Malory's Magic Book:
King Arthur in Children's Literature, 1862-1960

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Abstract

This thesis examines adaptations of Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur* produced for children between 1862 and 1960. It aims to interrogate the complex link between children and the Arthurian legend that has existed since J. T. Knowles's first adaptation for a juvenile audience in 1862, and which remains strong today. By comparing authors' alterations to their medieval source, I explore the 'child' as a discursive construct, as a mutable and protean category that is equally revelatory of assumptions about adult identity as about childhood itself. Tracing adaptations of the *Morte* chronologically, I examine the ways in which they participate in wider cultural dialogues relating to national heritage, citizenship, mental health and masculine development through their representations of childhood. Against the backdrop of empire, changes in educational policy, the increasing application of psychology to childcare and two world wars, the diverse ways in which this versatile text is offered as relevant to children illuminates both shifting conceptions of childhood and the complex relationship between adapters and their imagined child readers. This study contributes to enquiries regarding the refashioning of Arthur and the function and manifestation of medievalism, and to studies of children's literature, by illuminating the ways in which the elusive 'child' has been used to focus shifting perceptions regarding the essence and significance of the Arthurian legend over a century.

A note on names

The title and spelling of Malory's text varies across editions. This thesis will refer throughout to 'the *Morte Darthur'*, and 'the *Morte'* for brevity. Spellings of certain Arthurian names also vary across adaptations, particularly Lancelot/Launcelot and Guinevere/Guenever. When quoting directly from texts, the thesis will use the spelling as it appears in the original. However, during discussion of characters, names will be standardised thus: Agravaine, Gawain, Guinevere, Isolde, Lancelot, Merlin, Mordred, Pellinore, Tristram.

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Thank you also to my parents, who provided me with a roof over my head for the duration of this project, and who tirelessly plastered, painted and polished said roof for the sake of my wellbeing.

Author's declaration

I, Elly McCausland, declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References. The licence for this thesis does not apply to third party artworks reproduced herein. Acknowledgement is made to Penguin Random House LLC for permission to use artwork by John Steinbeck.

A version of Chapter One has been accepted, subject to revisions, by the *Review of English Studies*.

Introduction

> 'I hope you are not being stupid about children,' asked Merlyn, looking vaguely
> about him. 'We have high authority for being born again, like little ones. Grown-
> ups have developed an unpleasant habit lately, I notice, of comforting themselves
> for their degradation by pretending that children are childish. I trust we are free
> from this?'
> 'Everybody knows that children are more intelligent than their parents'.
> 'You and I know it, but the people who are going to read this book do not'.[1]

Defeated by his treacherous son Mordred following the collapse of his kingdom, T. H.
White's King Arthur finds himself, as part of a dream-like afterlife, in Merlin's cave. Here
he is offered the chance to return to his childhood for an evening in order to learn a series
of lessons deemed necessary by the magician and his committee of talking animals.
Sceptical, Arthur declines the offer to be 'born again, like little ones', and is swiftly
admonished by Merlin. In this meta-textual exchange, White's narrative seems to appeal to
a child audience. The assertion 'everybody knows that children are more intelligent than
their parents' appears intended to delight a child reader, flattering his or her youthful
knowledge and reversing the traditional dynamic whereby the child is at the mercy of
superior adult intelligence. Merlin suggests Arthur should feel privileged by the chance to
be 'born again' through magic, linking the state of being a 'little one' not with naivety and
ignorance but instead with 'high authority'. Arthur's matter-of-fact presentation of this as a
universal truth – 'everybody knows' – which is then qualified by Merlin – 'you and I know
it' – posits the child reader as part of an exclusive group. Forever misunderstood and
patronised by condescending adults, the child is here liberated and placed in the privileged
position of having its true abilities recognised by the legendary figures of King Arthur and
his famous magical adviser. Somewhat paradoxically, the child's very status as
marginalised and excluded places it among a knowledgeable elite. Yet Merlin's warning,
'the people who are going to read this book do not', complicates this relationship. By
designating 'the people who are going to read this book' as those very adults who are

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[1] T. H. White, *The Once and Future King* (London: Harper Collins, 1996), 710. First published
1958.

'stupid about children', Merlin calls the status of the implied reader into question. Is this a text for children or adults? Why is the child credited with superior intelligence while the adult is dismissed as 'stupid'? Are these two categories distinct, or is the reader assumed to occupy both spaces at different moments? What 'degradations' cause adults to pretend that children are childish, is this something that has only happened 'lately', and what is the essence of this childishness? Why does White remodel Malory's *Morte Darthur* as a series of lessons presented to the king by anthropomorphised geese, ants and badgers? Such questions take us to the heart of the complex relationship between children and the Arthurian legend.

I. The protean king and the variable child: 'strenuous' appropriations of Arthur

It has been pointed out that the *Morte Darthur,* Thomas Malory's fifteenth-century tale of King Arthur and his knights, does not obviously lend itself to juvenile versions. 'Malory did not write for children,' Andrew Lynch remarks. 'His book makes no concessions to a young audience and he never interpellates its audience as young'.[2] Furthermore, the *Morte* contains very few child characters and even fewer depictions of childhood. Yet, as with *Robinson Crusoe* and *Gulliver's Travels,* this largely childless text has been continually produced in children's versions since 1862 when James Knowles – architect, scholar and friend of Alfred Tennyson – published the first version of the legend for children, initiating a trend that shows no signs of abating today.[3] The diverse ways in which the *Morte* has been reworked for a child audience, and the changing and multifaceted 'child' envisaged by these texts, are the subjects of this thesis. Malory's original was 'too long, too monotonous, and too obscure' to appeal to children, Knowles claimed, but he saw his adaptation 'paving the way for such a popular revival of the Story as is its due'.[4] In 1816, for the first time since 1634, two new editions of the *Morte* had been published, by J. Walker & Company,

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[2] Andrew Lynch, '*Le Morte Darthur* for Children: Malory's Third Tradition' in *Adapting the Arthurian Legends for Children: Essays on Arthurian Juvenilia,* ed. Barbara Tepa Lupack (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 4.

[3] See J. T. Knowles, *The Story of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table* (London: Griffith & Farrow, 1862). Recent adaptations for children include versions by Kevin Crossley-Holland (2000-2003), Isabel Wyatt (2011), and Daniel Randall (2013). Many of the texts discussed in this study have been reprinted in recent years, including those by Knowles, Roger Lancelyn Green, Howard Pyle and Antonia Fraser.

[4] Knowles, *Story of King Arthur,* i.

and 1817 witnessed another edition by the poet Robert Southey.[5] Interest in Malory's text blossomed throughout the nineteenth century, aided by burgeoning book clubs and literary societies, a renewed interest in the chivalric gentleman, and the rise of literary histories, manuals, and guides to English literature. Knowles's predicted 'popular revival' came to pass, producing multiple children's versions of Arthur alongside his reincarnation in Pre-Raphaelite art and Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* (1859-85).[6]

The success of Knowles's text – in its eighth edition by 1895 – and the flourishing of children's versions during this period and beyond indicates that the *Morte* was perceived to be relevant to children in ways that could be foregrounded through a process of editing and adaptation. As this thesis demonstrates, the diverse ways in which the *Morte* has been, and continues to be, rendered for children suggest that the text's suitability lies in its flexibility and capacity to perform changing cultural work as it responds to and interacts with shifting conceptions of the child. Lynch observes that 'since the mid-nineteenth century there has been a troubled double apprehension of the *Morte*: that it is somehow particularly suitable for children yet can only be made so by strenuous adaptation'.[7] This raises several important questions. Firstly, why has the *Morte*, since 1862, been considered 'particularly suitable for children'? Secondly, why is this apprehension of Malory's text so 'troubled'? Lynch refers to 'strenuous' adaptation, which implies a process fraught with difficulty, suggesting a fundamental ideological dislocation between aspects of Malory's original text and perceptions of a child audience. What Roger Ascham famously identified as 'open mans slaughter, and bold bawdrye' – Malory's violence, adultery and incest – are obvious candidates for necessitating 'strenuous' adaptation, but in fact much of the *Morte's*

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[5] See *The Byrth, Lyf, and Actes of Kyng Arthur; of His Noble Knyghtes of the Rounde Table, Theyr Merveyllous Enquests and Aduentures, Thachyeuyng of the Sanc Greal; and in the End le Morte Darthur, with the Dolorous Deth and Departyng Out of Thys Worlde of Them Al*, ed. William Upcott, with an Introduction and Notes by Robert Southey (London: Longman, et al., 1817).
[6] Edward Strachey, who published the Globe edition of the *Morte* in 1868, credited these early editions with introducing his generation to Arthur and his knights: Burne-Jones, Morris and Swinburne all owned copies of Southey's 1817 edition. Tennyson's *Idylls*, the painting of William Dyce's Arthurian frescoes for the palace of Westminster in the mid-nineteenth century and the prevalence of Arthurian scenes in Pre-Raphaelite paintings illustrate the influence of Malory upon popular and literary culture. For more detailed accounts of the Arthurian revival, see Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) and David Matthews, 'Scholarship and Popular Culture in the Nineteenth Century' in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. Helen Fulton (Chichester: Blackwell, 2009), 355-68.
[7] Lynch, '*Le Morte Darthur* for Children', 1.

objectionable material is easily expurgated from children's versions: Mordred becomes simply Arthur's malevolent son, rather than the product of incest, while the fall of the Round Table is precipitated by this jealous son telling lies about Lancelot and Guinevere to cause a rift between Arthur and his favourite knight.[8] Rather, I would argue that the difficulties of the adaptation process lie in making Malory's medieval tale of knights, magic and adventure seem not only relevant but also beneficial to a child audience. 'Strenuous' implies substantial effort, indicating that Arthurian children's adaptations differ significantly from their medieval source material. This study examines those significant differences to investigate the child envisaged by these revised texts, and the changing versions of Arthur they have been offered over time.

In *Reinventing King Arthur: The Arthurian Legends in Victorian Culture* (2005), Inga Bryden suggests that 'Arthur inhabits the realm where the borders of national, cultural and mythological identities overlap'.[9] Several recent studies, such as those by Stephanie Barczewski and Debra Mancoff, have examined the ways in which the Arthurian legend and its contentious status as the 'Matter of Britain' became implicated in debates relating to the nation and its people during the nineteenth century.[10] These develop a common critical premise associated with Victorian medievalism: that it 'was a social language composed of myths, legends, rituals, and symbols that was appropriated by the Victorians both to criticise and to affirm their own times'.[11] Bryden suggests that Arthur's nature as a

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[8] Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster*, cited in Marilyn Jackson Parins (ed.), *Malory: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1988), 56-57.

[9] Inga Bryden, *Reinventing King Arthur: The Arthurian Legends in Victorian Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 1.

[10] In *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth Century Britain: The Legends of King Arthur and Robin Hood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), Stephanie Barczewski explores how these peculiarly 'national' heroes were co-opted in the construction of British identity through their association with the emerging disciplines of national history and English Studies. Debra Mancoff, in *The Return of King Arthur: The Legend Through Victorian Eyes* (London: Pavilion Books, 1995) explores the poetry and painting of the Arthurian revival to examine how Victorian society interpreted its own identity through the cultural legacy of its past.

[11] Charles Dellheim, 'Interpreting Victorian Medievalism' in *History and Community: Essays in Victorian Medievalism,* ed. Florence Boos (New York: Garland, 1992), 39. Alice Chandler, in *A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century English Literature* (London: Routledge, 1971) suggests nineteenth-century medievalism was rooted in two main aspects: naturalism, which equated the past with simpler modes of feeling and heroic codes of action, and feudalism, which regarded earlier social structures as harmonious and stable. Michael Alexander, in *Medievalism: The Middle Ages in Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007) examines the role played by Victorian antiquarians, historians and writers of fiction in recovering

'protean' figure, his complex relationship to 'fragmented fictional, historical and oral traditions', can illuminate processes of cultural construction and myth-making in the nineteenth century. Regardless of whether King Arthur actually existed, 'what is significant is how various forms of knowledge about Arthur are being remodelled or invented'.[12] Literary scholar and editor Ernest Rhys offered a similar observation as early as 1886:

> The story of King Arthur, the Prince who, fatefully environed, sinned his way as it were into heroism and kingdom, won shame and highest honour, and became the romance-type in his weakness and strength of all humanity, has never ceased to fascinate the story-tellers and the people. Its trace is continual in other languages, but especially in our own its history is interwoven, appearing and reappearing, as it does, in a hundred guises, altered in art-form as the literary custom of the day demanded, so that it serves in fact as a sort of touchstone of the different periods.[13]

Rhys suggests that the king was continually presented and re-presented in accordance with changing literary custom, but also stood at the nexus of discourse about heroism and kingdom, shame and honour, and 'our own' language and history. In its implicit suggestion that these ethical and national concepts are stable and unequivocal standards, Rhys's observation belies the fact that appropriations of Arthur often problematised and complicated the very ideals and structures they attempted to define: the reaches of his kingdom; the relationship between shame, punishment and penance; the requirements and limitations of heroism and honour.

This study contributes to continuing enquiries about medievalism and the refashioning of Arthur, exploring the ways in which authors related to the *Morte* and the Middle Ages – as object of scholarly enquiry, escapist fantasy, or heroic exemplar – and, in

and disseminating medieval texts. Tison Pugh and Angela Weisl argue in *Medievalisms: Making the Past in the Present* (London: Routledge, 2013) that the Middle Ages operates as a cultural fantasy constituted from fragments of real material, compelling authors to consider their places within diverse and often contradictory traditions. In *Medievalism: A Critical History* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015), David Matthews explores the juxtaposition of the 'gothic' and 'romantic' within Victorian medievalism, and argues that it was often the 'residual' medieval that held most potency in relation to social debates, citing texts by Gaskell, Dickens, Hardy and the Brontë sisters.

[12] Bryden, *Reinventing King Arthur*, 6.

[13] Ernest Rhys, *Malory's History of King Arthur and the Quest of the Holy Grail* (London: Walter Scott, 1886), xxix.

turn, how children were encouraged to relate to Arthur and his knights. It broadens existing work on the link between Arthur and nationalism, demonstrating that children's texts deployed a particularly vague notion of the *Morte* as 'heritage' to suggest historical continuity between Arthurian characters and the present day child. It also contributes to studies of nineteenth- and twentieth-century heroism, examining how children's versions of Malory attempted to negotiate the fine line between risk-taking and recklessness in their presentation of chivalric adventure.[14] Ultimately, it explores how manifestations of Bryden's 'protean' king, how he was remodelled and reinvented, figure equally problematic cultural assumptions and enquiries concerning the conceptualisation of children and childhood. The category 'children's literature' and the notion of 'writing for children' tend to imply a child readership that is homogeneous, yet the reworking of Arthur figures 'child' as another protean category: sometimes the recipient of overt moralising instruction, sometimes encouraged to take risks and learn self-reliance, the child may be envisaged as an object of address or appear as an author's nostalgic attempt to 'write back' to or access their own lost childhood. The pupil in the classroom, the adventurous explorer, the vengeful adolescent and the childish daydreamer all have a place in adaptations of the *Morte* from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. This thesis explores how a single medieval text can accommodate so many different children, and why particular children emerge in its adaptation at particular historical moments.

Malory's *Morte* has been chosen both for methodological reasons, and because of its cultural significance. Selecting this single text enables the direct comparison of adaptive strategies, which would be greatly complicated by looking at the mass of literature for children loosely based on Arthurian 'themes' that also began to appear during this period.[15] The *Morte* is widely acknowledged to be the most comprehensive version of the Arthurian

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[14] For example, John Price's recent study, *Everyday Heroism: Victorian Constructions of the Heroic Civilian* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

[15] Several adaptations of Malory's *Morte* examined by this study also include versions of other Arthurian material, such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* or the *Mabinogion*. I confine my analysis to material based on the *Morte*. When citing Malory's text, I use Thomas Wright's 1889 three-volume edition of Caxton's print. This was a popular edition and underwent several reprints following its initial publication in 1858; it was used for Tennyson's *Idylls*, and therefore can reasonably be expected to have influenced adapters during the late nineteenth century. In discussion of Steinbeck, who used Malory's Winchester Manuscript in Eugène Vinaver's edition, I refer to Vinaver's *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, 2nd edn. (1967). Original editions of primary texts, or digital reprints of originals, have been used where possible.

legend in English and, during the high point of Victorian medievalism, was the source text of choice for most adapters and neo-Arthurian works such as *Idylls of the King*. It unites many of the disparate strands of the Arthurian story – the romance of Tristram and Isolde, the life of Lancelot, the Grail Quest – and also offers a broadly teleological and self-contained (if convoluted) narrative of the rise and fall of King Arthur and Camelot. As this study will demonstrate, developments in children's Arthuriana during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries frequently run parallel to, or intersect with, advancement in Arthurian scholarship, much of which centres around Malory's text: its position in the canon, enquiries into its author's identity, and the discovery of the Winchester Manuscript in 1934. My analysis takes a predominantly diachronic approach to children's adaptations of the *Morte*, tracing their relationship with sociohistorical developments that impacted upon the way childhood was perceived: reforms in state education during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; the rise of English Studies as a curriculum discipline; the popularity of boys' adventure stories in the decades preceding the First World War; the Boy Scout phenomenon; the rise of child psychology, and the burgeoning post-World War Two children's publishing industry.

In this way, it follows single-text studies of children's literature such as those by Jacqueline Rose, based on *Peter Pan* (1984), and Andrew O'Malley's *Children's Literature, Popular Culture and Robinson Crusoe* (2012).[16] The latter concludes that *Crusoe* flourished as a children's text because it already possessed themes and values that aligned with the concerns of children's literature: it could be packaged as a 'suitable educational text' and a nostalgic 'relic of a more innocent time'.[17] The *Morte* is also co-opted in both of these ways, and the emphasis on adventure, heroism, education and nostalgia evident in children's adaptations from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth is, of course, not confined to Malory. Texts such as the Robin Hood legends – adapted by several authors who also adapted Malory, and dramatised by Disney less than a decade after *The Sword in the Stone* – were also offered as examples of heroic adventure to children, set in a vaguely 'medieval' past.[18] However, the *Morte* has several specific and

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[16] For more detailed discussion of Rose, see p.28 below.

[17] Andrew O'Malley, *Children's Literature, Popular Culture, and Robinson Crusoe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 156-57.

[18] The two are also analysed together in Chapter Five of Pugh and Weisl's *Medievalisms*.

unique advantages for a study of children's adaptation. First, it was a prominent text in the rise of English Studies during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and its distinctive (although problematic) status as a 'myth of origin' for the British renders its association with nationalism and heritage in children's texts particularly intricate and revealing. Secondly, its specifically *chivalric* brand of heroism was closely linked to the medieval revival of the nineteenth century and the rise of the chivalric gentleman, and therefore its discourses of heroism are associated with self-improvement, citizenship and masculinity in ways that are likely to differ from other popular children's texts, such as *Crusoe* or *Gulliver's Travels*. Finally, developments in Malory scholarship throughout the period influenced adapters in distinctive ways, and scholars were often instrumental in producing children's versions of the *Morte* themselves. This study therefore contributes to recent discussion of the connections between university scholarship and children's literature in the work of, for example, Charles Dodgson and C. S. Lewis.[19]

Malory's *Morte* offers a case study into how shifting conceptions of the child – as bold and adventurous, socially fragile, magical and innocent – actually manifested themselves in the texts that attempted to engage with these children. It can elucidate the complexities of interacting with the child as a writer, parent, teacher, or through memory of one's own childhood. The main texts examined are those by Clara Thomson (1902), Alfonzo Gardiner (1908), Howard Pyle (1903-10), Henry Gilbert (1911), Alfred Pollard (1917), Dorothy Macardle (1917), T. H. White (1939-58), Roger Lancelyn Green (1953), Alice Hadfield (1953), Antonia Fraser (1954) and John Steinbeck (1976), although a selection of other works are also briefly discussed.[20] The thesis begins by examining two different groups of texts from the early twentieth century (1902-17): school editions, produced by a close network of scholars and teachers (discussed in Chapter One) and texts for leisure reading, produced largely by professional children's authors (Chapter Two). T.

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[19] Martin Gardner's *The Universe in a Handkerchief: Lewis Carroll's Mathematical Recreations, Games, Puzzles, and Word Plays* (New York: Copernicus, 1996) examines the link between Dodgson as mathematician and as children's writer, while Thomas Martin (ed.) *Reading the Classics with C. S. Lewis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000), explores the influence of Lewis's academic literary career upon his writing.

[20] T. H. White's work is listed as 1939-58 because, although the bulk of *The Once and Future King* was written and published in the late 1930s and early 1940s as separate texts, White revised his work throughout the 1950s for the combined edition of 1958. For a more comprehensive guide to Arthurian adaptation (not just that based on Malory), see Ann F. Howey and Stephen R. Reimer, *A Bibliography of Modern Arthuriana (1500-2000)* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2006).

H. White is examined individually in Chapter Three, owing to his highly original version of the *Morte,* its response to developments in child psychology, and because his text was produced at a time that otherwise saw little innovation in Malory adaptation. The writers of the 1950s are, somewhat paradoxically, united in their diverse approaches to the legend, as the child of children's literature becomes ever more mutable, and are discussed in Chapters Four and Five. They are also the adults who would have been raised on the schoolroom adaptations of the early twentieth century. Nostalgia for the fantasy world of recollected childhood is particularly evident in the work of Roger Lancelyn Green, and John Steinbeck's novel construction of the magical child is partly based on his own childhood experience of the *Morte,* or, as he termed it, 'Malory's magic book'.[21] Many of these authors also respond to one another; they disagree with or differentiate themselves from each other's approaches, confirming the instability of the child behind 'children's literature'. Steinbeck repeatedly distinguished his work from T. H. White's, and his adaptation evinces an important shift in the power allotted to the fictional child. His unfinished *Acts of King Arthur and his Noble Knights* offers the outline of an imaginative child capable of extraordinary magical feats and emotional resilience, a construct that has an enduring legacy in later children's Arthuriana. Steinbeck's alterations to the *Morte*, and his sense of 'ownership' over the text, illustrate the versatility of Arthur in the hands of adapters by the late 1950s and anticipate later, more radical, reworkings of Malory, such as *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975*)* and Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon* (1982). *Acts* is chosen as a suitable cut-off point for these reasons, marking a shift away from Malory's original in children's (and adults') Arthuriana. The texts that follow, such as Susan Cooper's *Dark is Rising* sequence (1964-77), place child characters at the heart of their Arthurian stories in new and innovative ways.

Chapter One examines adaptations of Malory's *Morte* designed for use in the classrooms of state schools. It investigates the assumption of the *Morte'*s relevance for children, tracing its association with the emergence of English Studies as a curriculum and university discipline. As a perceived 'classic' text with links to the Matter of Britain, the

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[21] John Steinbeck, preface to *The Acts of King Arthur and his Noble Knights,* ed. Chase Horton (London: Penguin Classics, 2001), xii. Although posthumously published in 1976, Steinbeck wrote *Acts* between 1958 and 1959, abandoning the project in 1960, hence the '1862-1960' span of the thesis.

Morte was frequently implicated in debates among closely connected groups of scholars, teachers and educational policy-makers regarding the educational value of English literature, and appropriated in Britain as part of a pedagogical canon based on dominant definitions of culture, heritage and 'Englishness'. This chapter uses classroom adaptations of Malory's text to explore the influence of the professionalisation of teaching and the institutionalisation of English Studies on literature produced for children, and to elucidate the ideologies about children, pedagogy and the canon that underpinned this movement.

Chapter Two examines a series of concurrent adaptations that, although not specifically pedagogical, were equally invested in the education of their readers. Constructing the child as male, they explore the possibility of applying Malory's lessons in masculinity to everyday life. I investigate the assumption, particularly prevalent in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries although still extant, that boys enjoyed and benefited from adventure stories, interrogating the specific forms of adventure offered by these texts. Tracing the evolution of 'adventure' from its connotations in the *Morte Darthur* and Middle English to its reconfiguration in the adaptations of Howard Pyle (1903-10), Henry Gilbert (1911) and Alfred Pollard (1917), I explore the ways in which these texts depict adventurous children and address their child readers. They negotiate the link between chivalric adventure and the achievement of masculine honour in a modern, capitalist context, and attempt to balance a call for adventurous masculinity with an emphasis upon moderation, locating idealised masculinity in the ability to react in a considered way to circumstance and the vicissitudes of modern life. In this way, they can be read in tandem with the 'everyday heroism' movement of the late nineteenth century, the development of the Boy Scouts and associated groups, and the public school ethos exemplified by the poet Henry Newbolt's 'Vitaï Lampada', in which the rhetorics of sport and danger are problematically intertwined.

