donald Kennedy, "Caxton, Malory, and the 'Noble Tale of King Arthur and Emperor Lucius'" 217-32; and Meg Roland, "Malory's Roman War Episode: An Argument for a Parallel Text" 315-19. Armstrong argues that Malory made notable alterations from his source material when writing the Roman War episode, for the author "frames the account of the continental campaign with reference to Guenevere and marriage as well" (18).

[20] *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, ed. Charles Plummer and John Earle, rev. ed., vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952) 70. The translation that follows is my own: "871. In this year the Vikings came into Reading by Wessex, and three nights later two earls rode inland. Then alderman Ethelwulf encountered them at Englefield and there fought against them, and obtained a victory. Then four nights later

King Ethelred and Alfred his brother led a great army to Reading, and fought against them; and there was great slaughter made on both sides, and alderman Ethelwulf was slain, and the Danes [i.e., the Vikings] had possession of the battlefield." For discussions of Malory's "chronicle style," see Ian A. Gordon, *The Movement of English Prose* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1966) 97; and P. J. C. Field, *Romance and Chronicle: A Study of Malory's Prose Style* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1971) 35-39, 84-85, 92.

[21] References to Malory's text, quoted by page and line number in parentheses, are to *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. Eugène Vinaver, rev. P. J. C. Field, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

[22] To place a single type of genre marker over Malory's work is highly problematic. At times the *Morte* reads like a romance and at other times like a chronicle. Yet another genre one may consider for the *Morte* is that of diary. There is a confessional nature to many of Malory's passages, particularly those in which he addresses the reader, and these highly personalized passages, given his confinement while composing the text, could represent diary-like entries. In the light of the recent surge in scholarship surrounding Thomas Usk and his *Testament of Love*, it would be interesting to see how the prison environment may have influenced the composition of their respective works, and what similarities and differences are seen in the style, form, and content of their literary achievements as a result. See also Hayden White's *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987), especially Chapter 1: "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," 1-25, for an astute analysis of medieval annals and chronicles."

[23] While White believes that most chronicles lack modes of emplotment, Finke and Shichtman argue that the chronicles of William of Malmesbury, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace, Layamon, and Hardyng by and large emplot the events they narrate as romance, but "as early as the twelfth century, Arthurian romances appeared side by side with these chronicle histories. While medieval readers could certainly discern the difference between history and fiction, the generic boundaries between the two were much more fluid than they are for modern readers schooled in *disciplines* of history and literature, and they answer not to some kind of transhistorical laws of genre, but to the

social conditions of their production" (*Content* 5). For White's analysis of the four modes of emplotment (romance, tragedy, comedy, and satire) in historical texts see *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1973) 7-11. While White's four historiographical styles of writing (emplotment, argument, ideological implication, and tropology) continue to be relevant in deconstructing the quasi-historical nature of texts that are implicitly or explicitly concerned with historical matters, nevertheless to impose such a rigid graph over a text can limit the interpretation of that text. Clearly, Malory's *Morte Darthur* is not solely a romance, for at times there are comedic and certainly tragic plot lines, and to say that Shakespeare used only one trope when writing a historical play, for example *Richard III*, would be preposterous.

[24] For the possible gentrification of the Arthurian audience and the possible influence of chronicles on Malory's work, see Raluca L. Radulescu, "'Talkyng of cronycles of kynges and of other polycyez': Fifteenth Century Miscellanies, the *Brut*, and the Readership of *Le Morte Darthur*," *Arthurian Literature XVIII*, ed. Keith Busby (Cambridge: Brewer, 2001) 125-41, and *A Gentry Context for Malory's Morte Darthur*, Arthurian Studies 55 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2003). English chronicles of the late Middle Ages continue to be sources for literary as well as historical studies related to Arthur, the Wars of the Roses, and issues of legitimation seen in medieval prose and poetry. The starting point for studies in fifteenth-century historical literature is still Charles L. Kingsford, *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century* (New York: Franklin, 1913). Other recent studies include Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England II, c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1982); Lister M. Matheson, *The Prose Brute: The Development of a Middle English Chronicle*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 180 (Tempe: Arizona State UP, 1998); Mary-Rose McLaren, *The London Chronicles of the Fifteenth Century: A Revolution in English Writing, With an Annotated Edition of Bradford, West Yorkshire Archives MS 32D86/42* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2002); and William Marx, *An English Chronicle 1377-1461: A New Edition, Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales*

MS 21608, and Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Lyell 34, Medieval Chronicles 3 (Woodbridge, Eng.: Boydell, 2003).