Chapter Three explores the influence of developmental psychology on constructions of childhood in T. H. White's *Once and Future King* tetralogy (1939-58). Focusing particularly on White's depiction of the dysfunctional childhoods of Lancelot and the Orkney brothers, narratives inflected by the psychological concepts of trauma, repression and displacement, I suggest that White's Arthuriad explores a vision of the child markedly

different from that of his Victorian and Edwardian predecessors. The product of a culture in which psychology had drawn attention to the fragile nature of childhood, and inextricably bound up with his own experience of psychoanalysis and complex feelings towards his mother, White's text portrays a modern child tormented by self-loathing and suffering the scars of a troubled upbringing. His text blurs the boundaries between child and adult implied reader, constructing a world in which adults are shaped by, and continue to revisit, their youthful anxieties. Building on studies such as Kenneth Kidd's *Freud in Oz* (2011), I demonstrate how Freudian psychology manifests itself at a textual and narrative level in a work that is both for, and about, children, and often both simultaneously.[22]

Perhaps owing to this uncertainty regarding its implied reader, and its highly original – and often irreverent – treatment of Malory's *Morte*, White's text was largely overlooked by critics in discussions of the Arthurian legend for 1940s and 1950s children. Following what Andrew Lynch terms a 'stagnant interwar period', the early 1950s saw a spate of authors attempting to produce 'the Arthur for our age', an Arthur that White had apparently failed to provide. Chapter Four examines their efforts to make Malory's *Morte* freshly relevant for a period almost a century removed from the Victorian medievalism that had inspired Knowles's first version for children. It focuses particularly on the works of Roger Lancelyn Green (1953), Alice Hadfield (1953) and Antonia Fraser (1954), and the diverse ways in which these texts interpret the overarching significance of Malory's tale: as a magical world of lost childhood innocence, a guide to better spiritual living, or evidence of the capricious and volatile nature of human emotion. I suggest that the diversity of these adaptations demonstrates an increasing uncertainty regarding the relevance of Arthur in a post-World War and Cold War age, as authors either loaded the *Morte* with Victorian moralisation or, at the other end of the scale, subjected Arthur to a sensationalism bordering on parody, both of which necessitated very different constructions of the child. This unstable Arthur anticipates the radical rewritings of the *Morte* throughout later decades in literature and film.

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[22] Kenneth B. Kidd, *Freud in Oz: At the Intersections of Psychoanalysis and Children's Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

Chapter Five focuses on John Steinbeck's *Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights* (1976), an unfinished and posthumously published text whose significance has been largely overlooked. Steinbeck's own involvement with the *Morte Darthur* as a child, his intention to produce the text for his sons, his extensive research into Arthurian studies and his relationship with the Malory scholar Eugène Vinaver and the Winchester Manuscript all render *Acts* an important text in Arthurian adaptation for children. This chapter explores the intersections between Steinbeck's child characters and his own personal recollections of childhood, suggesting that his highly subjective and autobiographical retelling makes a novel intervention in children's Arthuriana through its presentation of the powerful, imaginative child, and its exploration of the child psyche as a source of emotional resilience and potent creative energy. Although Steinbeck abandoned his project in 1960, this legacy can be traced through Arthurian adaptations from the 1960s to the present day. My study concludes at this point, anticipating the neo-Arthurian retellings of the late twentieth century, many of which increasingly focused on the marginalised characters of the legend such as Morgan Le Fay and Morgause, and the movement of children's Arthuriana towards highly original texts based much more loosely on the legend, which often allocate greater power to the child.

II. Windows of opportunity: the construction of 'childness'

This thesis links studies of Arthurian juvenilia and medievalism with studies of childhood and children's literature, both theoretical and historicist. Barbara Tepa Lupack's *Adapting the Arthurian Legends for Children: Essays on Arthurian Juvenilia* (2004), covering everything from Arthurian picture books to comics and music and spanning the nineteenth century to 2004, precludes in-depth consideration of the child imagined by these texts. Lynch's '*Le Morte Darthur* for Children', in the Lupack collection, does aim towards 'an adult's investigation of textual "childness"', examining 'the traffic between these adaptations and their original, and their relation to each other and to broader cultural changes'.[23] However, Lynch's broad analysis lacks the space to examine in detail the 'textual "childness"' of these adaptations; that is, to investigate the child as a discursive construct informed by shifting adult assumptions and sociocultural contexts. For example,

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[23] Lynch, '*Le Morte Darthur* for Children', 3-4.

he notes that in the early twentieth century the *Morte* became 'an English "classic", to be read in schools', but does not examine the key educational and social changes involved in this phenomenon and the problematic assumptions underlying both 'classic' and 'English' in their application to Arthur, or consider what type of imagined child might benefit from a 'classic' text and why. Furthermore, he excludes T. H. White's work for reasons of brevity, but White's psychological construction of the child made a dramatic contribution to children's Arthuriana that cannot be ignored, directly impacting upon later adaptations such as Steinbeck's *Acts* and continuing to influence fiction for children today, such as J. K. Rowling's hugely successful *Harry Potter* series.[24]

Similarly, Velma Bourgeois Richmond's recent study, *Chivalric Stories as Children's Literature: Edwardian Retellings in Words and Pictures* (2014), although offering an illuminating account of the 'influence of chivalric stories for children as social commentary', does not examine in detail how these stories construct childhood at a textual level and how these constructs change over a substantial period of time.[25] However, Richmond's study – alongside her work on Chaucer and Shakespeare for children (2004 and 2008) – does demonstrate the unique value of adapted texts for the study of childhood. Because they can be directly compared with a source text, authorial decisions made with the child reader in mind can be more readily inferred than when considering original texts. This is evident in David Matthews's work on Chaucer for children, which explores the curious infantilising of the author by Victorian and Edwardian adapters and translators, and gestures towards the child audience implied by these changes.[26] The value of specifically medieval texts for these enquiries is evident in Pugh and Weisl's *Medievalisms* (2013), which explores the 'fantasies of innocence' that inflect representations of the Middle Ages in children's literature, concluding that these visions can reveal 'the contradictions and

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[24] Rowling referred to T. H. White's Wart as 'Harry's spiritual ancestor', and acknowledged the influence of his Merlin upon her own Dumbledore. See 'J. K. (Joanne Kathleen) Rowling (1966 –)', *Guardian*, last modified 22 Jul 2008. Accessed 22 Oct 2015: http://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/jun/11/jkjoannekathleenrowling.
[25] Velma Bourgeois Richmond, *Chivalric Stories as Children's Literature: Edwardian Retellings in Words and Pictures* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2014), 2.
[26] See David Matthews, 'Infantilizing the Father: Chaucer Translations and Moral Regulation', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 22 (2000): 93-114.

contrasts between yesterday and today that mutually constitute the child and the past'.[27] Building on such studies, I examine both the child and the 'medieval' constructed and envisaged by authorial decisions in Arthurian adaptation.

Zohar Shavit, in *Poetics of Children's Literature* (1986) claims 'the discussion of translated texts is even more fruitful than that of original texts because translational norms expose more clearly the constraints imposed on a text that enters the children's system'.[28] Among the most interesting manifestations of 'text adjustment', she suggests, 'are those elements that translators find necessary to add to the original […] since adding new elements to an already shortened text implies that the translator regards them as indispensable to the model'.[29] Original material within adapted texts can reveal a 'model' – a set of assumptions regarding children, closely linked to sociocultural contexts or what Karin Lesnik-Oberstein terms 'systems of purpose' – that affects and informs the texts' production, and can illuminate the ways in which the child of this 'model' is constructed.[30]

Mary Zambreno suggests that adapters take advantage of 'windows of opportunity' within original Arthurian texts to 'fill in gaps' with new stories or perspectives. She attributes the endurance of the legend to its 'piecemeal' nature as a narrative assembled from various sources, a hypothesis shared by Bryden and Barczewski.[31] Zambreno cites D. H. Green, who observed that the romances of Chrétien de Troyes are located in an undeveloped interlude between wars in Geoffrey of Monmouth's more 'historical' account, and that other romance authors make similar use of blank spots in the historical record. Green, she remarks,

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[27] Tison Pugh and Angela Jane Weisl, *Medievalisms: Making the Past in the Present* (London: Routledge, 2013), 48.

[28] Zohar Shavit, *Poetics of Children's Literature* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 112.

[29] Shavit, *Poetics*, 121-22.

[30] Karin Lesnik-Oberstein, *Children's Literature: Criticism and the Fictional Child* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 9-10.

[31] Mary Frances Zambreno, 'Why Do Some Stories Keep Returning? Modern Arthurian Fiction and the Narrative Structure of Romance', *Essays in Medieval Studies,* 26 (2010) 118-19. Bryden suggests that the fragmented fictional, historical and oral traditions of the legend rendered it particularly suitable for cultural acts of myth-making. Barczewski attributes the adaptability and durability of the Arthurian legend to the fact that its basis in reality has always been a matter of considerable doubt.

dubs these interludes 'windows of opportunity', a concept that I find worth
exploring. It seems to me that by its very nature the Matter of Britain contains many
such windows, gaps that may be filled in by other stories, new stories, and
perspectives omitted from or slighted in the original narrative […] One reason for
the amazing durability of the Arthurian legend, I believe, is its specific appeal to a
kind of literary confabulation inspired by the over-arching narrative structure of
Arthurian romance: the space, or spaces, contained in the framework of the story
allow the creative imagination of later authors room in which to work.[32]

My analysis examines the ways in which writers for children filled these gaps. As Shavit
suggests, these additions are the best indicators of the 'model' of childhood assumed by the
author, containing those elements they regard as 'indispensable'. My choice of texts is
therefore informed by Lynch's distinction between abridgement and retelling. It does
include a selection of 'abridged, censored, and glossed editions for children, with mainly
original text', particularly in Chapter One. However, it is primarily interested in books that
retell Malory's stories for children, especially those 'with significant new events alongside
or replacing Malory', although the *Morte* still provides the main narratives, characters and
themes of these texts.[33] These additions and alterations provide the most fruitful material
with which to analyse constructions of children and childhood. For example, Henry
Gilbert's decision to add a boy character, Owen, to his narrative emphasises the text's
mapping of an idealised trajectory of masculinity onto the child reader, while T. H. White's
depiction of the Orkney brothers' childhoods is central to his Freudian construction of the
child. For this reason, texts such as Knowles's *Story of King Arthur and his Knights of the
Round Table* (1862) and Sidney Lanier's *The Boy's King Arthur* (1880) do not feature
prominently in the analysis, as they are largely abridgements with some modernisation of
Malory's language and, when compared with subsequent adaptations, offer less insight into
the imagined child. We can note expurgations and omissions from Malory's text and
speculate as to the reasons behind them, but original additions to the *Morte* offer

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[32] Zambreno, 'Why Do Some Stories Keep Returning', 118-19. See also D. H. Green, *The
Beginnings of Medieval Romance: Fact and Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
2002), 178.
[33] Lynch, '*Le Morte Darthur* for Children', 2.

considerably richer material from which to infer the 'model' of childhood envisaged by the author.

Linda Hutcheon suggests that adaptation can be viewed from three distinct but interrelated perspectives: as a formal entity or product, often involving a shift of medium, genre, frame or context; as a process of creation and appropriation involving both (re)interpretation and (re)creation; as a form of intertextuality, with adaptations experienced as palimpsests through our memory of other works. This study uses the first perspective – changes made to the *Morte* in terms of genre, paratext and context – to infer assumptions underlying the recreation and appropriation of Malory's text, particularly in relation to the imagined child. It also explores the relationship between adaptations of the *Morte* and authors' memories of Malory's original, particularly in Chapters Four and Five. Hutcheon notes that adaptation study requires a theoretical perspective that is at once formal and 'experiential': the different media and genres used within a process of adaptation are not just formal entities, but represent different ways of engaging audiences.[34] This study contributes to work on adaptation by focussing this 'experiential' approach through the lens of the child. I investigate the formal aspects of adaptation, but am also interested in two different types of 'experience': the experience that the author offers to the implied child reader, and the author's own experience of Malory's text, frequently connected with childhood memory. In order to do this, I will examine three specific, and often interlinked, contributions by adapters to the original *Morte*. Certain chapters inevitably prioritise one or two of the following features, depending on their primary texts.

First, I explore the ways in which actual children are portrayed in these adaptations. These can be subdivided into the presentation of child characters, and references to the child reader. Exploiting the 'window of opportunity' that is the *Morte*'s lack of children, adaptations either invent new child characters at Arthur's court, such as Gilbert's Owen, or develop and expand the childhoods of existing characters, as in White's account of the young Lancelot and Orkney brothers. While Gilbert's hero-worshipping Owen is consistent with Victorian and Edwardian portrayals of malleable, receptive children learning from heroic role models, White's depiction of dysfunctional upbringings can be read in tandem

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[34] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), xiv.

with developments in child psychology during the early twentieth century and fears for the vulnerable child. Many adaptations refer to a generalised child reader in their prefaces or in narrative digressions, suggesting that their text has been produced with this child in mind. Gilbert notes in his preface that his version of the *Morte* conveys 'something which every boy can learn', constructing a childness that is both specifically male and implicitly receptive to didacticism.[35]

I also examine the paratexts of these adaptations: their prefaces, glosses, illustrations and – in the case of the educational adaptations of the early twentieth century – accompanying classroom exercises. The activities suggested by Dorothy Macardle in her 1917 adaptation exemplify the ways in which the Arthurian legend in the early twentieth century was co-opted to serve a liberal educational ideology. Prefaces can, of course, be read as 'manifestos' of authorial ideas about childhood and the role played by literature in the socialisation of children, but the actual text may contradict or complicate these: Steinbeck's preface announces that the text is written for his sons, but a close reading of *Acts* reveals it to be written largely for the author himself and his sister, as a 'wish-fulfilment' fantasy stemming from their childhood games.

Furthermore, I investigate the ways in which authors use Malory's *Morte* to foreground specific moral lessons for the child reader. This process may be overt, as in Howard Pyle's explicitly didactic asides to his reader, or more subtle, as with Alice Hadfield's reworking of the *Morte* to emphasise a spiritual rather than a martial brand of chivalry. The overarching moral narratives authors extrapolate from Malory's diverse text are perhaps the best indicators of their constructions of childness and the 'model' informing their work; on the other hand, the apparent collapse of a moral code in White's *Once and Future King* and Antonia Fraser's *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* is equally revelatory of changing attitudes towards the child, acknowledging the impossibility of generalised moral advice and standardised models of development.

Although this study is primarily concerned with texts produced by adults for a child audience, adult responses to these texts can be equally revelatory of conceptions of

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[35] Henry Gilbert, *King Arthur's Knights* (Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack, n.d., c.a. 1911)*,* vi.

childhood. In *Children's Literature: Criticism and the Fictional Child* (1994), Karin Lesnik-Oberstein suggests that children's literature criticism 'offers an ideal opportunity to study the operations of the systems of purpose' that shape cultural constructions of the child, as it 'bases its validity, its very existence, on a relationship between the author, or the book, and the child – a relationship which postulates, in many forms, the emotions, consciousness, and morality of the child'.[36] Phenomena such as the children's book list, a by-product of the surge in children's publishing and frequently produced by teachers or librarians, imply the criteria used to judge children's books and, by implication, wider assumptions about children, as do adult reviews of these texts. An early reviewer of Knowles's 1862 adaptation recommended it for boys owing to its 'healthfully active and energetic style', where 'adventure succeeds adventure'.[37] As I will demonstrate in Chapter Two, the presumption that boys love to read adventure stories is rooted in a more complex set of ideas and anxieties related to masculine development, the importance of self-restraint, and the management of risk in a burgeoning capitalist society. Adaptations of the *Morte* for children, and their critical reception, can be used to interrogate these assumptions about the child. What, specifically, could boys learn from the presentation of heroic deeds? Why were medieval texts deemed an important part of the growing English curriculum in the late nineteenth century? What does it mean to offer children a 'timeless classic' in a pedagogical context? Adult responses to these children's texts provide an illuminating insight into what Lesnik-Oberstein identifies as a 'need within Western society to capture, define, control, and release and protect the "child"', and the intricate interactions between these desires.[38]

III. 'Father of the man': locating the child

It is perhaps no coincidence that adaptation of the Arthurian legend for children commenced and developed during what both present-day scholars and writers of the early 1900s, reflecting on the preceding decades, term 'The Age of the Child'.[39] A writer in *The*

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[36] Lesnik-Oberstein, *Children's Literature*, 10.
[37] 'The Arthur Legends', *The Pall Mall Gazette* (London), 8 Feb 1869, 10.
[38] Lesnik-Oberstein, *Children's Literature*, 8.
[39] David Macleod titles his study into childhood in America between 1890-1920 *The Age of the Child* (New York: Twayne, 1998), while Douglas Mao qualifies the term 'Age of the Child', suggesting that the late nineteenth century saw 'The Age of the Child Studied', due to the

Youth's Companion in 1902 observed, '[this] age has many names, among others, The Age of the Child. Perhaps, looking back no farther than half a century, it is not strange if we feel that we have discovered the child'.[40] Although, as Judith Plotz notes, Romantic writers had established a 'cult of the child' in the eighteenth century, the nineteenth century saw these nascent ideas develop and flourish through detailed literary and scientific studies of childhood.[41] Various manifestations of the Victorian preoccupation with childhood have been explored at length, recently in the work of Sally Shuttleworth, James Kincaid and Marah Gubar.[42] At the heart of these studies is the contention that portrayals of the Victorian child served to crystallise a series of wider sociocultural debates and anxieties. In the figures of Oliver Twist and Jo the crossing-sweeper, Dickens embodied the distressing consequences of Victorian industrial expansion, the movements of the child serving to map the darkest contours of the miasmic, anonymous city. Gaskell's 'The Cry of the Children' used the child as a literal mouthpiece for rising class anxieties and philanthropic concerns for the poverty of the working classes. Attempts to delineate the essence of an idealised masculinity in an imperial age were dramatised in adventure novels for boys, where adolescents such as Jim Hawkins and their daring exploits in exotic landscapes established trajectories of masculine development. Anxieties over the decline of empire were realised in the figure of the malnourished, physically incompetent Boer War recruit, leading to a spate of reforms in the provision of medical care for children.

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increasing application of scientific enquiry to childhood development. See *Fateful Beauty: Aesthetic Environments, Juvenile Development, and Literature, 1860–1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 30.

[40] See 'Zuni Children', *Youth's Companion (1827-1929)*, 76.23 (5 Jun 1902), 290.

[41] In *Romanticism and the Vocation of Childhood* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), Plotz analyses the 'othering' of the child by male Romantic writers, who represented childhood as a separate sphere of being, characterised by its lack of social moorings and close connection with nature. They dedicated their profession to exploring, describing, circumscribing, worshipping and preserving this 'essential child' (xvi).

[42] In *The Mind of the Child: Child Development in Literature, Science, and Medicine, 1840-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), Shuttleworth traces the intersection between literary and scientific discourse as it attempted to conceptualise the psyche of the child during the Victorian period. James Kincaid, in *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), explores the relationship between Victorian conceptions of sex and childhood, suggesting that the 'othering' of the innocent child, distinct from sexuality, is a way of ignoring fragile and unstable traditional views of gender, family and authority. In *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), Marah Gubar cites the Victorian coining of the term 'cult of the child' as an example of the self-reflectiveness of nineteenth-century writers, who demonstrated acute critical self-consciousness about 'the whole problem of representing, writing for, looking at, interacting with, and adoring children' (10).

The figure of the child, Sally Shuttleworth suggests, 'lies at the heart of nineteenth-century discourses of gender, race, and selfhood'.[43] This study finds the child at the heart of a variety of other discourses, too, figuring in debates over educational policy and the English curriculum, the relationship between risk and masculinity, the implications of developmental psychology for mental health and the meaning of chivalry in a post-war age. Carolyn Steedman argues that, from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century, the figure of the child was used to represent human 'insideness': developing ideas about the self as they became increasingly located within the interior. Steedman notes the part played by Freudian psychoanalysis in 'summarising and reformulating nineteenth-century articulations of the idea that the core of an individual's psychic identity was his or her own lost past, or childhood'.[44] This study finds the child used to explore the connections between cultural history – the 'myth of origin' of King Arthur – and the adult self. The medieval period was frequently linked in literary histories with the 'childhood of the race'.[45] Returning to King Arthur, symbol of a 'lost past', and attempting to reformulate him for a child audience forced adult writers to explore the integrity of their adult selves and to consider their relationship with childhood in all its forms. As Pugh and Weisl argue, 'medievalisms invite us both to explore and to ignore history, to create a magical Middle Ages reflective of our unique desires, building our very selves through a relationship with history that is simultaneously the past and the magical past that we wish it might have been'.[46] The child is a particularly appropriate focal point for these concerns, existing at the nexus between past and present, memory and imagination, self and other. Lesnik-Oberstein observes that 'by defining and discussing the nature of children adults are expressing, formulating and projecting ideals and ideas about themselves and the not-themselves'. They are constantly negotiating connections between 'the adult and child without and the adult and child within', and thus children's literature – and its criticism – are inextricably bound up with theories 'not only of identity, but also of imagination, sympathy, empathy, and memory'.[47] The *Morte Darthur*, mediated through the unstable category of 'the child',

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[43] Shuttleworth, *Mind of the Child*, 4.
[44] Carolyn Steedman, *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780-1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 4.
[45] See Chapter One, p.62-63.
[46] Pugh and Weisl, *Medievalisms*, 10.
[47] Lesnik-Oberstein, *Children's Literature*, 25-26; 35.

becomes a means by which adults consider their relationship to tradition and heritage, their assimilation into normative social and sexual structures, and their psychological stability.

If the nineteenth century was the Age of the Child, it was also the beginning of the Age of Children's Literature, evolving in the final decades of the century to become what author Roger Lancelyn Green would later term a 'Golden Age'.[48] After a slow progression during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, during which children's literature was characterised by oppressive didacticism, pioneers such as publisher John Newbery demonstrated that children's texts, designed with both instruction *and* amusement in mind, could be a commercial success, and the early nineteenth century saw a surge in the popularity, availability and variety of writing for children. Bolstered by improvements in publishing and book distribution networks, a prosperous middle class with disposable income to spend on reading material, and increasing focus on the value of education and literacy, children's literature continued to flourish throughout the century and beyond, accompanied by a body of adult work devoted to reviewing the latest offerings. Children's literature from this period, J. S. Bratton suggests, conceives of the child both in terms of its present youth and its eventual transition to the adult world. If, as Wordsworth famously remarked, the 'Child is Father of the Man', then respectable adulthood depended on the provision of suitable books at a juvenile level.[49] Yet as 'father of the man', the child is both separate from and contiguous with adulthood: it must be provided for in ways that cater to its essential difference, yet with a view to inculcating values required upon its maturation. It is both exclusive in an evaluative sense, a specialist category with specialist requirements, and excluded, conceptually, from adulthood. As Bratton notes:

> For all of these children, books were being written throughout the century which were supposed to suit their level of literacy, their stations in life and their expectations of the future, and to reflect their present experience so as to mould through their response to it their moral and social attitudes.[50]

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[48] See Roger Lancelyn Green, 'The Golden Age of Children's Books', *Essays and Studies* 15 (1962): 59–73.

[49] William Wordsworth, 'My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold', in *The Major Works*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 246.

[50] J. S. Bratton, *The Impact of Victorian Children's Fiction* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 13.

Children's literature was thus concerned both with addressing children in ways that appealed to their current status and would also socialise them into acceptable forms of behaviour as preparation for adult life. Consequently, nineteenth-century children's literature and its attendant moralities were inextricably bound up with concerns over class and gender positions, as studies by Bratton, Claudia Nelson and Kimberly Reynolds have demonstrated.[51]

Recent theoretical studies of children's literature, such as those by John Stephens (1992), Karin Lesnik-Oberstein (1994) Jack Zipes (2002) and Perry Nodelman (2008) share with the historicist analyses of Bratton, Reynolds and Nelson a tendency to locate the unique qualities of children's literature in its socialising motive, its construction of both a 'present' child, the reader, and a 'future' child, the socialised adult guided and formed by the ideologies of the text.[52] The concept of a constructed child reader was first proposed by Jacqueline Rose, who based *The Case of Peter Pan* (1984) on the premise that 'there is no child behind the category "children's fiction", other than the one which the category itself sets in place, the one which it needs to believe is there for its own purposes'.[53] In many respects, Rose sets out to prove what White's Merlin observed over four decades previously: that adults need to believe in the category of 'the child' to alleviate a range of anxieties relating to their own social and sexual development, to reassure themselves that

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[51] Bratton analyses the didacticism of educational texts for children and the gendered, class-based ideologies transmitted by such texts. Claudia Nelson, in *Boys Will Be Girls: The Feminine Ethic and British Children's Fiction, 1857-1917* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), examines popular boys' genres such as the school and adventure story to chart the representation of ideal masculinity from an androgynous, passive and introspective model to one characterised by physical rather than spiritual manliness. Kimberly Reynolds, in *Girls Only? Gender and Popular Children's Fiction in Britain, 1880-1910* (New York: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1990) explores the operation of sensationalism and didacticism in the 'high' and 'low' fiction of the period, and the ways in which these texts responded to changing gender ideals and the developing concept of adolescence.

[52] See John Stephens, *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction* (London: Longman, 1992), Karin Lesnik-Oberstein, *Children's Literature: Criticism and the Fictional Child* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), Jack Zipes, *Sticks and Stones: The Troublesome Success of Children's Literature from Slovenly Peter to Harry Potter* (New York: Routledge, 2002), and Perry Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008).

[53] Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan, or, the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 10.

there exists a 'pure point of origin in relation to language, sexuality and the state'.[54]
Narrative in children's literature, Rose suggests, 'secures the identification of the child with
something to which it does not necessarily belong […] without the child being given the
chance to notice, let alone question, the smoothness and ease of that process'.[55] According
to Rose, 'pretending that children are childish' – to use Merlin's words – is the defining
practice of children's literature, which invents and constructs the concept of 'childishness'
in order to alleviate its own 'degradations', as Merlin termed them. Lesnik-Oberstein
argues that the child 'is a construction, constructed and described in different, often
clashing, terms. Furthermore, these constructions are the production of systems of purpose,
fuelled by need'. She identifies a similar need among adults to ascribe to children, make
them 'carriers' for, 'a load of emotional and moral meanings'.[56] Although this paradigm has
been subject to critical scrutiny, Rose's concept of the constructed child reader is an
important starting point for examining the relationship between literature for children and
cultural understandings of childhood.[57]

Building on Rose's work, Peter Hollindale coined the term 'childness' to explore
the ways in which children's literature operates as a vehicle for adult ideologies regarding
childhood and the socialisation of children.[58] In *Signs of Childness in Children's Books*
(1997), Hollindale refers to a 'childness which includes both an implied sense of the natural
and an implied sense of the ethical: an implied psychology and philosophy of childhood'.[59]
My study employs this twin notion of the natural and the ethical, suggesting that children's
texts demonstrate two interlinked ideological assumptions: what children supposedly *are*
(the natural) and how they *should* be (the ethical). The dual childness of these Arthurian

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[54] James Kincaid, in *Child-Loving*, explores further the notion that adults construct childhood to
alleviate anxieties about sexuality and the 'erotic' child.

[55] Rose, *Peter Pan*, 63.

[56] Lesnik-Oberstein, *Children's Literature*, 9-10.

[57] Marah Gubar has critiqued Rose's 'highly charged rhetoric', suggesting that her invocation of a
'colonisation paradigm', whereby adults use children's literature to socialise and indoctrinate
children, itself contributes to the 'othering' of children. See Gubar, *Artful Dodgers*, 31.

[58] Peter Hollindale, *Signs of Childness in Children's Books* (Stroud: Thimble Press, 1997), 47. I
have adopted Hollindale's term 'childness', subsequently used by Lynch, to denote the
amalgamated characteristics of the implied child reader as constructed by children's texts. This term
is chosen because it is free from the pejorative connotations of 'childishness', and because my study
shares Hollindale's fundamental assumption that 'childness is the distinguishing property of a text
in children's literature, setting it apart from other literature as a genre'.

[59] Hollindale, *Signs of Childness*, 53.

adaptations is frequently gendered, and is also often inflected by class. Hollindale perceives children's literature as an *event* that occurs when two variables co-exist: an author 'with imaginative interests in constructing childhood' and a reader, 'a child who is still in the business of constructing his or her own childhood, and aware of its presentness'. He suggests that a 'compound of cultural and personal attitudes is articulated in a text of children's literature, and the *event* of children's literature lies in the chemistry of a child's encounter with it'.[60] My study is largely interested in the former, rather than the 'chemistry' that occurs during the individual interaction between child and text. Departing somewhat from the work of Hollindale, Bratton and other children's literary theorists such as John Stephens and Peter Hunt, I do not focus on the actual experience of the child reader or the ways in which he or she may construct their own childhood. My study is less concerned with the actual children who read these texts than with the adults who produced them, and what constructions of childness reveal about those authors, their sense of self, and the cultural climate in which they worked.

However, there is one area in which the actual child is of interest. Bratton asks of the educational children's texts she examines, 'How and how far did they work? Did the anxiously studied, painstakingly directed child whose moral education was the objective of this elaborate enterprise respond in the way he was intended to?'[61] The time span of this study includes writers who read children's versions of the *Morte* in their youth then grew up to adapt the *Morte* for children themselves: John Steinbeck first read Malory's *Morte* aged nine, and prefaced his adaptation by noting its emotional importance for his child self and his desire to offer the same experience to his own children. Although we cannot fully ascertain whether Steinbeck responded to the *Morte* as 'he was intended to', his adaptation demonstrates a unique brand of childness coloured by this interplay between past and present evaluations of the text. Lynch claims that 'cultural consciousness of *Le Morte Darthur* has become richly invested with adult "childness", what we remember and imagine about childhood' because young readers of Malory's tales 'delighted as grown-ups in telling them again to children'. The childness of these texts is inflected by the authors' memories of their *own* responses to the *Morte* – either the original or its adapted forms – as

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[60] Hollindale, *Signs of Childness*, 49.
[61] Bratton, *Impact*, 21.

children, and subsequent adaptations are fruitful material for examining the 'experiential' aspect of adaptation. As Lesnik-Oberstein argues, 'looking through the eye of the child' also implies 'looking through the "I" of the child', and children's literature can be read as a means of expressing 'what is considered, hoped, or feared to be the "non-adult" still in the adult […] in other words, as a means of maintaining a pathway of contact and communication between the adult and the child without, and/or between the adult and the child within'.[62] These Arthurian adaptations constitute 'private places of memory where adult writers and readers ponder the structures of their development and connect their lives', where King Arthur, via the child, is used to explore the relationship between self, history and memory.[63]

Hutcheon notes that, within adaptation, 'there is a kind of dialogue between the society in which the works, both the adapted text and adaptation, are produced and that in which they are received, and both are in dialogue with the works themselves'.[64] This study explores authors' dialogues with Malory on a cultural and personal level. A reception study of the *Morte Darthur* and an exploration of medievalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it investigates how King Arthur became implicated in dialogues about nationalism, heritage, education, risk, self-improvement, masculinity, scholarship and psychology. At the heart of this appropriation lies the protean figure of the child, and the dialogues between adults, children, and memories of childhood. 'Why do people not think, when they are grown up, as I do when I am young?' the young Arthur asks Merlin in White's *The Sword in the Stone*. 'Oh dear,' Merlin replies. 'You are making me feel confused. Suppose you wait till you are grown up and know the reason?', to which Arthur remarks indignantly, 'I don't think that is an answer at all'.[65] This study examines both the methods of, and the contexts for, constructions of childness within children's Arthuriana. It will try, like Arthur, to get to the heart of the often 'confused' representations of children and childhood in these texts, to explore the ways in which adults 'pretend children are childish', and to trace how this childness is constituted in relation to changing understandings of children and the socialising function of children's literature. Ultimately,

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[62] Lesnik-Oberstein, *Children's Literature*, 26-27.
[63] Lynch, '*Le Morte Darthur* for Children', 4.
[64] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 149.
[65] White, *Once and Future King*, 192.

it aims to avoid the trap of 'being stupid about children' by interrogating the adult assumptions that inflect literature produced for the young, and to give, unlike White's Merlin, considered answers to questions about the children of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Heritage and humanity: King Arthur in the classroom

In 1880, J. T. Knowles released a new version of his 1862 children's *Morte Darthur*. Now titled *The Legends of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table,* this book, 'slightly modified in form', was accompanied by a preface in which Knowles declared his intention to offer Malory's *Morte* 'to a larger public than that of boys only'. Following the success of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King,* 'an outline of the noble story has almost become a necessary item of general information', Knowles observed. He intended his book to fill this gap, to become 'the introductory popular reading book on King Arthur – the Primer of the subject', presumably for both an adult and a child audience. Malory's original was not suited 'in form or cost', but an accessible version of the legend was necessary, Knowles claimed, 'lest any part neglected should fall to baser meanings in unworthier hands'. Knowles here exemplifies the tendency for adapters to manipulate Malory's text according to specific moral principles. He construes the Arthurian revival as a sign of 'increasing protest […] against the low and selfish side of a too commercial life' and a revolt against 'mean materialism'. The regeneration of Arthur, Knowles predicts, will put 'down the pandering cry of Art for Art's sake', replacing it with 'Art for Man's sake', and bring Arthur back 'to be a true King and Power among men'.[1] Knowles's preface reads as a vision of things to come in children's Arthuriana. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed a flourishing of Malory adaptations for children, many of which were designed for school use, apparently also capitalising upon this perceived need to provide 'the Primer of the subject'. These versions, like Knowles's, invoke notions of humanity and moral value, endorsing the ability of literature to improve mankind and positing Arthur as an exemplar for the cultivation of character. Knowles dedicated his book to Tennyson, praising the poet's *Idylls* for inspiring the notion of 'the King within us'.[2] These children's versions, too, deploy the notion of the 'king within us' to position the *Morte* as ethically educative for their audience of schoolchildren, and to highlight the continuity between Arthur and contemporaneous ideals of national character.

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[1] J. T. Knowles, *The Legends of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1880), vii-x.
[2] Knowles, *Legends,* x.

In 1917, Irish novelist and playwright Dorothy Macardle published *Selections from Le Morte D'Arthur of Sir Thomas Malory*, part of Macmillan's *English Literature Series for Secondary Schools*. Designed to make Malory's tale 'the theme of a term's work in oral and written composition, recitation, play-making and acting', Macardle's adaptation is accompanied by ten pages of classroom exercises and questions, along with notes and a glossary.[3] 'What ought Agravaine to have done, supposing that he really believed Sir Launcelot to be a traitor?', the child reader must decide. 'What qualities has King Arthur shown all through this trouble?', they are encouraged to contemplate. 'Was it,' they must consider, 'wise and fitting in Launcelot to bring the queen in such a state to King Arthur?' Such questions have in common the invitation to pass judgement upon the world of Malory's text, encouraging the child to consider the *Morte Darthur* not only as medieval narrative, but as a series of dramatised moral predicaments focussed around issues of justice, propriety and leadership.

Macardle's suggested classroom exercises can be divided into six categories in terms of the tasks and skills required from students. First, there are basic questions to test comprehension of the plot, for example, 'Why did Sir Kay treat Beaumains so scornfully?' Second, we find exercises to assess knowledge of Malory's language; these often involve rewriting certain sentences from Malory's prose in modern English. Third, students are given note-taking or essay-writing exercises on concepts relating to the text, such as knighthood or swordsmanship. Fourth, creative writing tasks based on selected episodes from the tale ('Tell the story of the rescue of Sir Kay as he told it to the king') and fifth, 'performative' exercises: learning certain passages from the *Morte* or Tennyson's *Idylls* by heart, or arranging 'tableaux' of the coming of Galahad or the drawing of the sword from the stone. Finally, there are those exercises mentioned above, which test more than just rudimentary knowledge of Malory's plot. These prompt interpretation of events and characters, cultivating ethical judgement. They encourage the reader to take a psychological realist approach to Malory's text, to consider its characters' mental makeup, speculate regarding their motivations, and analyse the ethical repercussions and implications of certain acts. They bear the marks of a nineteenth-century literary movement towards

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[3] Dorothy Macardle, *Selections from Le Morte D'Arthur of Sir Thomas Malory* (London: Macmillan, 1917), xii.

realism and psychological complexity, but remain grounded in the frameworks of the classroom, requiring the reader to extrapolate evidence from the text to support their argument.

Macardle acknowledges in her preface that 'many liberties have […] been taken' with the material, and her 88-page adaptation heavily truncates Malory's text, condensing whole books – those of Lancelot, Gareth and the Grail Quest – into five or six pages, and omitting the Book of Sir Tristram entirely. More interesting and revealing than her omissions, however, is the pedagogical material annexed to her edition: extensive notes on terms and concepts from the text ('the French book', jousts and tournaments, 'recreant' knights, Joseph of Arimathea and Excalibur), classroom exercises, further reading suggestions (the original *Morte,* Tennyson's poetry, the *Mabinogion* and other introductions to the history of the Arthurian romance) and a glossary of medieval terms. This material is designed not just to enable enhanced comprehension of the basics of Malory's text – its language, historical context and plot – but to encourage a 'living' appreciation of the *Morte* that identifies its themes as still relevant to contemporary readers.

The phrasing of these questions – not '*what do you think* Agravaine ought to have done?', but simply, 'What ought Agravaine to have done?' – implies the readers of Macardle's text are part of a community with shared ethical values, and credits them with the ability to supply the approved answer to this conundrum. Readers are encouraged to immerse themselves in the Arthurian world, to place themselves within the dilemmas faced by Malory's knights and to consider the moral questions that Macardle suggests are at the heart of these predicaments. She foregrounds this immersive tactic in her preface, claiming that, when reading Malory's *Morte,* 'the story-world becomes almost more real to us than the world we know', that Knowles's 'King within us' can be accessed by the child reader through the consideration and re-enactment of knightly scenarios.[4] These exercises all imply the timelessness of the Malorian situation, that thorny moral questions from the fifteenth century can be correctly navigated using the moral compass of the present day. By answering these questions, the reader is encouraged to work (with the help of the teacher) towards a series of implicitly universal answers to questions that focus liberal, middle-class

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[4] Macardle, *Selections,* xi-xii.

ideals of leadership, self-government and justice and promote the development of character through association with knightly heroes.

Macardle's *Selections from Le Morte d'Arthur* is one of a cluster of Arthurian adaptations that emerged in the early twentieth century designed or recommended for use in elementary and secondary schools. These adaptations were frequently produced by close networks of university academics, school teachers, editors and publishers. Macardle's text was part of a series edited by John Henry Fowler, a schoolteacher at Clifton College, Bristol, who was involved in an annual English Teachers' conference alongside Macardle and served on a 1919 government Departmental Committee on English Studies.[5] Leeds headmaster Alfonzo Gardiner adapted several canonical texts for children as part of the 'Bright Story Readers' series, including the *Morte* in 1908.[6] Writing in the 1880s for *John Heywood's Complete Series of Home Lesson Books*, Gardiner suggested an assignment for students of English aged twelve to thirteen: 'to recite 150 lines from Shakespeare or Milton, or some other standard author'.[7] By the later decades of the nineteenth century, a pedagogical canon had become established in secondary and elementary schools through the efforts of teachers, publishers and academics, to the extent that some authors were indeed 'standard' inclusions. Malory is one example. J. T. Knowles had situated Malory within the growing enterprise of children's literature in 1862, and several adaptations had emerged in the following decades that reinforced the suitability of the *Morte* for child readers. Charles Henry Hanson's *Stories of the Days of King Arthur* (1882) claimed to be 'the most complete epitome of the Arthurian legends that has yet been prepared of the use of young readers', while Margaret Vere Farrington's 1899 version remarked that Malory's

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[5] For an account of the conference, see 'News and Notes,' *English Journal*, 5.10 (Dec 1916): 708-14.

[6] Alfonzo Gardiner, *King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, by Sir Thomas Malory* (Leeds: E. J. Arnold & Son, 1908). Gardiner was also twice president of his local branch of the National Union of Teachers and published books on the welfare of the teaching profession. See Gardiner's obituary in Freemasons Lodge, *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum: Being the Transactions of the Lodge Quatuor Coronati, London*, vol. 24, 1895 (London: Forgotten Books, 2013), 298-9. Accessed 26 Oct 2015: http://www.forgottenbooks.com/readbook_text/Ars_Quatuor_Coronatorum_v24_1000057527/435.

[7] Alfonzo Gardiner, *John Heywood's Complete Series of Home Lesson Books: Book VII for Standard VII* (London: John Heywood, 1884), n.p.

text 'is ever fresh and fascinating to the boy and girl of today'.[8] The specifically pedagogical adaptations produced during the early twentieth century capitalised upon this established link between the *Morte Darthur* and child readers, suggesting ways in which this perceived affinity between children and the Arthurian legend could be formalised within the classroom to serve educational and ideological agendas.

Author and teacher Robert Shelton Bate, in *The Teaching of English Literature in Secondary Schools* (1913), offered a specimen course of lessons based around the *Morte Darthur*, commenting tellingly, 'let us assume a general knowledge of the Arthurian legend […] we may in any case take for granted that [the pupils] have read the *Idylls of the King* wholly or in part; and that their work has included the bulk of Malory's text in some judicious selection'.[9] Bate refers here to the huge number of cheap, accessible 'readers' or 'primers' for school children published in the 1880s in the UK and US, designed to encourage appreciation of 'classic' texts at elementary and secondary school level. Such was their proliferation that a reviewer in 1895 commented, 'Innumerable are the annotated editions of our classic writers produced year by year for school use'.[10] *The Romance Readers*, a series published by Horace Marshall (1902-05), aimed to 'provide children in all grades of school with simple reading-books, which are also an introduction to the great literature of the world'.[11] The assumption that Malory was part of this 'great literature' is evident through his inclusion in this and many similar series. We also find evidence of his assimilation into school examinations.[12] In 1907, Bate published *Stories of King Arthur*, part of the 'English Texts for Secondary Schools' series which adapted texts 'to suit the

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[8] See Charles Henry Hanson, *Stories of the Days of King Arthur* (Edinburgh: Nelson & Sons, 1882), n.p., and Margaret Vere Farrington, *Tales of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table* (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899), 13.

[9] R. S. Bate, *The Teaching of English Literature in Secondary Schools* (London: G Bell & Sons, 1913), 59-60. Although this chapter will concentrate solely on adaptations of Malory's *Morte*, it is important to note the role of Tennyson's *Idylls* in furthering the popularity of the Arthurian legends in the nineteenth century; many school versions of the *Morte* during this period also include references to, or excerpts from, the *Idylls*.

[10] '"Higher English", A Text-Book for Secondary Schools', *Saturday Review*, 8 Sep 1895, 292-93.

[11] *The Romance Readers*, 6 vols. (London: Horace Marshall, 1902-05). The aim of the series was announced in the preface to each volume.

[12] For example: J. M. Dent's 'King's Treasuries of Literature' and 'Temple Classics'; W. T. Stead's 'Books for the Bairns', and George Bell & Sons' 'English Texts for Secondary Schools'. An 1894 boys' certificate paper (for pupils aged 10-13) required students to compare Malory's 'Tale of Sir Gareth' with Tennyson's 'Gareth and Lynette'. See George Beach, 'Our 1894 Certificate Class', *Practical Teacher*, 14.10 (1894): 543-55.

four years' course in English suggested by the Board of Education', the first official manifestation of an English Studies curriculum in English schools. Malory's *Morte* is recommended for its second year, and Bate, like Macardle, provides sufficient material for a term's work.[13]

This chapter examines why, during this period, Malory was appropriated so enthusiastically for use in education. Pedagogical adaptations of the *Morte Darthur* manifest the nineteenth- and twentieth-century assumption that Malory's text was particularly suitable for child readers. Their additions to, and selections from, the original Arthurian material elucidate the specific values that were deemed important for child education during this period, and their provenance can shed light on both the communities instrumental in promulgating these values, and the conditions under which they were regarded as significant. They provide a fascinating case study of the ways in which the professionalisation of teaching and the institutionalisation of English Studies during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries intersected with the production of literature for, and contemporary perceptions of, children. Furthermore, they demonstrate how the values central to these movements were realised in the practical apparatus of the classroom.[14] It is significant that a prefatory note to Bate's secondary school edition of the *Morte* points out that the texts in the series 'are treated as literature, not as vehicles for grammatical or philological instruction'.[15] Treating Malory as 'literature' in these adaptations meant using him to promote education based not upon hard facts or formulaic rote learning, but upon cultivation of character, ethical awareness and a sense of national identity. These adaptations deploy children's literature as a crucible for debates relating to literature, education and nation, which united influential groups of educators, policy-makers and scholars through their common desire to establish a literary canon that reflected dominant definitions of culture and 'Englishness'.[16]

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[13] Robert Shelton Bate, *Stories of King Arthur* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1907).

[14] I will refer throughout this chapter to 'English Studies', although the discipline was (and is) often referred to as 'English Literature' or 'English'. 'English literature' will refer to an actual body of texts, rather than the academic discipline of literary study.

[15] Bate, *Stories of King Arthur,* n.p.

[16] Due to space constraints, this chapter will focus on British adaptations. For a comprehensive overview of Arthurian pedagogical adaptation in the US, see Velma Bourgeois Richmond, *Chivalric Stories as Children's Literature: Edwardian Retellings in Words and Pictures* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2014).

In *The Making of Middle English* (1999), David Matthews emphasises the importance of medieval literature in the establishment of English Studies, and accounts by Stephanie Barczewski and Chris Baldick have also explored the links between Victorian medievalism and the discipline.[17] Work on Chaucer and Old Norse texts for children has illuminated the complex interplay between medievalism, English Studies and school education: Matthews explores the way in which Chaucer was 'infantilized' in adaptations for children as part of a desire to 'reproduce the poet as an agent of ethical self-shaping', while Velma Bourgeois Richmond has demonstrated how the popularisation of Chaucer helped to build a foundation for the growth of English Studies. Andrew Wawn briefly surveys children's versions of Old Norse texts in *The Vikings and the Victorians* (2000), although his study is primarily concerned with adult scholarship and literature.[18] In-depth study of Malory for schoolchildren, however, is lacking. Specific examination of his role in the rise of English Studies can illustrate how pedagogical adaptations concentrated the values deemed central to the emerging discipline and revealed the imagined child, or children, behind educational and curriculum reform. Although there are many similarities between classroom adaptations of Chaucer, Old Norse texts and the *Morte Darthur* from this period, I will suggest that the *Morte* proved particularly suitable for incorporation into nationalist and humanist educational agendas owing to its nature as 'myth of origin' and to recent scholarship that had established Malory as English. These circumstances enabled children's authors to circumvent problematic issues of national identity and linguistic complexity through their focus on the implicitly timeless and universal 'truths' presented by the tale of Arthur and his knights.

I. 'Keeping Arthur for ourselves': the *Morte* as national inheritance

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[17] See David Matthews, *The Making of Middle English, 1765-1910* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), Stephanie L. Barczewski, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth Century Britain: The Legends of King Arthur and Robin Hood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), and Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism, 1848-1932* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

[18] See David Matthews, 'Infantilizing the Father: Chaucer Translations and Moral Regulation', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 22 (2000): 93-114 (103), Velma Bourgeois Richmond, *Chaucer as Children's Literature: Retellings from the Victorian and Edwardian Eras* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004) and Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000).

In 1889, German academic Heinrich Oskar Sommer published his scholarly edition of Caxton's *Morte Darthur* to widespread critical acclaim.[19] In his preface, Sommer remarked that 'Malory must always be counted as an English classic. I shall be satisfied if what I have done be considered not unworthy his merits and his position in English literature'.[20] Despite Sommer's implicit assumption that Malory's status is objective and uncontested, the 'position' of the *Morte Darthur* was the subject of debate among scholars throughout the late nineteenth century. W. E. Mead noted in 1897 that 'Malory shows no sign of decaying popularity […] Exactly what is its relative rank among the great books of English prose, we need not be greatly concerned to know'.[21] Yet Malory's 'relative rank' *was* an issue that preoccupied critics and academics. Edward Russell, essayist and editor of the *Liverpool Post,* noted the 'profound difficulty which I feel in reasonably making out the place of the Book of King Arthur in literary development'.[22] The question was not settled by the literary histories of the period, which played an important role in the formation and propagation of the canon. These manuals, usually penned by literary scholars for an academic adult audience, proposed to offer a comprehensive view of literary history and the seminal texts constituting 'English literature'. George Lillie Craik's six-volume *Compendious History of English Literature* was published in 1861; the revised 1866 version included an excerpt from Malory's death of Lancelot episode. In 1912, George Saintsbury's *A Short History of English Literature* claimed that Malory 'has added to literature an imperishable book', and the following year, William Henry Hudson produced *An Outline History of English Literature,* asserting, 'the *Morte Darthur* holds a high place in literary history'.[23] However, Maude Gillette Phillip's *Popular Manual of English Literature* (1895) declared 'no original prose work of any literary value was produced in England during the long interval between the reigns of Edward III and Henry VIII'.[24]

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[19] Arthurian scholar and editor Ernest Rhys praised Sommer's 'monumental edition' and 'scholarly accomplishment'. See Ernest Rhys, *The Noble and Joyous History of King Arthur* (London: Walter Scott, 1892) vii.

[20] H. Oskar Sommer (ed.), *Le Morte Darthur, by Syr Thomas Malory,* vol. 3 (London: David Nutt, 1891), 294.

[21] W. E. Mead, *Selections from Sir Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur* (Boston: Ginn, 1897), lxii.

[22] Edward R. Russell, *The Book of King Arthur* (Liverpool: D. Marples, 1889).

[23] George Saintsbury, *A Short History of English Literature* (New York: Macmillan, 1912), 197; William Henry Hudson, *An Outline History of English Literature* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1913), 41.

[24] Maude Gillette Phillips, *A Popular Manual of English Literature* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1895), 85.