[25] *English Historical Documents*. ed. David C. Douglas and A. R. Myers, vol. 4 (New York: Oxford UP, 1969) 289-90. This is a reproduction of the Hearne's Fragment, found in *Thomae Sprotti Chronica*, ed. T. Hearne (Oxford, 1719) 286.

[26] Andrew Boardman, *The Battle of Towton* (Stroud, Eng.: Sutton, 1994) 1-2, 107-08.

[27] P. J. C. Field, "Malory and the Battle of Towton," *The Social and Literary Contexts of Malory's Morte Darthur*, ed. D. Thomas Hanks, Jr., and Jessica Gentry Brogdon, Arthurian Studies 42 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000) 70-72.

[28] Whether Malory used the *Thomae Sprotti Chronica* as a possible source for the final battle remains unclear, and to argue for its use would be mere speculation. Raluca Radulescu has recently argued that Malory may have used *John Warkworth's Chronicle* as a possible source for his *Morte*, for that chronicle discusses issues of kingship, specifically the responsibilities of a king. See "Malory and Fifteenth-Century Political Ideas," *Arthuriana* 13.3 (2003): 36-51, where Radulescu states that the "language of *Warkworth's Chronicle* may or may not have been typical of fifteenth-century popular opinion. If Malory was aware of such writings, he perhaps thought that the political language of contemporary England was appropriate for his book on Arthurian romance" (39).

[29] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1995) 361-65.

[30] For two recent studies on Malory's representation of war and peace and the positive and negative consequences of war as seen in the fifteenth century and Malory's work, see, respectively, Andrew Lynch, "'Peace is good after war': The Narrative Seasons of English Army Traditions" 127-46; and K. S. Whetter, "Warfare and Combat in *Le Morte Darthur*" 169-86, both in *Writing War: Medieval Literary Responses to Warfare*, ed. Corinne Saunders, Françoise Le Saux, and Neil Thomas (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004).

[31] The idea of the importance of the "linguistic turn" to the style and composition of medieval chronicles is from Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography*

(Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1997). Spiegel writes that "The principal effect of the 'linguistic turn,' for historians, has been to alert us to the mediating force of language in the representation of the past, and thus to help us to understand that there is no direct access to historical events or persons, so that all historical writing, whether medieval or modern, approaches the past via discourses of one sort or another" (xvi-xvii).

[32] For studies that examine the parallels between Malory's and Tristram's incarcerations, see Dhira B. Mahoney, "Malory's 'Tale of Sir Tristram': Source and Setting Reconsidered," *Medievalia et Humanistica*, ns 9 (1979): 175-98; Larry D. Benson, *Malory's Morte Darthur* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1976) 109-34; and Mathews, *The Ill-Framed Knight* 60-65. For a study of Malory's later years in prison and Edward IV's refusal to name the knight in several of the king's general pardons see P. J. C. Field, "The Last Years of Sir Thomas Malory," *The Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 64 (1981-82): 433-65; Field states that "It is natural to assume that Sir Thomas was imprisoned and excluded from pardon because of something he had done as a follower of Warwick, whose estrangement from Edward became serious in July 1467, and deepened until it reached outright rebellion in July 1469" (439).

[33] Roland Barthes, "To Write: An Intransitive Verb?" *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986) 11-21. Barthes first presented this essay at the Colloquium at Johns Hopkins University, 1966.

[34] This example of intransitive writing in *Maus* is found in Art Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivor's Tale, II: And Here My Troubles Begin* (New York: Pantheon, 1991) 41-47.

[35] Roland Barthes, in a 1960 essay, sees the writer and the author as part of a paradox that appears to be the result of our modern and now postmodern society: "The author participates in the priest's role, the writer in the clerk's; the author's language is an intransitive act (hence, in a sense, a gesture), the writer's an activity. The paradox is that society consumes a transitive language with many more reservations than an intransitive one: the writer's status, even today, when writers abound, is much more problematic than the author's. This is primarily the consequence of a material circumstance: the author's language is a

merchandise offered through traditional channels, it is the unique object of an institution created only for literature; the writer's language, on the contrary, can be produced and consumed only in the shadow of institutions which have, originally, an entirely different function than to focus on language: the university, scientific and scholarly research, politics, etc." ("Authors and Writers," *Critical Essays*, trans. Richard Howard (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1972] 147-48).