Similarly, English professor Henry Morley's *A First Sketch of English Literature* (1883) claimed that the fifteenth century 'added to our literature not one masterpiece'.[25]

Although contested within the literary canon, it would seem that Malory's position in the Victorian classroom was more secure. In 1891, historian, folklorist and essayist Andrew Lang commented in his preface to Sommer's edition, 'in England, Malory's "Morte" is a favourite in most school-rooms'.[26] That same year, Edward Strachey, in an introduction to his reprinted edition of the *Morte*, remarked that 'only […] the offspring of genius, could have so held, and be still holding its ground, age after age. It may be said that it is chiefly with boys, and with men who have formed the taste by their boyish reading, that the book is so popular'.[27] John W. Hales termed it 'the favourite hand-book of all students' in 1893.[28] These writers had all attended relatively elite, fee-paying schools, where Malory may indeed have held a strong position in the classroom.[29] Furthermore, they all refer to the original *Morte*, rather than specialist children's versions. However, this chapter is interested in the ways in which the *Morte* was repackaged for the classrooms of British state elementary and secondary schools, and the endeavours of writers and publishers to render Malory's text accessible to readers from the middle classes within these environments. It was these schools that were most affected by curriculum reforms and campaigns for the establishment of English Studies during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[30] In his influential collection, *Essays on a Liberal Education* (1867),

[25] Henry Morley, *A First Sketch of English Literature* (London: Cassell, 1883), 170.
[26] Preface to Sommer (ed.), *Le Morte Darthur*, vol. 3, xx.
[27] Edward Strachey (ed.), *Le Morte Darthur* (London: Macmillan, 1891), xx.
[28] See Hales's introduction to the selections from Malory's *Morte* in Henry Craik's *English Prose Selections* (London: Macmillan, 1893), 61.
[29] See William Donaldson, 'Lang, Andrew (1844–1912)' and William Hunt, 'Strachey, Sir Edward, third baronet (1812-1901)', rev. R. S. Simpson, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn. Sept 2010), accessed 17 Nov 2015: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34396. Hales attended Louth and Durham Grammar schools; see John Venn and J. A. Venn (eds), *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, vol. 2 part 3 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 194-95.
[30] Following anxieties that England and Wales were lagging behind Europe and the US in their educational provision, in part due to the damaging effects of the Revised Code implemented by Robert Lowe in 1862, the Balfour Act of 1902 positioned the government as a major policy-making body in education through the establishment of Local Education Authorities (LEAs). This liberalised the outlook of elementary and secondary schools and promoted curriculum innovation among teachers. LEAs were empowered to support teacher training colleges, responding to the increasing professionalisation of teaching in the later nineteenth century. See David Wardle, *English Popular Education, 1780-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 68-72 and

John W. Hales suggested that English should be made 'the prominent linguistic and literary study' within 'schools whose pupils are not destined to proceed from there to a University, or to a life of studious leisure and opportunity'.[31] Although the nomenclature of Britain's schools during this period was highly confusing, comprising several variations of elementary and secondary school depending on pupil abilities and availability of scholarships, we can generally view these Arthurian adaptations as intended for state-funded school pupils, predominantly from the middle classes, most of whom would not have expected to attend university. Although some of these adapters express a wish that they may inspire students to seek out Malory's original text, they are largely concerned with extracting what they deem the salient points of Malory's narrative for the acculturation of the professional classes.[32]

In 1910, Birmingham teacher, school inspector and children's writer Clara Thomson published a pamphlet, 'Our Inheritance', a short chronological survey of the 'classic' texts presented to children individually in her many schoolbooks: *Beowulf*, Chaucer's poetry, the *Morte*, the *Faerie Queene* and numerous fairy tales, myths and Old Norse texts. It culminated in a challenge to its young readers: 'We have tried in a little space to tell you of some of its glories. The inheritance is yours. Will you not enter in and possess it?'[33] This conception of literature as 'inheritance' played an important role in the establishment of English Studies, and is reflected in the prefatory material of many school editions of the *Morte*, which emphasise the text's heritage value, implicating the child reader in 'ownership' of the legend and the implicit pride that such an association carries. Dorothy Macardle, in her preface, remarks that 'old English, Welsh, and French books are full of fables of the King, so numerous and so various that we scarcely know what to make of them or what idea of Arthur to keep for ourselves'.[34] The inclusive 'ourselves' renders the child reader complicit in this possession of the Arthurian tale, suggesting that familiarity

Christopher Robert Bischof, '"A Home for Poets": The Liberal Curriculum in Victorian Britain's Teachers' Training Colleges', *History of Education Quarterly*, 54.1 (Feb 2014): 42-69.

[31] John W. Hales, *Essays on a Liberal Education* (London: Macmillan, 1867), 310.

[32] Hales, in his preface to Mary Macleod's adaptation, hopes that the text 'may be of service in introducing young students to one of the masterpieces of medieval literature, and in exciting in them a desire to know it fully and directly'. See Mary Macleod, *The Book of King Arthur and his Noble Knights: Stories from Sir Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur*, 8th edn. (London: Wells Gardner, Darton & Co., 1946), vii.

[33] Clara L. Thomson, 'Our Inheritance' (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), 39.

[34] Macardle, *Selections*, vii.

with the story grants them access to a privileged group, the English. Macardle's comment echoes Jessie Weston's introduction to her 1899 *King Arthur and his Knights: A Survey of Arthurian Romance,* also designed for school use, in which she referred to the Arthurian story as 'a legend which we have every right to claim as national'.[35]

These texts acknowledge the complicated lineage of King Arthur and his associated legends, but underlying anxieties arising from competing claims for Arthur are superseded by a focus on Malory's Middle English version of the story, and the link between his text and the English language. Remarking, 'we know that early in the sixth century a British chieftain called Arthur fought a great battle against the invading Saxons and defeated them at Badon Hill', Macardle traces the story's development through Nennius, Geoffrey of Monmouth, metrical romances and 'great French books', glossing over the problem of Arthur's lineage by focusing instead on Malory's literary representation of the story and the unequivocal 'Englishness' of his particular text.[36] Describing the Wars of the Roses – recent scholarship had established Malory's role in the conflict – as a time when 'the language was in a tangled, shifting phase', Macardle establishes historical continuity between that period and the present: 'It was the birth of our modern speech; the beginning of the fine, rich English we speak to-day'.[37] These school versions circumvent the complicated origins of both the legend and the king himself, focusing instead on the interrelated national and linguistic significance of Malory's Middle English narrative. In this way, they demonstrate awareness of contemporaneous academic debates regarding the position and value of Malory's text. Stephanie Barczewski notes the cultural importance of Sommer's 1889 scholarly edition of the *Morte*, which identified Malory as an Englishman and recognised his originality as an author, thereby supplanting previous conceptions of the unknown 'knyghte' as a mere compiler of French and German chivalric source material.[38] By removing the obstacles that had hindered Malory's acceptance into the English canon, Sommer paved the way for a range of scholarly and pedagogical adaptations of the *Morte*

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[35] Jessie L. Weston, *King Arthur and his Knights: A Survey of Arthurian Romance* (London: David Nutt, 1899), 3.
[36] Macardle, *Selections,* vii-ix.
[37] Macardle, *Selections,* ix.
[38] See Barczewski, *Myth and National Identity,* 116-17. A study by Harvard professor George Lyman Kittredge in 1897 provided evidence to link Thomas Malory with a knight from Newbold Revel in Warwickshire, supporting Sommer's hypothesis.

that foregrounded the national and cultural significance of the text. The contested lineage of Arthur – as Macardle notes, old English, Welsh and French books all claim him for their own – could be bypassed as focus shifted to the 'Englishness' of Malory and his particular version of the story.

These adaptations have much in common with other early twentieth-century pedagogical adaptations, including those of other medieval texts. H. Malim's school version of the saga *Burnt Njal* was published in 1917, the same year as Macardle's Malory adaptation, and shared the same publisher (Macmillan). It included an appendix of very similar essay questions: 'Tell the story of Hallgerda's Theft'; 'Compare the characters of Njal and Gunnar'.[39] Clara Thomson's *A First Book in English Literature* (1903) featured suggested essay topics, asking students to consider the life and character of Geoffrey Chaucer, his religious opinions, and the historical context of his work. These texts were also products of close relationships between academia and children's writers.[40] Adaptations of Old Norse and Chaucerian texts for children similarly stress (and simplify) the historical and heritage value of the text: Allen French's 1905 *Heroes of Iceland*, designed for young readers, emphasised the role of the Old Norse hero in shaping contemporary national character: 'Because he was what he was, we are today, in part, what we are'.[41] These adaptations of the *Morte* are part of a wider genre of pedagogical adaptation from this period that simplified the complexities of literary and national history to focus instead on the ethical lessons offered by 'timeless' literature, particularly heroic stories, encouraging the reader to consider diverse moral scenarios and weigh their own response to them. Examining how they appropriate the *Morte*, a text with multinational historical and literary origins, reveals how the child in the classroom served as a focal point for adult explorations of the literary, ethical and patriotic value of King Arthur during this period.

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[39] H. Malim, *Njal and Gunnar: A Tale of Old Iceland* (London: Macmillan, 1917), 122-23.
[40] Beatrice Clay, who also produced a version of the *Morte* for children in 1913, worked on children's versions of the Icelandic sagas, frequently consulting her former tutor Eirikur Magnusson, Icelandic scholar and librarian at the University of Cambridge. See Wawn, *Vikings and the Victorians*, 365-67.
[41] Allen French, *Heroes of Iceland, Adapted from Dasent's Translation of the Story of Burnt Njal, The Great Icelandic Saga* (London: David Nutt, 1905), xxi.

Brian Doyle notes that it was the 'ideological work' of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries 'to institute the relations between English and Englishness as self-evident'.[42] Early nineteenth-century literary histories and anthologies played a central role in elucidating the relationship between literature and nation, with Old and Middle English particularly important. The Early English Text Society (EETS) was founded in 1864 by Frederick James Furnivall to render hitherto unprinted early English literature more accessible to students and to provide etymological material for the *New* (now *Oxford*) *English Dictionary*. David Matthews notes that 'patriotism did not account for all of Furnivall's interest in these texts, but it was, in effect, his sales pitch'.[43] In *Arthur: A Short Sketch of his Life and History in English Verse of the First Half of the Fifteenth Century*, Furnivall declared that 'one of the chief objects of the Early English Text Society is to print every Early English text relating to Arthur', whom he termed 'the British hero' and to whom he significantly devoted one of the Society's first publications.[44] That the origins of the Society were so closely associated with textual representations of Arthur suggests the suitability of the legend for performing the ideological work of equating English literature with English culture. Israel Gollancz, medieval scholar and Furnivall's successor as EETS director in 1910, commented in the preface to his 1897 edition of the *Morte* that Malory's text 'must have done more than any other work to nationalise the ancient story of Arthur and his Knights', while Andrew Lang referred to the work as 'our national romance'.[45]

Chris Baldick observes that the general trend of this period in English criticism is characterised by 'the substitution of literary-critical discourse for "culture" in general and for a whole range of other discourses from the philosophical to the political and sociological'.[46] Academic discussion of the *Morte* during this time often eschewed literary-critical discourse in its evaluation of worth, locating the true value of the text in national culture. Antiquarian scholar and Bristol schoolteacher A. T. Martin's *Selections from*

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[42] Brian Doyle, 'The Invention of English' in *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, ed. Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 92.

[43] Matthews, *Making of Middle English*, 146.

[44] Frederick J. Furnivall, *Arthur: A Short Sketch of His Life and History in English Verse of the First Half of the Fifteenth Century, Copied and Edited from the Marquis of Bath's MS* (London: Trubner, 1864), v-vi.

[45] Israel Gollancz (ed.), *Morte Darthur* (London: J. M. Dent, 1897), 314; Andrew Lang, in Sommer, *Le Morte Darthur*, vol. 3, xxi.

[46] Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism, 1848-1932* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 223.

Malory's Le Morte D'Arthur (1896), produced for school use and recommended by Macardle, claimed that the Arthurian legend has 'enjoyed [its] popularity because it combines two main elements – the glorification of a national hero, and a collection of national fairy tales'.[47] References to this national aspect were frequently accompanied by the assumption that the text therefore had valuable ethical guidance to offer. As Ian Hunter observes, 'the literary text lost its linguistic and historical conditions of intelligibility, or at least acquired different and no less fundamental moral conditions, when it was deployed as a device permitting the immediate registration of "life" on its norm-charged surfaces'.[48] We witness this shift in critical approbation of Malory's text, as linguistic and historical specificities became overshadowed by more generalised appreciation of the text's affective and 'cultural' value. Edward Strachey, in the preface to his 1891 scholarly edition of the *Morte*, noted 'the influence of Sir Thomas Malory's book upon […] English life, upon our thoughts, morals, and manners', while W. E. Mead, in his edited selections of the *Morte* in 1897, perceived the text as 'pervaded with the more enduring qualities of our common humanity'.[49] We find Malory recommended less for his literary style during this period – scholars conceded that his convoluted, paratactic narrative presented challenges, especially to children – than for his ability to teach life lessons through his 'national legend'.[50] This conflation of the nationalist value of English literature and its ability to inculcate liberal humanist ideals lay at the heart of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century movement to bring the subject to greater prominence in the world of education.

In 1921, having advised the Board of Education of its necessity, a Departmental Committee chaired by poet and novelist Sir Henry Newbolt, and including Macardle's editor John Fowler, published the results of their investigation into the teaching of English in England. The Newbolt Report, as it is now identified, began with an injunction:

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[47] A. T. Martin, *Selections from Malory's Le Morte D'Arthur* (London: Macmillan, 1896), ix.
[48] Ian Hunter, *Culture and Government: The Emergence of Literary Education* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), 128.
[49] Edward Strachey, *Morte Darthur*, ix; W. E. Mead, *Selections from Sir Thomas Malory*, lxi.
[50] In the preface to his 1886 *Malory's History of King Arthur and the Quest of the Holy Grail*, Ernest Rhys notes that 'one cannot read far in the *Morte d'Arthur* without feeling the inadequacy of the modes of expression; awkward confusions and repetitions abound' (London: Walter Scott, 1886), xv.

It must be realised that education is not the same thing as information, nor does it deal with human knowledge as divided into so-called subjects. It is not the storing of compartments in the mind, but the development and training of faculties already existing. It proceeds, not by the presentation of lifeless facts, but by teaching the student to follow the different lines on which life may be explored and proficiency in living may be obtained.[51]

The Report perceived national education as a tripartite process designed to train the will, the intellect, and the emotions. English Studies, it ventured, 'must form the essential basis' of this system: for the young student, an education in English literature 'should help to purify his emotions and sentiments, and to establish a right judgement of values in character, by bringing him into contact with emotion and character' as expressed in prose and poetry.[52] The Report envisaged English Studies as a means of achieving 'proficiency in living', 'freedom and independence of thought' and a 'wide outlook on life', a liberal humanist position directly opposed to the trend for rote learning that had characterised mid-nineteenth-century elementary education. It ended with a case study entitled 'The Circulation of Books in London Elementary Schools', which classified popular school books according to demand. In Class A, 'those in great and steady demand', the Arthurian Legends appeared as the third most popular item on the list, following *Tales and Stories from Shakespeare* and *Robinson Crusoe*. The previous two decades had seen a huge increase in editions of the Arthurian legend published for use in schools, most of which share similar traits. They abridge Malory's text, omitting the lengthy and convoluted Book of Sir Tristram and shortening episodes such as the Tale of Gareth and the Grail Quest. They omit the rape of Igraine, Arthur's incest with Morgause, and the adultery of Lancelot and Guinevere, instead having Mordred and Agravaine accuse Lancelot of a mysterious 'treason' out of jealousy and wickedness. Illustrations are mostly minimal, compared with many of the elaborately decorated versions produced in previous decades, probably intended as present or prize books rather than for explicit pedagogical use.[53]

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[51] *The Teaching of English in England [The Newbolt Report, 1921]* (London: HMSO, 1926), 4-5. Accessed 23 Oct 2014: http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/newbolt/newbolt1921.html.
[52] *Newbolt Report*, 19; 142.
[53] Charles Hanson's 1882 version features beautiful and dramatic illustrations of battle scenes, drawn by Gustave Doré. The illustrations to Margaret Vere Farrington's 1899 adaptation are in a similar vein, and the text itself is illustrated in the margins to resemble a medieval manuscript. J. T.
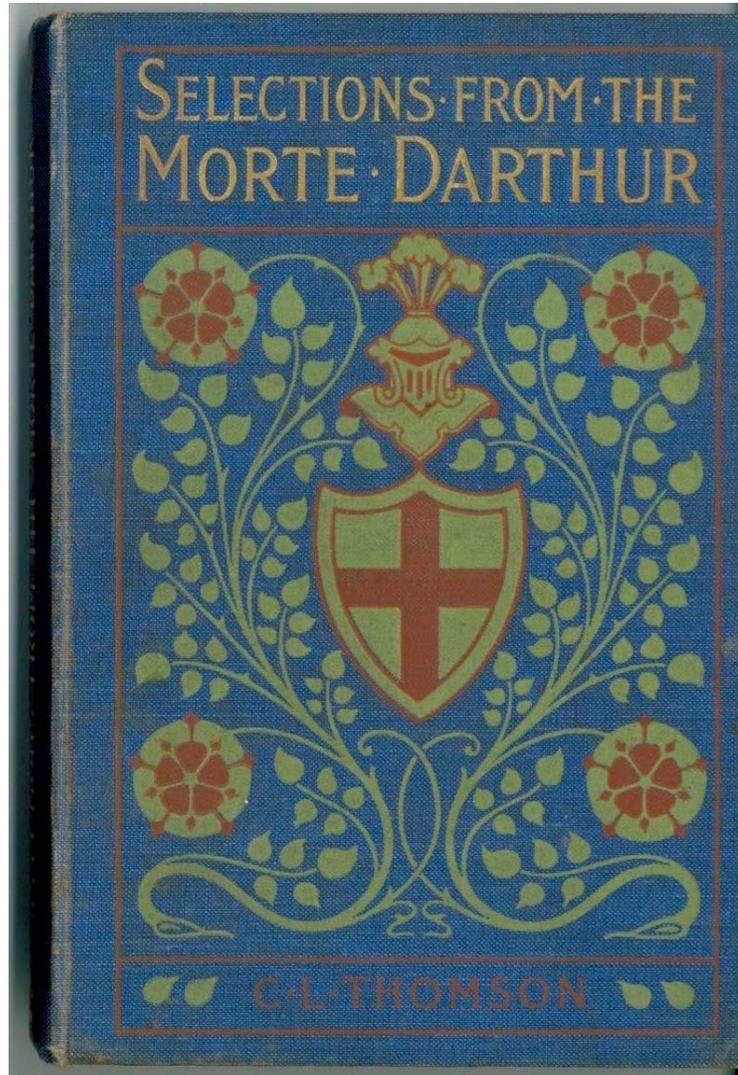
Figure 1. Clara L. Thomson, *Selections from Le Morte Darthur* (London:
Horace Marshall & Son, 1902)

These classroom versions modernise Malory's spelling and grammar, providing glossaries for archaic terms, but retain the original 'flavour' of the text as far as possible: Macardle, for example, includes words such as 'eft' (again), 'foin' (a thrust) and 'kirtle' (a short gown), while Gardiner simplifies phrases such as 'the kynge was passyngly wrothe for the hurte of Sir Gryfflet' to 'Arthur was very angry at the way Sir Griflet had been

Knowles's version of the *Morte* was first published with illustrations by George Housman Thomas, and later re-issued in 1908 with new illustrations by Lancelot Speed. Clara L. Thomson's *Selections from Le Morte Darthur* (1902) is unusually decorative for a pedagogical version, featuring ornate black and white illustrations and an illuminated cover (fig. 1).

treated', but retains medieval terms like 'prise', glossed as 'the death note, on [Arthur's] hunter's horn'.[54] Clara Thomson, in the preface to *Selections from Le Morte Darthur* (1902), notes her desire 'to keep as closely as possible to Malory's words, only diverging from them occasionally where archaic words or constructions might render the meaning doubtful to young readers'.[55] This linguistic similarity with the original *Morte* is important: these authors locate a substantial part of Malory's value in his having helped to 'settle' the English language, and continuity between Malory's Middle English and the English of the present day is one manifestation of the model of progressive history and culture employed by these texts.

Most importantly, these versions all feature prefatory or digressional discussions of the history of the Arthurian legend, during which they locate the educational value of the *Morte* in two main areas. Thomson, in her preface, declares that her adaptation contains much 'that is of the highest value both from the ethical and the literary standpoints'.[56] That the *Morte* was deemed suitable for schoolchildren because of its dual relevance to 'ethical' and 'literary' issues suggests its importance in the development of English Studies, where 'national' literature was repeatedly linked to the improvement and cultivation of character, a term increasingly used in an evaluative rather than a descriptive sense. Stefan Collini has identified the 'basic core' of qualities invoked by the evaluative sense of character in the nineteenth century as self restraint, perseverance, strenuous effort and courage in the face of adversity, all of which depended upon a prior notion of the individual as a moral agent whose mastering of his circumstances through the strengthening of his will contributed indirectly to the vitality and prosperity of his society.[57] These texts construct their middle-class child readers as similar moral agents, promoting what Ian Hunter terms a 'practice of aesthetico-ethical self-cultivation'.[58] They guide the child through the complexities of various ethical predicaments in a process that is implicitly linked to his or her status as an English citizen, enmeshed in a tradition of literary excellence that has evolved progressively and seamlessly from the Middle Ages and thus can offer guidance for modern

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[54] Gardiner, *King Arthur*, 42; 59.
[55] C. L. Thomson, *Selections from Le Morte Darthur* (London: Horace Marshall, 1902), 7.
[56] Thomson, *Selections*, 7.
[57] Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 110.
[58] Hunter, *Culture and Government*, 70.

life. These interrelated notions of nationalism and heritage are rarely nuanced, with the terms 'English' and 'British' often used interchangeably, and the distinct concepts of a literature *in English* and a literature *of England* frequently conflated.

Collini ventures that 'the complexity and ambiguities of the relation between the history of the "British" state and the identity of the "English" people may have increased the emphasis placed on the seemingly less problematic unity offered by the English language and its literature' during this period.[59] Similarly, Julia Wright observes that the positing of English literature in the nineteenth century as 'a synecdoche for both national identity and greatness' rendered 'popular involvement in the nation state peculiarly virtual'. Citizens 'could become full participants in the nation through their reflection of the "national character", their attachment to its cultural traditions, and their affective response to the nation as an idea', without in-depth consideration of the political and geographical implications of the nation.[60] These pedagogical adaptations offer a comparably 'virtual' engagement with questions of nationalism, language and literature, evading the tensions inherent in these concepts by focusing on the liberal, middle-class values that could be acquired from 'timeless' texts. They posit England and Englishness as attached not to a particular place, but instead as something linked to what Robert Young terms 'imaginative identifications', such as the countryside, Shakespeare or sport: a 'transportable set of values' that could be united through focus on the English language and its literature.[61] They emphasise predominantly the affective impact of literature upon the reader, and celebrate the particular Englishness of Malory's *Morte*, simplifying historical complexity by promoting a model of continuity and progress from the Middle Ages to the present day.

II. 'Natural centres': anxieties of canonicity

Clara Thomson's *Selections from the Morte Darthur* is accompanied by both a preface and an introduction, which work to justify the presentation of Malory to 'boys and girls under

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[59] Collini, *Public Moralists,* 353.

[60] Julia M. Wright, 'Literature and Nationalism' in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Volume 6: The Nineteenth Century, c.1830-1914,* ed. M. A. R. Habib (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 113-14.

[61] Robert J. C. Young, *The Idea of English Ethnicity* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 231-32.

fifteen years of age'.[62] In her introduction, she notes that 'the stories contained in this book are very old, so old, indeed, that no one knows who first told them or how much of them is true, and how much is fable'. We do know, Thomson acknowledges, that King Arthur 'really lived', as a British chief in the sixth century. Following his death in battle, 'these stories increased in number and length, for as time went on men added fresh stories of adventures, or took old tales and altered them so as to make King Arthur the hero'. She describes the various permutations of the Arthurian story, from Breton tales to Geoffrey of Monmouth, Malory to Tennyson, as each author added 'fresh inventions of his own [...] introducing fresh characters'. In fact, Thomson concedes, 'in many of these poems Arthur is not the principal hero'.[63] Thomson's initial assertion, mentioned earlier, that Malory is valuable from both literary and ethical standpoints is apparently not based upon the centrality of Arthur as an exemplary and heroic figure, nor is it based on Malory's ingenuity as compiler of these disparate tales: she notes that he 'did not always choose the most beautiful of those in existence'. For Thomson, the *Morte*'s main appeal lies in its 'beautiful language'. Her introductory material gestures towards anxieties regarding the authority and indeed authenticity of the *Morte*, positing it as a hybrid text with complex social, racial and literary origins. Affirming Arthur's historical popularity, Thomson notes that he appears in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and both Milton and Dryden considered him as the subject for an epic poem. This coupling of Arthur with other canonical English authors, combined with the assertion of his unique linguistic merit, discloses an uncertainty regarding the case to be made for the *Morte* as a classic text: whether Malory was valuable in his own right, or through his association with literary greats. Later, Thomson identifies 'what is noblest of all in the legend' as 'man's sorrow and remorse for sin, the suffering that it brings both to himself and those about him'.[64] Alternating between promoting the *Morte* as ethically and linguistically valuable, and eminent through its association with other significant authors, Thomson's text exemplifies the manifold, and often inconsistent, ideologies informing the construction of canonicity by scholars and teachers.

In the eighteenth century, Thomson recounts, 'learned people and great poets seem to have forgotten about Arthur, or were not attracted by the subject'. However, 'among the

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[62] Thomson, *Selections*, 7.
[63] Thomson, *Selections*, 11-12.
[64] Thomson, *Selections*, 14-16.

poorer people the legends still lived on and the stories were told in a shortened form in little cheap pamphlets called "chap-books", badly printed on coarse paper'. This continued until 1817, when Robert Southey released his edition of Caxton's Malory, 'and then scholars began to read the stories again'.[65] Thomson's comment suggests that legitimacy was only conferred upon Malory's *Morte* through the activities of 'learned' scholars and poets. She equates Arthur's fall into obscurity with his appropriation by poor people, dismissed through the adjectives 'cheap' and 'coarse', and implies that only the efforts of scholars and great poets are legitimate in the dissemination of the legend. These mediations and interventions alone, she intimates, have rendered the *Morte* suitable material for the classroom. Such comments disclose the class bias underlying the pedagogical canon of the early twentieth century, as Malory was simultaneously offered to the children of state schools whilst remaining, in many ways, the property of learned scholars and poets, responsible for his propagation within the classroom in editions that reflected their own relatively elite status.

1906 saw the establishment of the English Association (EA) by two secondary school headmasters aiming to increase the prominence of English Studies in schools and universities. Its diverse membership and zealous publishing impulse combined to offer the impression that certain ideas about the value of English Studies were universal, held by teachers, academics and politicians alike.[66] In 1912 the EA published 'English Literature in Schools: A List of Authors and Works for Successive Stages of Study', stating that 'any carefully planned course of reading will necessarily be based upon the great writers. They stand out in each period as the natural centres, and we return to them to take our bearings'.[67] An assumption of uncontested canonicity is evident here within an institution active in propagating not only this notion itself, but in publicly establishing those texts that possess it. Ian Small notes that pedagogic and national claims made for English Studies during this period depended upon the prior professionalisation and institutionalisation of literary criticism, which had delivered 'Literature' into the hands of professional specialists and

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[65] Thomson, *Selections,* 15.
[66] In 1917 the EA convinced the Board of Education that a Departmental Committee was needed to investigate the state of English teaching in England. The resulting Committee produced the Newbolt Report, and included nine EA members, John Fowler among them.
[67] 'English Literature in Secondary Schools: A List of Authors and Works for Successive Stages of Study' (Kent: E. Clarke & Son, 1912), 1.

thereby allowed that group several powers: the power to determine what was common to all 'Literature', to decide what values were endorsed by it, and to control, through their authority as the only qualified practitioners of that profession, the dissemination of those values.[68] Through institutions like the EA, a pedagogical canon was collaboratively constructed by scholarly and educational communities, selecting texts that apparently confirmed, rather than suggested any challenge to, the dominant ideals of the time. However, as Thomson's introductory material suggests, these dominant ideals rested, at times, upon unstable foundations.

A closer look at the provenance of early twentieth-century school editions of the *Morte* reveals strong connections between these educational and literary communities, and indicates their responsibility for the propagation of Malory within the classroom. David Matthews notes the role of Furnivall in establishing such networks in 1866, when he arranged for prizes for the best pupil in exams on English before Chaucer to be awarded at leading universities, creating and maintaining a group of scholarly contacts involved in education that were closely linked to the developing discipline of English Studies.[69] Several EETS scholars published their own versions of Malory's *Morte,* W. E. Mead particularly for schoolroom use.[70] Their editions were frequently recommended by EA pamphlets. Gollancz's version was published by J. M. Dent as part of the 'Temple Classics' series, designed to make works of literary value more accessible to the general public; it was repackaged in 1907 by teacher Robert Shelton Bate. John W. Hales had links, as a scholar, with many EA and EETS members, including Furnivall himself, but was also a teacher and examiner at King's College School.[71] He provided the introduction to Mary Macleod's 1900 adaptation of the *Morte* for children, and proved highly influential upon a student, Alfred Pollard, who in turn produced his own children's version of the *Morte* (discussed in Chapter Two) and became director of the EETS in 1930.[72] The *Cambridge History of*

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[68] Ian Small, *Conditions for Criticism: Authority, Knowledge, and Literature in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press), 139-40.

[69] Matthews, *Making of Middle English*, 157.

[70] Ernest Rhys in 1886, Israel Gollancz in 1897, and Alfred Pollard in 1917. Mead's *Selections from Sir Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur* was published in 1897.

[71] Hales co-edited *Bishop Percy's Folio MS* with Furnivall and offered introductory comments on Malory for Craik's *English Prose Selections* (1893).

[72] Hales, Pollard's tutor at Kings College School, piqued his interest in English literature. See W. W. Greg, 'Pollard, Alfred William (1859–1944)', rev. H. R. Woudhuysen, *Oxford Dictionary of*

English and American Literature, an 18-volume compendium published between 1907 and 1921 which attracted contributions from a huge range of scholars worldwide, featured Gollancz alongside teacher and school inspector Clara Thomson and classicist, publisher and author F. J. Harvey Darton, who produced Macleod's adaptation in 1900. Thomson presented at the English Conference in Stratford-on-Avon in 1916 alongside John Henry Fowler and Dorothy Macardle. Nearly all of the pedagogical versions of the *Morte Darthur* from this period were produced by this select group of individuals, designed to uphold the specific values they identified in 'classic' English literature and to promote these values as both unequivocal and educational.

In a 1919 EA pamphlet, literary scholar and suffragette Edith Morley identified English Studies as 'one of the most effective means to that education which aims primarily and in the widest sense at the production of good citizens', and which 'is to lead to the full development of the individual for the service not merely of the State, but of mankind'.[73] The concepts of state and nation are subordinated here to a focus on 'humane' education and the self-improvement of the individual. Stefan Collini notes that where the civic humanist tradition of the enlightenment had emphasised the moral vigour of the citizen as instrumental to the maintenance of political liberty, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the cultivation of character was perceived as an end in itself.[74] The rhetoric of the EA, and the English Studies movement in general, subsumed complex issues of class and nationalism in the ostensibly depoliticised goal of 'humanising the masses', to use EA member George Sampson's phrase.[75] This ideology was predicated upon a dichotomy between two main types of education: practical preparation for a job or vocation, and 'life' education, the latter a somewhat nebulous concept linked to character development and self-improvement. The Newbolt Report adopted this rhetoric, praising the 'unifying tendency' of an English education and its power to transcend class boundaries:

National Biography (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed 17 Nov 2015: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35557.

[73] Edith J. Morley, 'Literature as a Humane Study' in *The Teaching of English in Schools: A Series of Papers,* ed. Edith J. Morley (Kent: E. Clarke & Son, 1919), 33.

[74] Collini, *Public Moralists,* 109.

[75] George Sampson, *English for the English: A Chapter on National Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 33.

the fact that the majority of elementary school children will have to take up some form of manual labour […] must not limit the kind of education they are to receive, for […] education is a preparation for life, not, in the first place, for livelihood.[76]

This 'unifying tendency' was offered as a laudable quality of English Studies, but it is also a rhetorical strategy employed by the report and much of the discourse promoting English literature during this period. It glosses over the implications of class difference – the fact that many state school students would not require a working knowledge of English literature in their professional lives – to focus instead upon what Morley termed 'the strengthening of character', and associated notions of self-improvement. As Ian Hunter has noted, English Studies emerged 'as an apparently unstructured domain of experience in which the child's moral development was governed by norms which he found in himself'.[77] The life lessons offered by English literature, it was implied, were universal to all classes, and canonical literature enabled pupils to work towards the cultivation of universally desirable character traits, defined (often vaguely) by the pedagogical adaptations of these texts. They mask tensions regarding Malory's canonical status, his complex relationship to class and nation, by focusing upon the moral development of the individual child. Gauri Viswanathan, exploring the rise of English Studies and its links with colonial education in India, notes that literary training in the nineteenth century reclaimed particular cultural moments as 'exemplary instances of truth, coherence, and value'.[78] Within these adaptations, the actions of Malory in 'settling' the English language and the role of Arthur in the history of Britain are occluded by the peculiar 'exemplarity' these authors identify in the *Morte,* its potential to offer timeless and universal 'truths' to children.

III. Timeless chivalry: learning from Malory's knights

'Every boy may be as much a true knight as those we read of in the brave days of old,' declares the narrator of Alfonzo Gardiner's *King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table* (1908), 'and every girl may be worthy of the respect and courteous consideration of

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[76] *Newbolt Report,* 60.

[77] Hunter, *Culture and Government,* 120.

[78] Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 119.

all those she is brought in contact with as were the fair ladies of the chivalrous days of Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table'. This is possible because

> though chivalry in its old form has perished, the 'spirit of the ideal knight still lives', and the same keen sense of honour and generosity, courtesy, Christian tenderness and helpfulness, which influenced and developed the knights of past days, remains with us yet.[79]

Gardiner devotes an entire chapter to this digression on the importance of chivalry. His 'still' and 'same' imply the timelessness of specific ideals deemed desirable for the contemporary child reader, and their continued relevance. Clara Thomson, in her preface, highlights the moral message of the *Morte*: 'the final victory that may be attained by him who is strong enough to persevere in the conquest of self and in the search after righteousness'.[80] The ethical lessons offered by these texts rest on a base of middle-class ideological assumptions, positing the individual as a freely choosing agent concerned with citizenship, self-government and justice; ultimately, with the cultivation and strengthening of a 'character' expressed in liberal terms. They present unexamined moral norms as self-evident truths traceable back to a glorious English past. They are also frequently gendered: note the pronoun 'him' in Thomson's aside, and the active and passive roles ascribed to boy and girl readers respectively in Gardiner's text. Gardiner's digressional chapter on chivalry, offering historical context about the training of pages and squires, is focalised almost entirely through the male perspective:

> Their duty was to attend to the ladies on their walks and drives, and in their spare time they were instructed in music and games. Very frequently a youth was chosen by a lady for her particular companion, so that a boy's thoughts were trained in the direction of honour, bravery, and gallantry.[81]

The implied reader of Macardle's text is similarly gendered male: all classroom activities involve adopting the position of Arthur or his knights, never the women, and topics for

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[79] Gardiner, *King Arthur*, 19-20.
[80] Thomson, *Selections from Le Morte Darthur*, 16.
[81] Gardiner, *King Arthur*, 12.

discussion and research all pertain to the arena of male activity: combats, swords, kings. Despite the teaching profession being largely dominated by women in the late nineteenth century, much educational writing tended to ignore or downplay the presence of women in schools, either as pupils or teachers. Bate, for example, refers only to boys in his treatise on secondary education. Despite acknowledgement in reading lists that girls enjoyed many of the same books as boys, particularly adventure novels, the gendering of the implied reader as male is a common feature of Arthurian adaptation for children in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, suggesting that Malory's text was perceived to offer valuable education in areas that were aligned more closely with male self-improvement. The ways in which these rhetorics of 'honour, bravery and gallantry' intersected with discourses of masculine development will be explored in Chapter Two.

In 1900, literary scholar Sir Walter Raleigh was appointed as Chair of English Literature and Language at Glasgow University. In his inaugural address, he contemplated the problems facing the growing discipline of English Studies. 'Literature is,' Raleigh remarked, paraphrasing Matthew Arnold, 'the expression in words of all the best that man has thought and felt: how are we to catch it and subdue it to the purposes of the class-room?'[82] Pedagogical adaptations of Malory's *Morte* foreground its status as cultural artefact, a record of 'all the best that man has thought and felt', but tap into this heritage value to extract role models for the child reader in the classroom. They anticipate the assertion of the Newbolt Report, that 'the effect of English literature in education is the effect of an art upon the development of human character'.[83] The examples offered by the characters of the *Morte,* they suggest, will induce a process of identification by child readers, during which they can develop their own 'character' in accordance with liberal ideals. These ideals are often vague, exemplifying what Ian Hunter and Terry Eagleton identify as 'the indirect and contentless pedagogy' of the literature lesson: they cluster around nebulous concepts such as 'honour' and 'courtesy', and the identification of children with the *Morte* is often delineated in terms of the text's emotive, affective value.[84]

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[82] Walter Raleigh, *The Study of English Literature: Being the Inaugural Lecture Delivered at the University of Glasgow on Thursday, October 18th, 1900* (Glasgow: James MacLehose & Sons, 1900), 6.
[83] *Newbolt Report*, 20.
[84] Ian Hunter, 'Learning the Literature Lesson: The Limits of the Aesthetic Personality' in *Towards a Critical Sociology of Reading Pedagogy: Papers of the XII World Congress on Reading,* ed.

The conflation of Malory's heritage value with his potential to educate in the present is predicated upon the assumption that (literary) history exists as a series of interlinked epochs through which certain traits and trends can be traced. Linked to what Herbert Butterfield first termed 'the Whig interpretation of history', a model of history as a single linear and progressive narrative ordered in terms of currently prevailing values, this vision of literature emphasised what Walter Skeat termed 'the Unity of English […] an unbroken succession of authors, from the reign of Alfred to that of Victoria'.[85] John Churton Collins, a vocal proponent of English Studies, claimed that 'nothing is so necessary in treating Literature historically as the recognition of its continuity', and we find this assumption in many of the period's literary histories, often produced for school use.[86] Joan Brown notes that, in order to form part of the pedagogical canon, 'one function that a work can fulfil is to illustrate or symbolize a step in literary history […] a work must be a worthy exemplar – an ideal model and/or a typical specimen – of something that fits with both the historian's thesis and his or her perspective'.[87] We find this principle underlying W. E. Mead's evaluation of Malory's work as 'assuredly one of the golden links that unite our age to his'.[88] Frequently, the 'thesis' behind such assumptions relates to the development of a national character. The Newbolt Report advised that study of literature 'should make the pupil at least conscious of the past history of the English people and of their position and function in the existing family of nations', implying continual development between the English past and the contemporary national disposition.[89]

Carolyn D. Baker and Allan Luke (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1991), 55. Eagleton notes that 'the task of the moral technology of Literature is to produce an historically peculiar form of human subject who is sensitive, receptive, imaginative and so on […] *about nothing in particular*'. See Terry Eagleton, 'The Subject of Literature', *Cultural Critique*, 2 (1985-86), 98.

[85] W. W. Skeat, *Questions for Examination in English Literature: With an Introduction on the Study of English* (London: Bell & Daldy, 1873), xii.

[86] John Churton Collins, *The Study of English Literature: A Plea for Its Recognition and Organization at the Universities* (London: Macmillan, 1891), 37-38. Frederick Ryland's *Chronological Outlines of English Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1896) helps the student to 'trace the growth of schools and movements' and 'will perform in some degree the same kind of service for the student of literary history as a map does for the student of geography' (1).

[87] Joan L. Brown, 'Constructing our Pedagogical Canons', *Pedagogy* 10.3 (2010), 542.

[88] W. E. Mead, *Selections from Sir Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur*, lxi.

[89] *Newbolt Report*, 142-43.

Middle English was particularly associated with this thesis in the nineteenth century, owing to its close links with philology in the early days of the discipline. Matthews suggests that 'Philology allowed the scholar to see regular processes of linguistic change connecting modern words to medieval, where earlier generations had seen only hopeless barbarisms'. Institutions like the EETS were crucial in reconfiguring perceptions of medieval literature, no longer seen as 'alien, attractively exotic but far removed from modern history and modern aesthetics' but instead as 'the cradle of modern literature, as continuous, in an unbroken chain, with modernity'.[90] Thus Skeat could claim in 1873 that 'the language which we speak *now* is absolutely *one* in its essence, with the language that was spoken in the days when the English first invaded the island'.[91] Malory's *Morte*, a 'myth of origin' for the English people and written in Middle English, could be incorporated within this linear cultural narrative more effectively than many other texts. John W. Hales, in his preface to Mary Macleod's 1900 adaptation, often used in schools, noted that the *Morte* 'was written at a time when our language was greatly unsettled, and it undoubtedly exercised much influence in settling it'.[92] An editorial note in Gardiner's school version echoes this assertion, claiming that the *Morte* 'did much to settle the language, and is an excellent specimen of English prose'.[93] These texts posit 'our language', having been 'settled' by Malory's *Morte* in the fifteenth century, as a fixed, unequivocal standard. They evoke a sense of shared pride in the national language, a language that is both superior to and owes its existence to medieval texts such as Malory's, implicating the *Morte* in a narrative of national pride resting upon an assumption of historical continuity.

The linguistic complexity of the *Morte*, its roots in older English and European traditions, rendered it an ideal text for promoting and accommodating increasingly elastic and capacious definitions of 'English'. Robert Young notes that from the 1860s onwards,

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[90] Matthews, *Making of Middle English*, 146; 155.
[91] Skeat, *Questions for Examination*, xii.
[92] Macleod, *Book of King Arthur*, vii. Kara L. McShane notes that Macleod's text was often used in schools, and excerpts were also published in a weekly magazine for children between 1901 and 1906. See *Malory's Morte d'Arthur: Exhibition Guide* (Rochester, NY: Rossell Hope Robbins Library, 2010). Accessed 12 Aug 2015: http://d.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/text/mcshane-malorys-morte-d-arthur-exhibition-guide.
[93] Gardiner, *King Arthur*, 96.

the differences between the racial and linguistic definitions of English ethnicity began to seem more porous […] Englishness became something inclusive, defined not in terms of autochthonous origins attached to a particular place, and only very generally in terms of origin. The English, by all accounts, were a largely immigrant race, as mixed as their language.[94]

The *Morte* could reflect this developing conception of Englishness as heterogeneous. It embraced the diverse roots of the Arthurian tradition, and, like England, enjoyed a varied heritage. Focus on Malory's English language and the aesthetic value of his text could be used to promote this heritage. Hales, in his preface, identified the *Morte* as 'an excellent specimen and a conspicuous standard of English prose'. He credits it with reducing 'the old cumbrous and endless Romances to convenient and readable dimensions', providing 'a charming summary of them both for its own age and for all ages to come'. Although he does not specify these romances, he perhaps alludes to the French and German chivalric tradition that Malory abridged and unified into a (mostly) coherent whole. His expository preface on the Arthurian legend is overwhelmingly focussed on Malory the author, rather than the chivalric tradition or the historical significance of Arthur, and he devotes the bulk of the text to Malory's biography. 'This is a question to which it is impossible not to feel attracted,' he claims:

> When we read any work of power or beauty, we always long to know who wrote it. We are not content with the mere perusal of the written words; we like to picture to ourselves him who penned them, his circumstances, his conduct and character, and to feel assured that he writes with competence and as one having authority.[95]

Hales's preface reflects contemporaneous literary-critical bias towards notions of culture and authority rather than stylistic details, and the perception of English literature as a treasured repository of guidance for conduct and character development. Malory's 'conduct', as later research demonstrated, was hardly exemplary: he was accused of kidnapping, theft, and rape, and embroiled in the conflicts of the Wars of the Roses. Hales,

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[94] Young, *English Ethnicity*, 172.
[95] Macleod, *Book of King Arthur*, vii-viii.

however, describes Malory as 'the supreme embodiment of Arthurian romance', noting that he 'belonged by birth to the Midlands – to the same county as Shakespeare and "George Eliot", not to mention many lesser and yet brilliant lights'. The complex lineage of King Arthur and his associated texts, and indeed the problematic conduct of Malory himself, are circumvented through a focus on the quintessential 'Englishness' of the *Morte Darthur:* it is associated with those 'brilliant' works by canonical authors at the heart of England's green and pleasant land. Similarly, Gardiner's adaptation is accompanied by a note from the editor of the series, commenting that in order to show the influence of the *Morte* upon English literature, 'a few extracts from Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* are incorporated, for Tennyson chiefly used Malory as the groundwork for those splendid poems which tell some of the acts and deeds of Arthur and his Knights'.[96] By associating Malory with the work of Tennyson – perhaps the best approximation of an English 'national poet' that the nineteenth century offered – Gardiner's text situates the *Morte* and the story of Arthur firmly within English culture. Hales even ventures that Malory's portrayal of Lancelot was inspired by 'his connection with Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick', which 'brought him into close familiarity with one who was the best living impersonation of that chivalry of which he was to be the chief and enduring celebrator'. One can scarcely doubt, Hales remarks, 'that the image of the great captain of his youth often gave reality to the pictures of Sir Lancelot and other legendary heroes which he painted with such knowledge and sympathy'.[97] Lancelot, whose first appearance is in Chrétien de Troyes' twelfth-century *Le Chevalier de la Charette*, is linked both with an English chivalric hero, and with a French literary and ancestral tradition (Beauchamp). Malory's *Morte,* for Hales, is a text that, perhaps paradoxically, enables the celebration of diverse Anglo-European literary traditions through a focus on its quintessential 'Englishness', a term that denotes both its actual language and its portrayal of character.

Hales's preface eclipses concerns about the heritage of Malory's source material by drawing upon recent scholarship that had identified Malory with a knight from Warwickshire. In his citation of scholarly sources – he refers to work by G. L. Kittredge and A. T. Martin – and engagement with contemporaneous academic debates, and in his

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[96] Gardiner, *King Arthur*, 96.
[97] Macleod, *Book of King Arthur*, x.

circumventing of the more problematic aspects of Malory's 'national' tale by focusing on moral values, Hales's preface exemplifies the work performed by pedagogical adaptations of the *Morte* during this period. Straddling the realms of the classroom and university academia, they gloss over the tensions behind the promotion of English Studies as a national, classless subject to focus instead on the Englishness of Malory's particular text, and its potential to offer exemplary lessons for the present-day student through the portrayal of heroic deeds. They emphasise the affective, emotional value of the *Morte,* tied to vague definitions of culture and humanity, and exemplify 'the contraction of the morally managed space of the school into the landscape of the literary text'.[98] Hales suggests that being 'brought into the midst of a society so famous as the Knights of the Round Table' – a notion that anticipates Macardle's immersive pedagogical framework in her adaptation seventeen years later – will 'prove both a pleasure and a profit'.[99]

Children could 'profit' from these texts by identifying with the knightly heroes of Malory's tale; schoolroom texts from this period assume that their child readers will learn through example. Heroic examples, specifically those of 'national' heroes such as Arthur, were often chosen, illustrating the conflation of nationalism with positive character development, and the implication that those heroes' actions were still relevant in the present.[100] Although Chaucer was frequently adapted for children in the nineteenth century, his wide oeuvre lacks the central nation-building hero of Malory's text, which perhaps explains why he was placed lower in the hierarchy of the pedagogical canon by the Newbolt Report.[101] Clara Thomson noted in her preface to *The Romance Readers*, a school series of classical and medieval hero stories, that 'if these legends are to provide a moral ideal for children, we must emphasise the good qualities of the heroes whose adventures they tell'.[102] We find an assumption of timelessness, that the actions of Arthurian heroes are still relevant to the child readers of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. This is reinforced by the fact that the Arthurian age is frequently identified in scholarly and

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[98] Hunter, *Culture and Government,* 65.

[99] Macleod, *Book of King Arthur,* vii.

[100] Collections focused around the exploits of heroes were extremely popular; see Chapter Two for further discussion.

[101] *Tales from Chaucer* appears at number twenty-nine on the Newbolt Report list of recommendations, compared with number three for the Arthurian legends.

[102] Clara Thomson (ed.), *The Romance Readers*, 6 vols. (London: Horace Marshall, 1902-05).

children's literature as the 'infancy' or 'childhood' of the race – an organic metaphor that reinforces the model of historical continuity discussed above – and therefore by the same token is likely to appeal to child readers.[103] H. E. Marshall, in her preface to *English Literature for Boys and Girls* (1909) advises, 'I have of set purpose treated the early portions of our literature at much greater length than is usual, it being of my belief that what was attractive to a youthful nation will be most attractive to the young of that nation'.[104] This link is predicated upon the assumption that children identify with characters and learn vicariously through their experience, but also that all historical periods are part of a continuous linear narrative.

Macardle's preface refers to Malory's time as 'the childhood of England' and 'the story-time of life', linking the medieval with a childness defined in terms of imaginative curiosity, fantasy and innocence.[105] As David Matthews has noted, this strategy is also common in Victorian and Edwardian adaptations of Chaucer for children, which 'view Chaucer as having a unique sympathy with the childish mind'.[106] Interestingly, Macardle develops this link between Chaucer and childishness to consider its implications for Malory. After Chaucer's death, she suggests, 'the court grew preoccupied with enmities and anxieties of statecraft: the people were ceasing to believe in faeries'.[107] This assertion implicitly privileges the purity of child-like fantasy over the petty complexities of politics. Fortunately, Macardle recounts, Malory took up the 'beautiful' stories of King Arthur, 'in some of the sweetest English that has ever been written'. Matthews points out that Chaucer's work in the nineteenth century was 'severed from its original aesthetic being' through translation and expurgation in order to be 'projected as an agent of moral regulation', particularly for children.[108] Yet Macardle suggests that there is 'childness'

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[103] Jessie Weston refers to the Arthurian legends as material 'on which the childhood of the nation had been fed' (Weston, *King Arthur*, 9-10). R. S. Bate claims ballad poetry is poetry 'of a nation's infancy, and therefore most suitable for the childhood of the individual' (*Teaching of English*, 17). George L. Craik's *Manual of English Literature* terms the Semi-Saxon era the 'period of Infancy and Childhood of our existing national speech'. Old or Early English constitutes the 'boyhood' and Middle English the 'adolescence' to Modern English's 'manhood' (London: Charles Griffin & Company, 1863), vi.
[104] H. E. Marshall, *English Literature for Boys and Girls* (London: T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1909), x.
[105] Macardle, *Selections*, ix.
[106] Matthews, Infantilizing the Father', 108.
[107] Macardle, *Selections*, ix.
[108] Matthews, 'Infantilizing the Father', 97.

already extant in Malory's *original* narrative, lending it a unique aesthetic value. 'He is using a free and childish language,' Macardle remarks, and 'it is not only the words that are childish, but the mood, the quality of the story-teller's imagination is sometimes like a child's'. The medieval period, and Malory's creativity, are identified with a positive childish naivety. This quality of Malory's narrative manifests itself in his 'vivid, simple pictures', Macardle suggests.

To an extent, Macardle is also concerned with presenting the *Morte* in a vivid, simple fashion. She subordinates the complexities of history and language to a particularly 'vivid' emotive quality that, she implies, renders the *Morte* infinitely valuable, and is peculiarly aligned with childhood. Malory's worth is couched in terms of affect: he has a 'musician's power over words; he could see and hear and feel things that had never been, and tell of them in words that made them come visibly to life'.[109] Arthur's historical specificity is overshadowed by the moving, empathetic impact of the story, demonstrated by her implication that the people of the Middle Ages believed in faeries, and that Malory restored some of this innocent fancy through his creative endeavours. Macardle uses this 'childish' side of Malory to gloss the particulars of his national and historical identity, and instead to suggest that the *Morte* has a 'timeless' significance, vaguely couched in terms of affect and personal experience: 'we know, with all our hearts, that he was a story-teller. It does not matter where he read the stories; he wrote them out of his own living imagination'.[110] The child here is used to simplify and evade anxieties regarding Malory's canonical position, his literary, historical and political significance, by instead appealing to a nebulous, emotive and imaginative quality. The *Morte* is valuable, first and foremost, for its appeal to the heart.

John Stephens acknowledges the assumption in most historical stories for children (and indeed for adults) that

there is an essential human nature which underlies all changing surface appearances; important human qualities such as love, reason etc. are transhistorical;

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[109] Macardle, *Selections*, xi.
[110] Macardle, *Selections*, x.

human desires are reasonably constant […] individual experiences thus reflect
constant, unchanging truths; history imparts lessons because events, in a substantial
sense, are repeatable and repeated.[111]

These texts depict history as 'repeated' in two ways: by emphasising continuity between the Arthurian legend and the present day, and by linking a nascent literary age and a nascent child reader. Historical fiction for children, Stephens suggests, has 'always performed a moral, and even didactic, function, especially through its capacity to transform events which appear to be historical particularities into universals of human experience'.[112] Montrose Moses, an American children's writer who published a guide to *Children's Books and Reading* in 1907, claimed that 'children have their hero moments when they are not of the present, but are part of that perennial truth which is clearer-visioned in the past', and that 'the moral *habit* is part of the structure of the Arthurian legends'.[113] These texts immerse the child reader in the Arthurian world, inviting him or her to consider its heroic characters and cultivate a 'moral habit' in accordance with chivalric ideals, interpreted as liberal values elevated to the status of 'perennial truth'. They manifest the assumption pervading the Newbolt Report: that 'all great literatures will present deep and universal truths'.[114] Through the rhetoric of their paratexts, they posit Malory as both timelessly applicable and nationally specific. Benedict Anderson argued that nations are usually imagined as inherently limited communities: 'even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind'.[115] However, these children's texts construe the nation as finite and contained – they laud the peculiar 'Englishness' of the *Morte* – but also, simultaneously, as linked with a series of values that are indeed implied to be coterminous with mankind. The *Morte* is a text with national, heritage value

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[111] John Stephens, *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction* (London: Longman, 1992), 203. Although these Arthurian texts complicate questions of genre, existing at the nexus of fantasy, legend and history, many of them affirm the historical veracity of the Arthurian legend and its continuity with the present day, and therefore Stephens's observations on historical fiction can usefully apply.

[112] Stephens, *Language and Ideology*, 205.

[113] Montrose J. Moses, *Children's Books and Reading* (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1907), 14-15; 11.

[114] *Newbolt Report*, 18.

[115] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1985), 15.

but also timeless, implicitly universal significance, whose appeal lies in its essential, common humanity, delineated in terms of ethics and affect and linked specifically with the developing child.

Liberal politician John Morley, editor of Macmillan's 'English Men of Letters' series, suggested that the benefits of English Studies lay in its ability to resolve sociopolitical tensions by promoting consideration and forethought. 'Let us read to weigh and consider', he exhorted in 1887 at an address to the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching, echoing an injunction from Francis Bacon's essay 'Of Studies'. 'In the times before us that promise or threaten deep political, economical, and social controversy, what we need to do is to induce our people to weigh and consider'.[116] These pedagogical adaptations use the idea of consideration to gloss a series of problematic complexities related to class and nation by prioritising individual development. The list of recommended books for schools published by the EA in 1912, mentioned earlier, referred to 'natural centres' of literature, from which we should 'take our bearings'. Learning to take 'bearings' from the *Morte,* for the child readers of these adaptations, meant connecting on a personal level with its characters, entering into the world of the fiction in order to consider the ethical issues at stake. These children's texts manifest the liberal humanist assumption that literature, regardless of period or provenance, can provide, in the words of the Newbolt Report, 'equipment for the understanding of life'.[117] The figure of the child serves to crystallise a series of anxieties underpinning the establishment of English Studies, the creation of the canon and the national value of English literary texts. These tensions are masked by the promotion of 'aesthetico-ethical self-cultivation', and an endorsement of nebulous ideals about 'humanity' and 'life', for which the growing child is identified as a particularly suitable vessel.

IV. Conclusion

'Malory is one of the most magical story-tellers who ever lived,' Macardle asserts in her preface:

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[116] John Morley, *The Study of Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1907), 227.
[117] *Newbolt Report*, 19.

> After we have read his great book we can hardly wake out of the wizard-spell that has held us in Camelot. It has all been real and close to us: we have moved among those gallant knights, seen their very gestures and heard their very words; and we have loved them, and have been proud and sorry for them.[118]

The 'wizard-spell' that holds Macardle's readers in Camelot also holds them within a network of assumptions relating to the purpose and practicalities of a state school education and the ways in which children learn. In moving among, admiring and loving Malory's gallant knights, the child in the classroom is assimilated into a continuous historical narrative, beginning with the 'infancy of the race', that posits liberal humanist ideals as timeless and fundamental. Encouraging the reader's sympathetic connection with Malory's knights, adaptations of the *Morte* for school use in the early twentieth century suggest its ability to teach self-development and broaden the outlooks of the middle classes, endorsing justice, co-operation and consideration as unequivocal moral norms and simplifying complex issues of class and nationalism through a celebration of 'Englishness' as a linguistic and moral standard. The products of collaborative endeavours between select groups involved theoretically, legislatively and practically with education, they serve contemporary educational agendas which coalesce around the national and humanising function of English Studies. This close relationship between university academia and the production of the *Morte Darthur* for children is a recurring theme throughout the twentieth century: Chapter Four explores the influence of Oxford scholars J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis upon the Arthurian work of children's writer and literary critic Roger Lancelyn Green, while Chapters Three and Five examine the efforts of T. H. White and John Steinbeck to engage with (and, in many cases, challenge) contemporaneous critical interpretations of Malory's *Morte* through their retellings of the legend for children.

In 1911, American professor William Witherle Lawrence published *Medieval Story and the Beginnings of the Social Ideals of English-Speaking People*, in which he emphasised the value of medieval narratives:

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[118] Macardle, *Selections*, x.

A study of these old stories is no antiquarian pastime, no rummaging around dust, no quest for stiff and soulless figures. It is the opening of the door upon a life as exuberant as our own, full of richness and color, stirred by adventure and by passion, with the sun shining bright in the heavens, and the joy of life strong in the hearts of men.[119]

We frequently witness in British school adaptations of Malory this gendering of the implied reader, the assumption that boys are the main consumers of the legend, stirred by its depictions of adventure and passion, and the large number of hero-focused texts published for school use during the period assume a predominantly male audience. Cyril Norwood and Arthur Hope, writing on *The Higher Education of Boys in England* in 1909, asserted the importance of matching a pedagogical scheme to a boy's interest, which initially lies in 'stories of deeds, and of great men of action' and 'gradually develops into the love of romance and tales of adventure'. Such a scheme would aid education 'in the fuller and deeper sense of the term'; that is, 'the training of boys outside the classroom in the manlier virtues'.[120] Having examined how school adaptations aimed to train boys *inside* the classroom, I will explore in the next chapter how British and American versions of the *Morte* designed for extracurricular leisure reading during this period offered boys a very different type of quest, the object of which was not 'stiff and soulless' schoolroom study but a form of education implicitly deeper and more vital. These texts appeal to a boyish love of adventure in order to inculcate 'the manlier virtues', developing the risky escapades of Malory's knights to provide their young readers with a valuable life education in self-improvement and social awareness, underpinned by the exhortation to 'weigh and consider'.

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[119] William Witherle Lawrence, *Medieval Story and the Beginnings of the Social Ideals of English-Speaking People* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1911), 25.
[120] Cyril Norwood and Arthur H. Hope (eds), *The Higher Education of Boys in England* (London: John Murray, 1909), 341.

Risk and revenue: adventurous masculinity in the work of Howard Pyle, Henry Gilbert and Alfred Pollard

In 1917, four years before he produced the Newbolt Report and well into his career as a poet, editor and journalist, Henry Newbolt published *The Book of the Happy Warrior,* a collection of inspirational militaristic hero stories for young boys that reflected his persistent interest in the educational value of chivalric tales.[1] It included the stories of Richard the Lionheart and Robin Hood, and was accompanied by the author's musings upon boyhood, chivalry and education. Although the age of chivalry has passed, Newbolt acknowledged, 'the imperishable part of chivalry, that which belongs to character, has survived, and we have only to look at the history of our latest war to see this'.[2] The most valuable part of chivalry is 'the moral element', Newbolt opines, 'and for that there is nothing like the old English school tradition'. He proceeds to explicitly link 'success in modern war' with this vital element, 'supplied by our schools and universities'.[3] Following heavy losses for the British and the French at the Somme and Passchendaele, Newbolt's measure of 'success' in modern war is not a literal but a moral and ideological assessment, identifying the heroic, patriotic spirit of Britain's young fighters as a relic of a chivalric age, maintained through the stalwart institutions of public school and university.[4] Where the 1921 Newbolt Report located the value of these educational institutions in their ability to encourage a wide outlook on life through the English Studies curriculum, Newbolt's fiction and poetry, much of which was aimed at boys, focuses instead on an extracurricular form of education offered by these establishments. In their capacity as relics of the chivalric system, he suggests, they provide a more wide-ranging practical, social and moral

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[1] Several of Newbolt's works had specifically Arthurian themes. *Mordred* (1895) is a play based on the *Morte Darthur* that offers a sympathetic interpretation of Arthur's illegitimate son. Not intended for children, it will not be examined here, but it is worth noting the creative interest in Arthuriana that informs Newbolt's opinions on chivalry and education. His *Aladore* (1914) is an allegorical tale of knight adventurer Ywain, instructed by a forest hermit before embarking upon a series of quests that teach him about the nature of service, personal development, justice and responsibility.

[2] Henry Newbolt, *The Book of the Happy Warrior* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1917), 257.

[3] Newbolt, *Happy Warrior,* 276.

[4] James Campbell argues that this ideology survived the First World War through a tendency towards 'combat gnosticism' in literary criticism: 'a construction that gives us war experience as a kind of gnosis, a secret knowledge which only an initiated elite knows'. See 'Combat Gnosticism: The Ideology of First World War Poetry Criticism', *New Literary History,* 30.1 (1999), 204.

education, offering the modern schoolboy a chance to follow in the footsteps of his medieval counterpart, the heroic knight.

The world of chivalry, Newbolt declares,

> was a real world, a world of real needs and real feelings. It had no use for any pretended efficiency; your fighting, your riding, your shooting, your singing, your courtesy, your love, were all put to the test of action, of competition, of risk, of life and death. Shamming and cramming were useless, for you were examined every day in the whole art of life by those who lived it on the same terms. And you obeyed because you wished to be like them.[5]

Newbolt invokes the language of the competitive examination system – 'efficiency', 'shamming', 'cramming' – to extol the virtues of an alternative form of education, one based around 'the art of life'. This art, comprising mostly physical skill, is tested not through rote learning or 'cramming', but instead through action, competition and risk, and the desire to imitate one's superiors. He terms this 'the school of happy warriors', a title that reflects a common coupling in his work between the realms of school and battlefield. As explored in Chapter One, heroic role models were frequently offered to children in public and state schools during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as part of a movement to promote English Studies as a stronghold of nationalism and liberal middle class values, and Newbolt lent his name to the report that explicitly formalised this viewpoint. However, alongside the importance of English Studies, Newbolt also recognised the potential of heroic tales to instil specifically militaristic virtues. 'However you may educate them in school hours,' Newbolt observes, 'nearly all English boys are born to the love of fighting and of service'.[6] His fictional and poetic work is invested in these 'matters not covered in the textbooks', in promoting an educational ideology with chivalry at its core.

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[5] Newbolt, *Happy Warrior*, 271.
[6] Newbolt, *Happy Warrior*, 272.

Newbolt ends *The Book of the Happy Warrior* with a (lengthy) injunction to his boy reader:

> Take the full happiness of life, the happiness of serving, loving, befriending, and defending – the happiness of fighting and conquering all that is difficult or dangerous or devilish, whether in men or circumstances. Play games, for recreation, but not too seriously, because when they are serious they are neither quite games nor quite the real thing. The real thing is mastery, the power to use the world and all its resources, and hand it on improved to those who come after you. One joy of this mastery is what is called sport – the joy of pitting your courage, your endurance, or your skill against others, men, animals, or mechanisms; better still if it is team work, and best of all if it is the great hazard of life and death, in the service of a cause that is worth a man's life. To gain this mastery, to fit yourself for such a service, you must accept the training offered you, and you must help to train yourself; learn to do everything that man can do […] learn the lives and the adventures of great men, and the thoughts and feelings they have recorded in their books; learn to be a man yourself, not a half-developed or lop-sided creature, but a man full grown, full of all life that can be got from men and spent for men again.[7]

The potential happiness that Newbolt identifies is couched in specifically militaristic, chivalric terms – serving, defending and conquering – and lies particularly in overcoming the 'difficult', 'dangerous' and 'devilish'. The notion of achieving 'mastery' over the world and its resources combines a chivalric and a colonialist ethic through an emphasis on human control, identifying success in the ability to manage and manipulate danger. However, this control soon degenerates into 'great hazard', the unpredictable maelstrom of life and death. Similarly, the opposition between 'games' and 'the real thing' becomes increasingly blurred, as 'sport' is used initially to refer to a joyous test of skill, courage and endurance, but swiftly becomes associated with 'the great hazard of life and death', and noble sacrifice. This uneasy tension between gravitas and frivolity also manifests itself in Newbolt's poetry.[8] His work couples the idea of masculine mastery over danger, and the

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[7] Newbolt, *Happy Warrior,* 283.
[8] In 'The School at War', the army lying in 'fitful sleep' before 'the brink of death' return, in spirit, to the school playing field, in preparation for 'immortal games'. 'Vitaï Lampada', arguably

paradox that true honour can only be found in the hazarding of one's life in an unpredictable scenario. This is cheerfully and powerfully obscured by the commanding imperatives in the final lines of the passage, as he outlines the path towards a 'full grown' masculinity, posited as an essential prerequisite to a life of 'service' and couched again in militaristic and athletic terms, as 'training': the boy must both learn from the examples of others, but must also be actively invested in his own self development. Although the drive for 'mastery' is implied to be innate, it is also, somewhat paradoxically, depicted as something that must be learned. Masculinity, in Newbolt's text, is not a biological guarantee or an assured state of maturity, but a set of qualities to be acquired and honed. Instrumental to this, he suggests, is inspiration drawn from the 'adventures' of great men.

This chapter argues that children's Arthuriana from the early twentieth century sits in fraught relation to the two interlinked, but divergent, conceptions of risk and heroism at work in Newbolt's *Happy Warrior*. On the one hand, these texts present dynamic and exciting tales of heroic knightly exploits to gratify their boy readers' taste for thrilling adventure, positing Arthurian heroes as inspirational exemplars of masculinity through their willingness to take risks. On the other hand, they recognise the problems of aligning heroism with risk-taking and danger, and the difficulties of reinterpreting Malory's 'adventure' and 'worship' for the modern age. The works of American author Howard Pyle (1903-10), and British authors Henry Gilbert (1911) and Alfred Pollard (1917), reinterpret knightly adventures as acts of conscious risk-taking.[9] While Pollard's musings upon the significance of Arthurian danger and heroism are confined to his preface, Pyle and Gilbert contribute a substantial amount of original material to the *Morte* as they grapple with the implications of its risky adventures for the child. Envisaging a boy reader gratified by the presentation of exciting combat, these authors create an enhanced role for child characters in Malory's text, as they are incorporated into the world of battle and achieve valour and

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Newbolt's best-known work for the refrain, 'Play up, play up, and play the game', conflates the school playing field with the battlefield, where the 'game' is played 'not for the sake of a ribboned coat/Or the selfish hope of a season's fame'. See Henry John Newbolt, *Collected Poems 1897-1907* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1910), 151-53; 131-33. It is a mark of Newbolt's ambivalent attitudes towards sport, war and danger that he later referred to 'Vitaï Lampada' as 'a kind of Frankenstein's monster that I created thirty years ago'. See Patrick Howarth, *Play Up and Play the Game: The Heroes of Popular Fiction* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1973), 1.

[9] Pyle published four Arthurian texts; this chapter will focus on the first, *The Story of King Arthur and his Knights,* as it narrates the young Arthur's progress towards adult masculinity.

prowess through their readiness to take risks. Professional children's authors, rather than scholars and academics who occasionally turned their hand to children's writing, Pyle and Gilbert engage imaginatively with Malory's material in order to offer the *Morte* as an example to children, specifically boys, by reformulating its martial adventures to emphasise a series of social and moral qualities that are linked to the development of idealised masculinity.

I. Living dangerously: chivalry and everyday heroism

The same year that Newbolt produced *The Book of the Happy Warrior*, literary scholar and editor Alfred W. Pollard published *The Romance of King Arthur*, accompanied by lavish illustrations by Arthur Rackham. Although the text itself differs little from Malory's version – Pollard notes that he has introduced 'not more than a hundred words of my own' – it is noteworthy for its preface, in which the author offers his personal interpretation of Malory's tale. The legend is

> penetrated to its very core by the special virtues of days in which men were content to live dangerously (dangerously for themselves, not merely dangerously as against others), carrying their lives in their hands and willing to lay them down lightly rather than break the rules of the game or be faithless to word or friend.[10]

Pollard's rhetoric echoes that of Newbolt, depicting the chivalric ethos as a game with codified rules and emphasising the level of personal, bodily risk entailed. Like Newbolt, he stresses the potential nobility of self-sacrifice if achieved in a worthy cause, and the importance of laying down one's life rather than breaking one's honour. His description of the 'wandering knight', who 'challenges a great lord in a trial of skill, to be fought out to death or exhaustion' reflects Newbolt's emphasis on mastery, and the joy to be found in pitting one's courage against a worthy foe. It is reinforced by a dynamic illustration at the end of the preface, featuring an armoured knight brandishing a spear from his rearing horse, a slain foe lying alongside as he rides away into a sky marred with ominous gathering

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[10] Alfred Pollard, *The Romance of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table* (London: Macmillan, 1917), vi.

clouds (fig. 2). The language of sport and gaming pervades Pollard's preface: in fact, he acknowledges that it bears almost 'too great a resemblance to the page in school magazines headed "Characters of the Team"'. He refers to the tradition of courtly love as a 'game' and likens Arthur to 'a typical sportsman', noting that he loved jousting 'as some men now love less dangerous games'. Palomides, the Saracen, 'is constantly doing things which Sir Lancelot, or even Sir Tristram, would have died sooner than do, and then he pulls himself together and apologises and tries manfully to play the game', an echo of Newbolt's famous refrain.[11]

Figure 2. Illustration by Arthur Rackham in Alfred Pollard, *The Romance of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table* (London: Macmillan, 1917), xii.

Pollard's use of sporting rhetoric reveals a preoccupation with masculinity and the legitimacy of danger. Newbolt identified the 'adventures of great men' as indispensable training material for the young boy on a quest for manhood: Pollard's adaptation delivers, explicitly framing the adventures of the Arthurian heroes as educational material concerned with the development of masculinity and the management of risk. Although he does not explicitly address his text to boys, his use of public school rhetoric ('Characters of the Team'; 'play the game') and focus on specifically masculine respectability disclose his

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[11] Pollard, *Romance of King Arthur*, x.

intended audience. Sir Lancelot, Pollard opines, 'is perhaps the most splendid study of a great gentleman in all our literature', a reputation that resides at least partly in his 'eager[ness] to set himself ever harder adventures'. Palomides, however, is 'not quite a gentleman, but pathetically anxious to become one' through his attempt to 'play the game'. For these heroes, the negotiation of danger and risk is indispensable to their masculine development; furthermore, Pollard posits the acquisition of (specifically upper-class) masculinity as the main aim of Malory's errant knights. Arthur, for example, is praised because 'though a king, he never spared to take risks'. Pollard uses a quotation from Malory's *Morte* to emphasise this: 'all men of worship said it was merry to be under such a chieftain, that would put his person in adventure as other knights did'.[12] Newbolt's notion of mastery is here realised in Arthur the chieftain, whose willingness to take risks and undergo 'adventures' is linked to his acquisition of masculinity and superior social position.

However, as with Newbolt's *Happy Warrior*, Pollard's text also manifests a tension between the glorification of adventure and 'sport', and the risks of a hazardous world. He appears more uneasy about this than Newbolt, considering in his preface the implications of offering 'dangerous' heroic examples to young readers. The narrator notes that courtly love sometimes passed 'beyond a game', and 'because it was dangerous, although every one knew it was wrong, it made a story more exciting, and all the writers of these Arthurian romances chose this exciting subject as a literary fashion'. Pollard's preface acknowledges the appeal of danger within the Arthurian world, but commends the tendency of the legend to condemn gratuitous risk-taking. 'The saving merit […] of the Arthurian romances,' he concludes, 'is that, though they insist on this situation in order to show the hero daring all sorts of dangers, they make it perfectly clear that the situation was wrong and could not go unpunished'. The legend is a 'great story', he declares, 'because it shows us the effect on many different characters of this obligation to live dangerously'. Its didactic potential is linked to the complexities of risk-taking among individuals, 'men and women of real flesh and blood, no two of them alike'.[13]Although Arthur is praised for never sparing to take risks, Pollard is anxious about the 'obligation to live dangerously' that underpins so many of the Arthurian tales.

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[12] Pollard, *Romance of King Arthur*, ix.
[13] Pollard, *Romance of King Arthur*, viii.

Pollard's preface, with its anxieties about excessive danger and simultaneous glorification of risk-taking as essential to the development of a gentleman, complicates the possibility that the *Morte* appealed to, and was offered to, children solely because of its presentation of exciting adventures. An early reviewer of Knowles's 1862 adaptation recommended for boys its 'healthfully active and energetic' style, where 'incident crowds on incident, adventure succeeds adventure'.[14] The adaptations of Pollard, Pyle and Gilbert do, in many ways, continue a nineteenth-century tradition of offering heroic tales, often drawn from antiquarian sources, to boy readers to stimulate their excitement. This assumption that stories of adventure were both appealing and beneficial to boy readers was evident in the huge range of texts in this vein provided for boys during the nineteenth century, from the popular novels of Charles Kingsley, Captain Marryat and G. A. Henty to the numerous boys' story papers bearing titles such as 'Pluck', 'The Champion' and 'Adventure' itself. As late as 1921, the editor of the latter quoted a famous explorer (unnamed) as claiming:

> I do not believe there is not one healthy, full-blooded boy or man in this country whose heart does not thrill at the thought of adventures, or who does not live for the day when he will get the opportunity to bring off some daring deeds. If there's a spice of danger, all the better. Adventure is the breath of life!'[15]

The term 'spice' emphasises the excitement that accompanied adventure in these texts, as physical risk-taking was portrayed as exhilarating and healthy. For this reason, narratives of heroic adventure, often drawn from ancient or medieval legend, were offered as exemplary reading for young boys (although 'penny dreadfuls' or sensationalist crime stories were largely condemned).[16] In 1907, Elizabeth Godfrey wrote in *English Children in the Olden Time* that texts such as *Beowulf* and John Mandeville's *Travels* inculcated 'an adventurous spirit, a brave heart, a joyous delight in outdoor life', while Newbolt offered the tale of

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[14] 'The Arthur Legends', *The Pall Mall Gazette* (London), 8 Feb 1869, 10.

[15] 'You and the Editor', *Adventure*, 21 Sep 1921, 3.

[16] Other examples include Charlotte Yonge's *A Book of Golden Deeds* (1864) and *A Book of Worthies* (1869); American educational reformer Hamilton Wright Mabie's *Heroes Every Child Should Know* (1906); and, later, F. J. Harvey Darton's *A Wonder Book of Old Romance* (1907) and David W. Oates's *Heroes of Old Britain* (1914), based on tales from Geoffrey of Monmouth.

squire John Marland as 'the record of a boy's first adventure in the great world of chivalry'.[17] Kenelm Digby's *Broad Stone of Honour* (1822), which played an important role in the nineteenth-century chivalric revival, posited that 'as the heroic is always the earliest age in the history of nations, so youth, the first period of human life, may be considered as the heroic or chivalrous age of each separate man'.[18] The perceived connection between childhood and the medieval, discussed in Chapter One, is here deployed to establish a further connection between childhood and the specifically chivalric and heroic. In fact, Digby suggests that the link between childhood and heroic chivalry is deeply rooted in medieval culture and language: 'the Anglo-Saxons distinguished the period between childhood and manhood by the term "cnihthade", knighthood'. Every boy and youth is, Digby claimed, 'in his mind and sentiments, a knight, and essentially a son of chivalry'.[19]

However, it is clear that authors were also anxious about offering ancient heroic tales as exemplary in an age where combat with sword and shield was no longer a viable means of proving one's mettle. A parallel tradition of heroic representation focused on and developed Digby's notion of knighthood as mental and sentimental. John Price has examined the phenomenon of 'everyday heroism' – the recognition that heroic acts were performed by both men and women of all classes and ranks – in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By 1908, he suggests, 'everyday heroism was relatively well understood', shaped by public activity such as the introduction of the Albert Medal and the Carnegie Hero Fund Trust and the construction of memorials to everyday heroes: working or middle-class men and women who had voluntarily risked their lives to save others.[20] The imperial adventurer sought out and 'performed' heroism, Price suggests; by contrast, the everyday hero acted unselfconsciously and spontaneously. This impulse to relocate heroism in the everyday milieu of nineteenth-century life gave rise to books for children such as Laura Lane's *Heroes of Every-Day Life* (1896) and Frank Mundell's *Heroines of Daily Life*

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[17] Elizabeth Godfrey, *English Children in the Olden Time* (London: Methuen, 1907), 64; Newbolt, *Happy Warrior,* 176.

[18] Kenelm Digby, *The Broad Stone of Honour: Or, the True Sense and Practice of Chivalry. The First Book, Godefridus* (London: R. Gilbert, 1829), 89.

[19] Digby, *Broad Stone,* 90.

[20] John Price, *Everyday Heroism: Victorian Constructions of the Heroic Civilian* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 129.

(1896), and was also made tangible in George Frederic Watts's 'Memorial to Heroic Self Sacrifice', installed in London's Postman's Park in 1900 and featuring a series of plaques commemorating everyday acts of self sacrifice by members of the public, including those performed by children.[21] In the US, Louis Albert Banks published *Twentieth Century Knighthood: A Series of Addresses to Young Men* (1900), outlining a modern-day chivalry exemplified by common men, such as a train inspector who refused to be provoked by a rude passenger. These stories, he suggested, would provide 'a wide stimulation of manly courage in the hearts of American youth'.[22]

This acknowledgement that children could be capable of heroic deeds, following edifying literary inspiration, was also evident in British titles such as William Martin's *Heroism of Boyhood; Or, What Boys Have Done* (1865), a collation of inspirational tales about the boyhoods of great men. Martin acknowledged that the nineteenth century required a new heroism for its children to emulate. 'In former times, a man, to be a hero, was expected to slay his thousands, to found empires, and to subjugate nations', Martin noted. Now, however, 'we understand that true heroism may consist in performing our duty in that state of life unto which it may please God to call us'. The heroism of active, militant chivalry is replaced in Martin's text with 'refraining from evil', 'speaking the truth', 'devoting ourselves to some difficult task for the sake of others' and 'the vindication of principle'.[23] Consequently, the heroes of his text are characters who have won 'nobility from obscurity' by 'force of talent and indomitable perseverance', such as George Stephenson. In this alternative tradition of heroism, martial chivalry was divested of its class connotations and reinterpreted as a series of moral and character virtues that could enable one to survive within an increasingly industrial, mercantile economy.[24] Kelly Boyd has observed that within boys' story papers of the early twentieth century, 'aristocratic

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[21] See Laura Lane, *Heroes of Every-Day Life* (London: Cassell, 1896) and Frank Mundell, *Heroines of Daily Life* (London: Sunday School Union, 1896).

[22] Louis Albert Banks, *Twentieth Century Knighthood: A Series of Addresses to Young Men* (New York: Funk & Wagnells, 1900), 14.

[23] William Martin, *Heroism of Boyhood; Or, What Boys have Done* (London: Darton & Hodge, 1865), iii.

[24] Mark Girouard has identified the connection between gentlemanliness and the revival of chivalry in *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981). Everyday heroism, although similarly interested in moral rather than martial forms of chivalry, is an alternate and parallel tradition in terms of its focus upon figures from the working and middle classes.

heroes still appeared, but members of the lower-middle and artisan classes also became protagonists and a tension had developed between individual endeavours and community requirements'.[25] This tension, between the daring knight with his desire for personal 'worship', and the moral and social requirements of the court, is also a feature of Malory's *Morte Darthur,* and is accentuated in the adaptations of Pyle and Gilbert. These versions attempt to redefine chivalric adventure in ways that retain the 'spice' of danger, whilst simultaneously emphasising social responsibility.

II. Adventure abroad: risk and the unknown

The term 'adventure' carries a variety of significations within Malory's *Morte*. Its four most common meanings are: a knight's literal or metaphorical journey into the unknown, as when Balin declares 'I shall take the adventure […] that God will ordaine to me'; physical jeopardy, as when Griflet offers to 'adventure his body with yonder knight at the fountaine'; chance, as when Ulfius 'by adventure […] met Merlyn in a beggers araye'; and a knight's tales of his experiences relayed to the court, as when Arthur charges Gawain, Ewaine and Marhaus to 'tell him all their adventures that there had beene fallen them all the twelve monthes'.[26] Adventure can function as a verb of action, a state of being, a philosophical concept, and a recollected narrative. Beverly Kennedy suggests that the term – derived from the Latin *res adventura,* 'that which is to come' – and its significations can be differentiated through 'the question of who or what makes things (*res*) come about (*adventura*)'.[27] The concept of adventure as fate or chance implies a causal agent, but one with 'a supernatural or transcendent nature which man is powerless to control': the 'God' that will 'ordain' Balin's adventure for him. Adventure as exploit implies demonstration of skill or daring, which in turn implies competition and therefore *human* agency; as Kennedy suggests, 'since [God] has no odds against Him and no competition, one would never want to call one of His actions an "enterprise" or an "exploit"'. Where adventure signifies

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[25] Kelly Boyd, 'Knowing Your Place: The Tensions of Manliness in Boys' Story Papers' in *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800,* ed. Michael Roper and John Tosh (London: Routledge, 1991), 145.

[26] Thomas Wright (ed.), *The History of King Arthur and of the Knights of the Round Table, Compiled by Sir Thomas Malory,* vol. 1 (London: Reeves & Turner, 1889), 62; 49; 3; 166-67.

[27] Beverly Kennedy, 'Notions of Adventure in Malory's *Morte Darthur'*, *Arthurian Interpretations,* 3.2 (1989), 39.

jeopardy or danger, however, although human rather than divine agency is assumed (because an omnipotent and omniscient God could never experience danger),

> the compelling question of human volition may still remain. One wants to know whether the man *in adventure* has chosen to take this 'risk' in order to realize his own 'enterprise' or whether he simply finds himself in 'danger'. The reader is forced to look to the context for an answer to this question, because this meaning of *adventure* in itself leaves open both possibilities.[28]

We witness this dual signification in an important incident from the *Morte,* frequently depicted in children's versions and quoted in Pollard's preface: the aftermath of Arthur's near-fatal battle with King Pellinore. Saved by Merlin's magic, the King

> came unto Carlion, whereof the knights were passing glad; and when they heard of his adventures, they marvailed that he would jeopard his person so alone. But all men of worship said it was mery to be under such a chieftaine that would put his person in adventure as other poore knights did.[29]

The revelation that Arthur would 'jeopard his person' is ambiguous in its implications of agency. The jeopardy may have been accidentally *or* intentionally encountered; Arthur being 'so alone' may simply have rendered him more susceptible to accidental danger. However, the phrase 'put his person in adventure' suggests the conscious positioning of the body in a space hitherto acknowledged as dangerous, implying the *voluntary* undertaking of a dangerous feat; adventure as verb of action and as jeopardy converge. Apart from the recollected narrative meaning, it is this interpretation of adventure that appears most frequently in the work of Pyle and Gilbert. 'Adventure' in these children's texts entails a literal crossing of boundaries that also signifies the metaphorical separation between the word's dual significations of chance and agency. In embarking upon adventurous activity in an unknown, perilous space, one voluntarily (agency) enters a realm ruled by fate (chance), a potentially dangerous world.

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[28] Kennedy, 'Notions of Adventure', 41.
[29] Wright (ed.), *Malory*, vol. 1, 56.

Graham Dawson notes a seventeenth-century usage of the term adventure in the phrase 'to adventure themselves abroad', with 'abroad' originally signifying 'out of one's house' before its extension to 'out of one's home country' in the mid-fifteenth century. This shift, Dawson notes, 'catches perfectly the widening thresholds of the unknown beyond which increasingly perilous adventures may occur'.[30] Adventure becomes synonymous with 'risk-taking', emphasising human agency in crossing a boundary into an unknown and dangerous world. The earliest uses of the term 'risk' are recorded in the mid-seventeenth century, and denote '(exposure to) the possibility of harm or damage causing financial loss, against which property or an individual may be insured'.[31] The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites two possible etymologies: one is the Arabic *rizq,* carrying connotations of luck, fortune, destiny and chance. Another is the unattested post-classical Latin noun *resecum* (a proposed derivative of classical Latin *resecāre*), with the sense 'that which cuts' and hence 'rock, crag, reef', alluding to the hazards of travel by sea and explaining the earliest uses of the term in the context of maritime insurance. From the seventeenth century the term adventure was also used in this context, to denote the period during which a ship or cargo was considered to be in danger.[32] Both risk and adventure, then, incorporate elements of chance and of human agency. Risk, however, implies a greater degree of the latter: we *take* risks, *run* risks, *assess* risks; at the most basic level, we are *aware* of risks, with all the emphasis on the human subject this entails.

Elaine Freedgood identifies 'careful representations of the precise locations of safety and danger' in ephemera from the nineteenth century – handbooks of hospital reform, statistical analyses of the British empire, memoirs of balloon aeronauts – which suggest 'risk could either be avoided altogether (in England) or engaged voluntarily in the

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[30] Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire, and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994), 58.
[31] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s. v. 'Risk', accessed 7 Feb 2014: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/166306?rskey=IIcWm9&result=1&isAdvanced=false.
[32] John Vernon, in *The Compleat Comptinghouse*, a series of instructions to trainee merchants published in 1678, includes a copy of a 'policy of assurance' which refers to 'the adventures and perils which we the assurers are contended to bear, and do take upon us in this voyage' (145). See John Vernon, *The Compleat Comptinghouse* (London: Benjamin Billingsley, 1678).

dangerous world beyond it'.[33] The idea that 'risk could be written into, and out of, specific places' is also evident in children's literature from the period. The adventures depicted in boys' literature write risk into imperial or fantastical locations: in Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883), Jim Hawkins indulges an array of fantasies about what the 'unknown island' might be like as he prepares to take a risk and set sail. 'Sometimes the isle was thick with savages, with whom we fought, sometimes full of dangerous animals that hunted us,' Jim notes, 'but in all my fancies nothing occurred to me so strange and tragic as our actual adventures'.[34] Jim's comment posits adventure as existing at the intersection of absent knowledge about the future, and the decision to take a risk in the face of that absence: adventure is used to emphasise human, specifically masculine, agency. Similarly, in Howard Pyle's four-book Arthuriad, the term 'risk' is only ever used to denote a voluntary choice to imperil one's body or life, often involving the conscious crossing of a spatial boundary. 'Risk' is not a term that occurs in the *Morte Darthur;* it is significant that Pyle assigns this term to episodes of knightly adventure, as it foregrounds the intention and agency behind such activity. Arthur, before entering into combat with Pellias, asks him to agree that whichever knight is overthrown shall serve the other. Pellias responds, 'I do accept that risk'.[35] Geraint, warned of the evils that lie over a bridge, declares 'I shall assume even such a risk as that', riding onwards.[36] Tristram acknowledges that 'it is a great risk for me [to go to Ireland...] it is hardly likely that I shall ever escape from that country again with my life', before choosing to do so anyway.[37] Risk here is actually risk-taking, placing emphasis on human agency. It denotes the voluntary acceptance of or engagement with the uncertain and potentially dangerous beyond an established spatial boundary. We can perceive this at work in Malory's original, with the phrase 'put his person in adventure', and in Henry Gilbert's *King Arthur's Knights*, where the act of adventure is often coupled with a spatial transition: 'set forth to seek greater adventures in deserts and

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[33] Elaine Freedgood, *Victorian Writing about Risk: Imagining a Safe England in a Dangerous World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1.

[34] Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island* (London: Penguin Books, 1994), 42.

[35] Howard Pyle, *Story of King Arthur,* 108.

[36] Howard Pyle, *The Story of the Grail and the Passing of Arthur* (New York: Dover Publications, 1992), 50. First published 1910.

[37] Howard Pyle, *The Story of the Champions of the Round Table* (New York: Dover Publications, 1968), 126. First published 1905.

wild regions'; 'went into Logres and Alban and Wales, seeking adventures'; 'go forth into strange lands to seek adventures'.[38]

Dawson observes that 'the essence of adventure resides in risk that gives rise to an experience of novelty and excitement'.[39] Howard Pyle embellishes Malory's text with new 'adventures', designed to enthral the reader. These are characterised by their situation in unknown locations, and require the taking of risks. Born to Quaker parents in Delaware in 1853, Pyle earned the childhood nickname 'The Bloody Quaker' for his self-confessed 'strong liking for pirates and for highwaymen, for gunpowder smoke and for good hard blows'.[40] Initially an art teacher, Pyle began writing original and adapted stories for children in the 1880s, including a version of *Robin Hood,* and was a prolific illustrator for historical adventure stories in children's periodicals as well as his own texts. In 1903 he produced the first of four King Arthur books, which, although based on Malory's *Morte,* take great liberties with the story.[41] Rather than rendering the legend into modern English, as was common during the early twentieth century, Pyle writes in an archaic, pseudo-medieval style, and his vivid woodcut illustrations have been perceived as evoking an alluring 'timeless present'.[42] His version remains popular today for its appealing prose and illustration, and in 1983 was included in the 'Canon of Children's Literature', a list of sixty authors and titles compiled by the Children's Literature Association.[43] A man who rarely travelled and preferred the familiar and the domestic to the adventurous, Pyle displays a vicarious fascination with the marauding figures of archaic history and legend in his work, which explores 'the tensions between civilisation and barbarism, law and license, social order and individual freedom'.[44] His first book, *The Story of King Arthur and his Knights,*

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[38] Henry Gilbert, *King Arthur's Knights* (Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack, n.d.), 195; 117; 114. First published 1911.

[39] Dawson, *Soldier Heroes,* 53.

[40] Lucien Agosta, *Howard Pyle* (Boston: Twayne, 1987), 1.

[41] Pyle invents an episode in which Arthur disguises himself as a gardener's boy in order to woo Guinevere, and changes certain details from the *Morte,* such as having Lancelot marry the lovestruck Elaine.

[42] Jeanne Fox-Friedman and Julie Nelson Couch have analysed the role played by Pyle's illustrations in his Arthurian work; see Jeanne Fox-Friedman, 'Howard Pyle and the Chivalric Order in America: King Arthur for Children', *Arthuriana* 6.1 (1996): 77-95 and Julie Nelson Couch, 'Howard Pyle's *The Story of King Arthur and his Knights* and the Bourgeois Boy Reader', *Arthuriana* 13.2 (2003): 38-53.

[43] See Agosta, *Howard Pyle,* preface (n.p.).

[44] Agosta, *Howard Pyle,* 1.

manifests this friction in a series of exciting, violent adventures that are gradually overshadowed by an increasingly didactic interpretation of Arthur's youthful experiences.
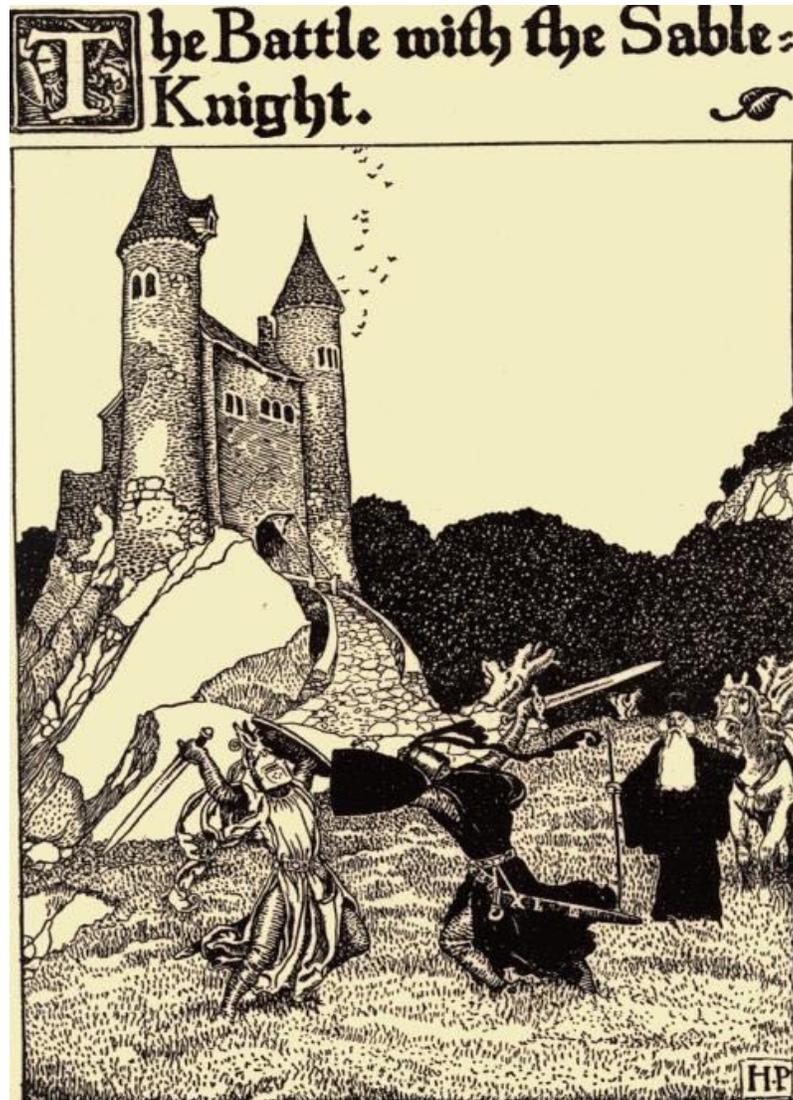
Figure 3. 'The battle with the Sable Knight'. Illustration by Howard Pyle in *The Story of King Arthur and his Knights* (New York: Dover Publications, 1965), 52.

Arthur's first adventure after being crowned king is that of the 'Sable Knight', Malory's King Pellinore. In order to do battle with this knight, Arthur passes through 'the Valley of Delight', 'a wide and gently sloping valley, a-down which ran a stream as bright as silver […] strewn all over with an infinite multitude of fair and fragrant flowers of divers sorts'. In this valley he finds 'three damoiselles clad in flame-coloured satin', who urge the

king, 'be in no such haste to undertake a dangerous adventure'. Merlin, too, warns Arthur: 'a real peril […] lieth before thee […] thou shalt certainly suffer great dole and pain therein'. He chooses to proceed, however, and must follow a 'dark pathway' away from the valley 'for the distance of a league or a little more'. Before Arthur even reaches the 'place where dwelt the Sable Knight', the space is clearly juxtaposed with and isolated from the safety of the Valley of Delight. Violence and foreboding are inscribed in the very space of this adventure: Arthur perceives 'a violent stream of water, that rushed through a dark and dismal glen', a 'tall and forbidding castle', and a tree hung with blood-stained shields. Furthermore, there is also 'a lawn of green grass, whereon Knights-contestants might joust very well'.[45] Unlike the flower-strewn lawn of the Valley of Delight, this lawn is specifically identified as a stage for dangerous physical activity. The setting is dramatised in Pyle's dynamic woodcut illustration (fig. 3). The Sable Knight's 'forbidding castle' stands tall in the background; a group of dark birds, suggestive of carrion crows, circle ominously overhead. Merlin is dwarfed in the background by the figures of two knights, mid-battle, their swords raised in the air, as if to suggest that even the wizard cannot save Arthur from this potential peril. Pyle's language heightens the tension and excitement of the battle: the knights come together three times, and each time disaster appears to strike on both sides. The Sable Knight's spear splinters, Arthur's saddle is torn apart and throws the king from his horse, and the Sable Knight too is pulled from his steed. Arthur is 'bereft of his senses' by a blow, 'so that everything whirled around before his eyes', and the violence of the knights' blows result in 'whole cantels of armor [being] hewn from their bodies and many deep and grievous wounds'. Malory's succinct description of the battle is replaced by four pages of graphic fighting, during which each side loses and regains the upper hand. Its suspense is heightened to increase the excitement of the child reader, whose attention is engaged by the multiple references to blood and violence.

The dwelling of the Sable Knight, demarcated as a dangerous space, is coupled with Merlin's warning and the written challenge 'Whoso Smiteth This Shield Doeth So At His Peril', to warn of the forthcoming adventure as potentially harmful. Arthur, however, voluntarily crosses the boundary between safety and danger: 'even an I were to face my death,' he tells Merlin, 'yet would I not turn back from this adventure'. With his use of the

[45] Pyle, *Story of King Arthur*, 47; 50; 53.

subjunctive, Arthur acknowledges the uncertainty inscribed in this dangerous space. However, what is ultimately foregrounded is his agency in seeking it. He disregards Merlin's warning to turn back, declaring 'with a very steadfast countenance' that 'I have a greater mind than ever for to try my power against yonder knight. For, consider, what especial honor would fall to me should I overcome so valiant a warrior'. Pyle's knights make conscious choices to enter these self-proclaimed spaces of danger and uncertainty; furthermore, a link is established between doing so and the demonstration of certain positive masculine values, such as steadfastness and honour. Merlin tells Arthur that he is 'assuredly, a very brave man to have so much appetite for battle'.[46] The encounter with the Sable Knight marks his transition from a 'beardless boy', despised by his fellow lords and monarchs, to a respected man and king.

Pyle's choice to elaborate and embellish Arthur's youthful years from Malory's *Morte* can be compared with children's author Henry Gilbert's decision to add a new character, Owen, to his narrative, based on Chrétien de Troyes' tale of *Yvain, Le Chevalier au Lion*.[47] The first colour illustration of Gilbert's text, by Walter Crane, depicts the boy as a supplicant, clinging to Arthur's robes (fig. 4). The king, crowned and clad in a lavish gold and red robe featuring a dragon, holds out his hand to stop his guard restraining the young boy. The illustration foreshadows Gilbert's special interest in child characters throughout his adaptation of the *Morte*: Owen joins the young Perceval in a series of stories that depict knightly childhoods and youthful longings for chivalric glory. A page in King Arthur's court, Owen's first act of heroism is to save the king's life from the evil Turquine. Unable to sleep during an ominously stormy night, Owen is haunted by 'vague and dreadful fears'. Intending to go and lie at the king's door in case of emergency, he is seized by the throat and a 'hateful voice' growls in his ear, 'Lead us to the king's room, or this [knife] shall sink in thy heart!' He refuses, and Turquine 'thrust his dagger into the body of the struggling boy, who swooned and dropped to the floor'. In spite of his wounds, Owen rouses himself to stumble through the castle halls and sound the alarm. His injuries are found not to be fatal, and he is laid at the foot of Arthur's bed, 'glad and proud to hear the king's words of

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[46] Pyle, *Story of King Arthur*, 50; 54; 65.
[47] Gilbert retains the basic plot of Chrétien's tale, in which Yvain encounters a magical fountain that leads to a series of adventures culminating in his marriage. However, he diverges from the original by depicting Owen as a young boy at Arthur's court before his transition to knighthood.

praise'. Significantly, Merlin advises Arthur, 'ye owe your life to this brave lad here, and he shall be a passing good man when he shall have attained his full strength, and he doth deserve your high and gracious favour'.[48] Owen's act of heroism marks his transition from a 'lad' to a 'passing good man'; his youthful bravery is aligned with the achievement of a noble masculinity, endorsed by King Arthur himself. Later in life, Owen performs a series of adventures – including battling a troll – that leads to his marriage to the countess Elined, 'because he had proved himself the best man of all her wooers'.[49]

YOUNG OWEN APPEALS TO THE KING
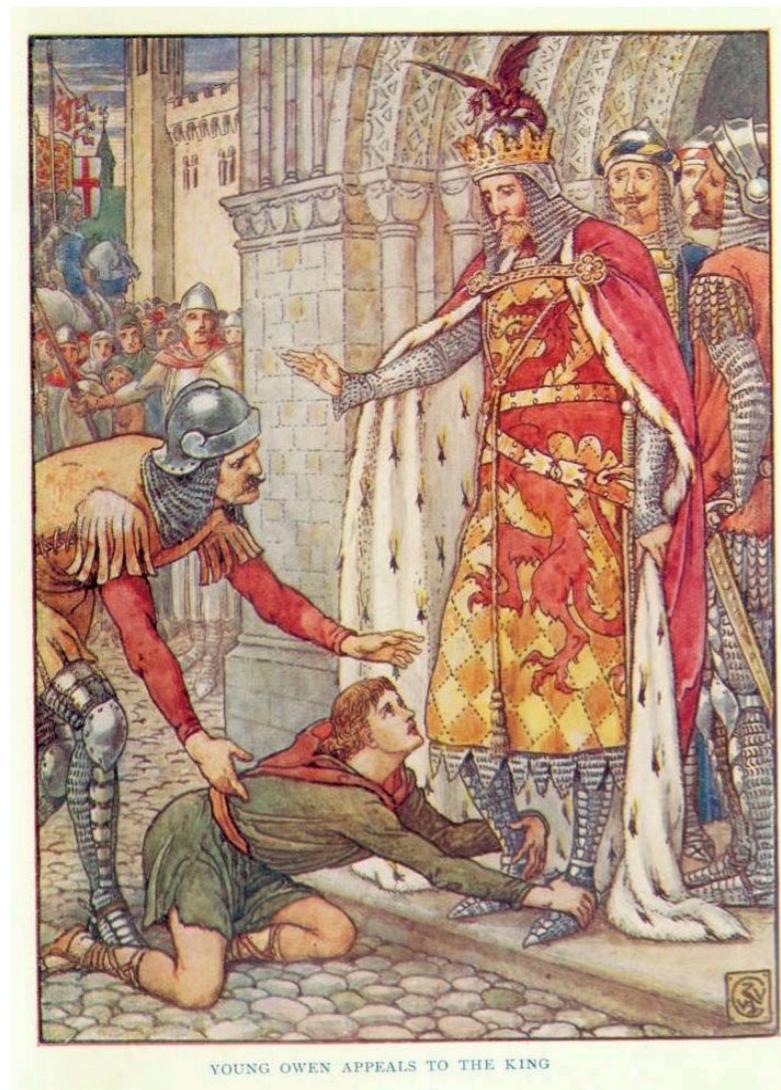
Figure 4. 'Young Owen appeals to the King'. Illustration by Walter Crane in Henry Gilbert, *King Arthur's Knights* (Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack, n.d.), ii.

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[48] Gilbert, *King Arthur's Knights*, 21.
[49] Gilbert, *King Arthur's Knights*, 215.

YOUNG PERCEVAL QUESTIONS SIR OWEN
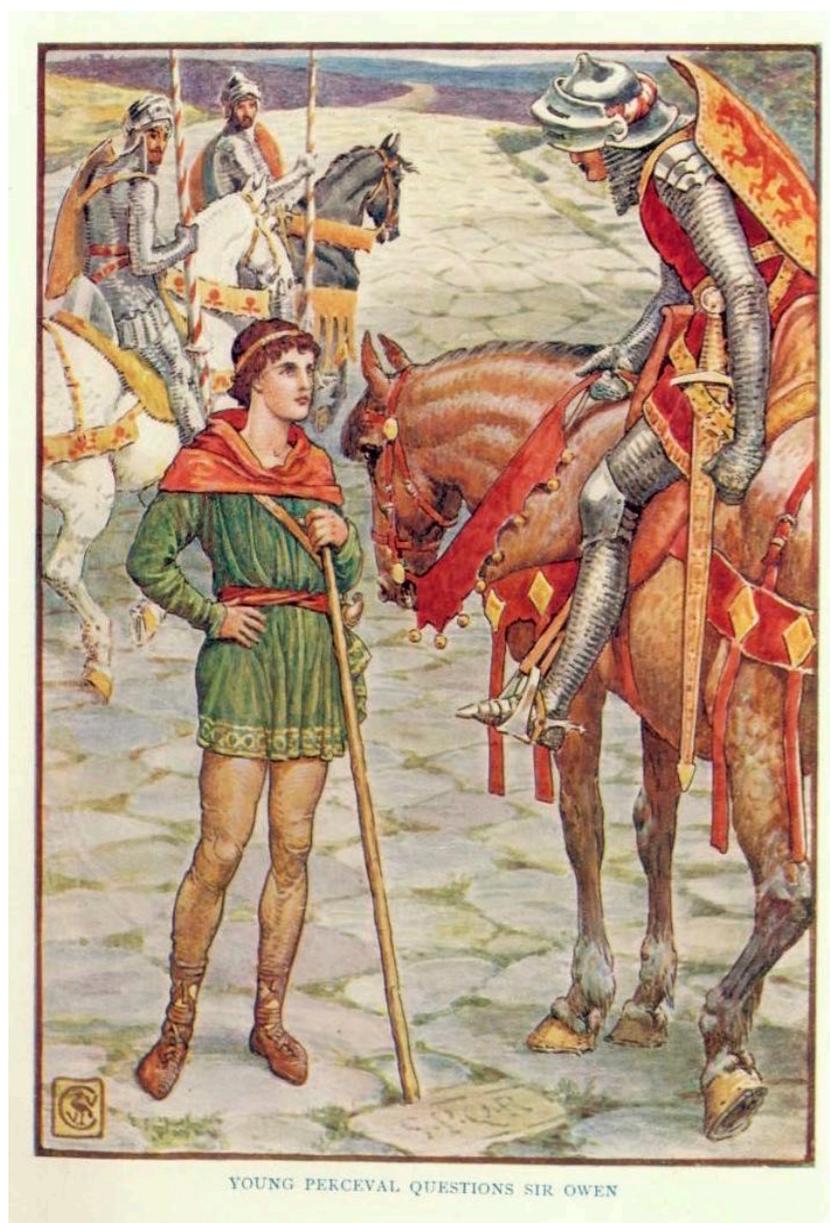
Figure 5. 'Young Perceval questions Sir Owen'. Illustration by Walter Crane
in Gilbert, *King Arthur's Knights,* 168.

Owen later becomes a mentor to the young Perceval, who follows in his footsteps as a squire working towards knighthood. A colour illustration mirrors the earlier image of Owen prostrate at Arthur's feet (fig. 5). This time, however, it is Perceval who is the youthful page, dressed in exactly the same red and green garments as the young Owen in the previous illustration, while Sir Owen, now a knight on horseback, proudly displays the Arthurian colours of red and yellow and the dragon motif, his head bowed kindly in

Perceval's direction. In an episode echoing Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, we are told that Perceval, the youngest of seven sons, is kept at home by his mother so that he can 'run no risk of death', while his brothers are 'famed for their knightly prowess'. He befriends a clan of trolls, the head of whom predicts that Perceval 'shall be a stainless knight, who shall gain from evil the greatest strength', foreshadowing his role in Malory's Grail Quest. 'But the lad knew not what he meant,' Gilbert's narrator notes, 'though he was very content to have the trolls for his friends'.[50] This juxtaposition of the high mystery and religious gravitas of Malory's narrative with the childlike simplicity of a young boy emphasises Gilbert's reworking of the legend to appeal to a young male reader, a child motivated by a desire for adventure and a thirst for knowledge. Furthermore, it frames the adventures of Malory's narrative as culminating in a respectable masculinity, aligned with bravery and honour.

After Pyle's Arthur has defeated Pellinore, won Excalibur and battled with the Duke of North Umber, we are told that his knights

> were greatly amazed, and gave much acclaim unto the knightliness with which he had borne himself in those excellent adventures through which he had passed. And they rejoiced greatly that they had a king for to rule over them who was possessed of such a high and knightly spirit.[51]

Explicitly linked to the performance of 'adventures' is an idealised form of masculinity that Pyle terms 'knightliness' in line with his Malorian material, but which in these texts encapsulates a mixture of bravery, selflessness and physical action. The taking of risks, narrated as adventure, is aligned with the acquisition of a positive, vigorous masculinity. Perceval, kept at home by his mother so that he can 'run no risk of death', can never achieve the 'knightly prowess' of his six brothers: it is only once he is free to make his own way in strange lands that he transitions from a 'foolish lad' to a 'young man'. Within Pyle's and Gilbert's adaptations, risk-taking – the agency required to cross a boundary into the perilous unknown – is central to the development of masculinity. In this way, it can be read

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[50] Gilbert, *King Arthur's Knights*, 168.
[51] Pyle, *Story of King Arthur*, 122.

alongside nineteenth-century discourses of adventure which, inflected by developments in capitalism and financial speculation, associate risk-taking with reward and revenue.

III. The revenues of danger

Francis O'Gorman, discussing the adventurous plots of H. Rider Haggard's boys' novels, identifies 'risk's pleasurable transformation into reward'. Reading Haggard's novels within the context of late nineteenth-century capitalism, O'Gorman perceives his heroes as 'fantasies of masculinity and simulacra of a different sort of modern economic man'. Motivated by a desire for reward, not from traditional productive labour but from risk-taking, Haggard's protagonists are neither producers nor consumers, but instead enact a form of speculation through daring ventures in exotic locales. His novels create what O'Gorman terms 'an environment intrigued by the revenues of danger'.[52] The concept of adventure as accruing reward and revenue can be traced alongside the financial developments that had inflected the word since the sixteenth century, where it began to denote 'A financial risk or venture; a commercial enterprise; a speculation'.[53] By the late nineteenth century, this attribution was widespread. In 1887, an article in Chambers's Journal described 'the steady, persevering trader, who had been accustomed to increase his wealth and prosperity by enterprises and adventures surrounded by no little risk and peril'.[54] Adventure, and the act of risk-taking it required, was identified with the accumulation of capital, a 'new and potentially vibrant financial energy'.[55] The figure of the merchant adventurer, engaging in financial transactions abroad, combines both the Middle English concept of adventure as existing in an unknown, potentially dangerous space and the rising influence of venture capitalism, or financial risk-taking.

Furthermore, the signification of 'capital' extended to moral and social, as well as financial, meanings. Nancy Henry, writing on finance and speculation in the work of

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[52] Francis O'Gorman, 'Speculative Fictions and the Fortunes of H. Rider Haggard' in *Victorian Literature and Finance*, ed. Francis O'Gorman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 169.
[53] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s. v. 'Adventure', accessed 5 May 2014: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/2923?rskey=oEORLu&result=1&isAdvanced=false.
[54] 'Stock Exchange Speculation', *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Arts*, 4.187 (1887), 481.
[55] O'Gorman, 'Speculative Fictions', 172.

George Eliot, notes the 'mentality of measuring human value as an investment' in the references to Tom Tulliver's education as 'capital' in *The Mill on the Floss*.[56] The anonymous writer of *How a Penny became a Thousand Pounds* (1856), a guide to successful financial ventures, noted that 'people's faces are often a reflex of their tills. A blank page on the credit side of a banker's book blanches the cheek of the depositor. A full page of ugly debits sets a dark frown upon his brow'.[57] Tamara Wagner explores how the figure of the nineteenth-century speculator 'stands in for a welter of cultural, social, and personal emotional issues', as Victorian literature explored the link between financial accountability and personal responsibility.[58] Newbolt recalls that in his school days, the danger of war was distant and limited, 'but risks were taken and credit was at stake'.[59] The continuing rise of capitalism in the nineteenth century had cemented this link between risk and 'credit', both in a financial and in a moral sense. Christopher Clark has argued that narratives of economic respectability became a staple of biographical and autobiographical writing in nineteenth-century America, as qualities deemed exemplary for the conduct of business became incorporated into evaluative judgements about character.[60] Within this financial context, adventure served as a means of gaining 'credit', both in terms of literal capital and moral respectability. This relationship infiltrated 'everyday hero' literature, focused not on the daring adventures of crusading knights in Saracen lands but instead on the perseverance and financial success of figures like George Stephenson. In America, this new model of the financial hero was presented as exemplary to children in *The Rich Men of Massachusetts* (1851), a series of character sketches describing money made by 'experience and risk', but also emphasising 'success resulting from a suitable combination of those sterling qualities, Perseverance, Energy, Carefulness, Economy, Integrity, Honesty'.[61]

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[56] Nancy Henry, *George Eliot and the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 79.

[57] Anon, *How a Penny became a Thousand Pounds* (London: Houlston & Stoneman, 1865), 62.

[58] Tamara Wagner, *Financial Speculation in Victorian Fiction: Plotting Money and the Novel Genre, 1815-1901* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2010), 174.

[59] Henry Newbolt, *My World as in My Time: Memoirs of Sir Henry Newbolt, 1862-1932* (London: Faber & Faber, 1932), 40.

[60] Christopher Clark, '"Martyrs to a Nice Sense of Honour": Exemplars of Commercial Morality in the Mid-Nineteenth Century United States' in *Heroic Reputations and Exemplary Lives*, ed. Geoffrey Cubitt and Allen Warren (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 194-211.

[61] A. Forbes and J. W. Greene, *The Rich Men of Massachusetts: Containing a Statement of the Reputed Wealth of about Fifteen Hundred Persons, with Brief Sketches of more than One Thousand Characters* (Boston: Redding, 1851), iii.

Approval of the 'capital' or 'credit' gained by risk-taking was often tempered by insistence upon hard work and honesty: financial adventures could result in gain, but they had to be undertaken with care and consideration. These narratives dispel the notion of speculation as a 'quick fix', suggesting instead that capitalism simply provided a context within which the resourceful, persevering, honest man could flourish financially and socially. The author of *How a Penny became a Thousand Pounds* notes that 'every successful man, engaged in speculative matters, has reserved to himself a sufficient prop to meet a contingency'. His narrative of financial success is suffused with references to precautions, insurance, honesty and industry, and he ends his account with an injunction to the reader: 'remember, above all things, the system of *assurance,* which will immediately cover the chief contingency of life'.[62] At the end of George Henry Lewes's play *The Game of Speculation* (1851), the protagonist, Affable Hawk, delivers a moralising speech to the audience: 'play your game boldly and steadily, till some good card turns up – then reap the reward of your courage and your toil – burn the cards, and eschew for ever – as I shall do – the Game of Speculation!' His reference to the game of speculation is perhaps an allusion to the popular Victorian card game, based around the act of gambling.[63] Both associated with perseverance, stoicism and patience ('reward of your courage and your toil') and with the potential for ruin through reckless gambling, the ambivalent usage of 'game' here is symptomatic of mixed attitudes towards speculation during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We find this in Newbolt's writings upon the subject:

> Deep-seated in the fibre of our being there is a love of sport, a pleasure in danger for its own sake; a spirit of adventure and willingness to take risks; a delight derived from mere achievement of a purpose; a fascination in matching one's skill, energy, wit, or judgement against some one else; an exhilaration in the act itself, and a subtle joy in the process. This instinct finds some scope even in investments.

The qualities Newbolt associates with acceptable risk-taking, or adventure, are those of productivity and self-improvement: 'achievement of a purpose', 'skill, energy, wit […]

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[62] *How a Penny became a Thousand Pounds*, 94.

[63] References to the game appear in Austen's *Mansfield Park* and Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby*. A description of its rules can be found in Henry G. Bohn's *A Handbook of Games* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1851).

judgement'. Its alignment with sport suggests inherent vitality and health-giving properties, preventing stagnation. The difference between acceptable financial 'sport' and the condemnable sport of gambling, Newbolt seems to suggest, lies in awareness of social responsibility:

> so long as the game is not indulged in at the expense of the community, or to the ruin of one's neighbour, and so long as it is not played with loaded dice, or by one whose obligations forbid him to take the risk, there may in one aspect be no great harm in it.[64]

Risk-taking is again identified as a 'game', harmless provided it is accompanied by a sense of social responsibility. When it becomes 'reckless', it places one 'outside the social pale', as warned by an article in the *New York Times* in 1904.[65] Danger occurred when social responsibility was superseded by greed and desire for financial gain, as pertinently illustrated by a scene in Lewes's *Game of Speculation* where Hawk holds up a banknote and laments, 'Chivalry has shrivelled into *that*!' Although this implies that financial speculation cannot be properly equated with knightly adventure, the former constituted an important way of understanding, conceptualising and discussing risk during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and its influence is evident in portrayals of more bodily and martial risk-taking in these children's texts.

Following his adventures with Pellinore, Pyle's Arthur is reminded by Merlin 'thou must bear in mind that thou art not as an ordinary errant knight, but that thou art a King, and that thy life belongeth not unto thee, but unto thy people'. Arthur meditates upon his words, and promises thereafter only to use Excalibur to fight 'for the sake of my people'. 'I will keep both Excalibur for to fight for them, and likewise his sheath for to preserve my life for their sake. Ne'theless, I will never use him again saving in serious battle'. Arthur kept his word, the narrator tells us, 'so that thereafter he did no battle in sport excepting with lance and a-horseback'.[66] Pyle here constructs an opposition between 'serious' battle and battle in sport, based upon Arthur's selfless consideration of his subjects. The frivolity

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[64] Henry Newbolt, 'Investment, Trade and Gambling', *Monthly Review*, 3.8 (1901), 9.
[65] 'The Vice of Gambling', *New York Times (1857-1922)*, 7 Jul 1904, 8.
[66] Pyle, *Story of King Arthur*, 75.

of battle in sport is condemned as implicitly selfish, played 'at the expense of the community'; its serious counterpart is elevated, signifying consideration for one's subjects and one's place within a wider social structure. In many ways this reflects Newbolt's 'play the game', an ideology whereby sport and games are primarily valuable for their encouragement of teamwork and social cohesion. Although risk-taking is portrayed as positive and conducive to idealised masculinity in the work of Pyle and Gilbert, reflecting a nineteenth-century association between adventure and respectability, these texts advocate consideration, social awareness and moderation, mirroring similarly complex – and often contradictory – attitudes towards financial speculation.

In Malory's *Morte,* characters who threaten the integrity of the Round Table and the chivalric enterprise are frequently condemned using the phrase 'oute of measure', often associated with sexual behaviour. The knight Garnish slays his paramour and her adulterous lover through 'sorrow out of measure', while Morgan le Fay's relationship with Accolon is described in the same terms and associated with an attempt at regicide.[67] Malory's text endorses moderation in matters of love and sex but rarely in matters of adventure; the greater the peril of an adventure, the more likely a knight will take the risk in a quest to find 'worship', as when Balin is warned of his eventual destruction but proceeds regardless. However, the *Morte* is overwhelmingly concerned with forms of upper-class social responsibility: the Pentecostal Oath emphasises a knight's obligations to the homosocial Round Table community as well as to damsels and gentlewomen in need. When sexual feelings threaten to undermine these obligations, excess is condemned and moderation, or 'measure', endorsed. Pyle and Gilbert's texts are concerned with tempering excess in physical rather than sexual risk-taking, while Pollard expresses anxieties related to sexual risk through his attribution of 'danger' to the courtly love game. The *Morte* and these children's adaptations all endorse moderation, albeit in different contexts. The effect is the same, however: to emphasise social responsibility and its necessity for the achievement of honourable masculinity.

IV. 'If I slay him here in this crowded hall': hypothetical masculinity

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[67] See Wright (ed.), *Malory,* vol. 1, 85-6; 134.

Anticipating a second battle with Pellinore, Pyle's Arthur declares, 'I have a greater mind than ever for to try my power against yonder knight. For, consider, what especial honor would fall to me should I overcome so valiant a warrior'.[68] The key word here is 'consider'. A recurring theme within late nineteenth-century discussion of financial adventure and children's Arthuriana of the early twentieth century is the concept of *considered* risk-taking. Gerda Reith suggests that gambling 'can be seen as a microcosm in which more general issues about the role of uncertainty and chance in human life are played out in concentrated form'.[69] It is 'a highly ritualised and structured arena of uncertainty which is sharply demarcated from its surroundings and which can be entered and left at will'.[70] Physical risk-taking in these children's texts serves a similar function, also occurring inside clearly demarcated spaces that require voluntary entrance. Against a backdrop of uncertainty and unknowability, these texts dramatise issues of contingency, cause and consequence, encouraging their readers, as with Pyle's Arthur, to consider the potential losses and gains of taking certain risks. Just as risk came to be associated with revenue in the nineteenth century, risk-taking in these children's texts has *acquisition* as its goal: specifically, the acquisition of an idealised heroic masculinity. Financial discourse associated adventure with the acquisition of both monetary and moral revenue and a natural, healthy impulse to take risks, often linked semantically to sport. However, this carried problematic connotations, and could also be used to emphasise the frivolity and selfishness of a slide from financial adventure into gambling. Risk-taking was qualified by calls for moderation, self-mastery and reason, concepts that we can unite through the notion of consideration.

Pyle's King Arthur begs Griflet, who has requested that he may fight the fearsome Pellinore to increase his knightly honour, to 'consider and ask some other boon'.[71] Griflet refuses, and is sorely wounded as a result; his anticipation of the potential honour to be gained through this quest blinds him to the more likely outcome, given his age and lack of experience, of physical harm. Gawain, declaring his knights' intention to fight the Duke of Umber and his men, is told to 'consider how unequal are our forces, and that you stand in

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[68] Pyle, *Story of King Arthur*, 54.
[69] Gerda Reith, *The Age of Chance: Gambling and Western Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), 1.
[70] Reith, *Age of Chance*, 183.
[71] Pyle, *Story of King Arthur*, 45.

great peril in undertaking so dangerous an encounter'. Unlike Griflet, Gawain *does* make the necessary calculation of potential profit and loss, subsequently declaring 'I consider that the peril in which ye stand is fully equal to our peril'.[72] He is correct, and successfully dispatches the Duke and his men. Gilbert's Balin, spying the evil Sir Garlon upon whom he seeks vengeance, 'considered long within himself what he should do'. The reader is privy to Balin's decision-making process: 'If I slay him here in this crowded hall […] I shall surely not escape, and if I leave him now, peradventure I shall never meet with him again, and much evil will he do if he be let to live'.[73] Balin chooses to attack, out of a desire to administer justice for the knights Garlon has killed in cold blood, and a sense of responsibility for Garlon's potential future victims. The process of consideration involves engagement with the hypothetical, awareness of the relationship between action and chance, cause and consequence, and an overarching consciousness of one's status as part of a community: Balin's obligations to Garlon's previous victims, Gawain's desire to rid the Round Table of the threat posed by the Duke of Umber, or Arthur's duty to protect his subjects. We can witness here what Tina Young Choi terms the 'logic of contingency', which she argues helped to shape the readerly imagination from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Choi traces the role of Darwin's *Origin of Species,* other narratives of natural history, and the life insurance prospectus in positing the future as 'a realm shaped not primarily by the quality of individual belief, whether rational or theological, but by engagement with the hypothetical, a space thick with narratives describing an array of consequences, unrealized outcomes, and diverging alternatives'.[74] Just as the texts examined in Chapter One urge their readers to 'weigh and consider' the predicaments of Arthurian characters with a view to broadening their outlooks upon life, so these texts also urge consideration through their presentation of exciting adventure and hypothetical scenarios. This time, they offer a specifically gendered rendition of Malory's *Morte,* positing consideration as an essential prerequisite to the achievement of a heroic masculinity.

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[72] Pyle, *Story of King Arthur,* 128.

[73] Gilbert, *King Arthur's Knights,* 45-6.

[74] Tina Young Choi, 'Natural History's Hypothetical Moments: Narratives of Contingency in Victorian Culture', *Victorian Studies,* 51.2 (2009), 278.

Furthermore, as in Chapter One, this heroic masculinity is specifically associated with middle-class values of self-improvement and patient hard work. It is opposed to reckless, 'quick-fix' forms of risk-taking such as gambling, posited as emasculating. W. D. Mackenzie's 'The Ethics of Gambling' suggested that the gambler, like the drunkard, has 'dishonoured his manhood'.[75] A writer in *The Advance* in 1897 noted that when gambling 'has finished its work on a man […] his manhood is gone', while Alfred Norris claimed in 1889 that 'Gamblers and betters are apt to become capricious, wilful, treacherous, inapt, effeminate'.[76] What is particularly interesting is how he claims this degradation manifests itself:

> They frequently lose the marks of manhood – they can no longer
>> *Breast the blows of circumstance*
>> *And grapple with their evil star.*
> It is noteworthy that the earliest enforcement of the laws against gambling, both in Italy and in England, was not because it demoralised men so much as because it made them effeminate. They became inapt to do, unready to dare. They were soft and slothful in all their lives as citizens.[77]

Norris links effeminacy with being 'unready to dare', abstaining from forms of positive risk-taking perceived as beneficial to human nature, and the inability to respond to adverse circumstance. The masculinity he constructs exists, at least partly, in the realm of the future and the hypothetical; manhood is not simply about how one acts, but how one *would* act when confronted with certain challenging situations.

In the foreword to *The Story of King Arthur and his Knights,* Pyle remarks, 'I have had such extraordinary pleasure in beholding how those famous knights behaved whenever circumstances called upon them to perform their endeavor'.[78] We can recall the *Adventure* piece of 1921, which claims that every healthy boy 'live[s] for the day when he will get the opportunity to bring off some daring deeds': idealised heroic masculinity is constituted at

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[75] W. D. Mackenzie, 'The Ethics of Gambling', *Contemporary Review, 1866-1900,* 60.8 (1891), 226.
[76] 'Gambling', *Advance (1867-1917)*, 1653 (1897), 68.
[77] Alfred Norris, 'A Discourse on Gambling', *Sunday at Home,* 17 Aug 1889, 523.
[78] Pyle, *Story of King Arthur,* vi.

least in part as a response to testing *circumstance*. Rudyard Kipling's 'If', written in 1895 and published in 1910, predicates the achievement of manhood – 'You'll be a Man, my son!' – on the successful navigation of hypothetical situations that serve as implicit tests for masculinity, in this case characterised by patience, integrity, modesty, justice and ambition. In fact, Kipling's poem posits risk-taking as one such test:

> If you can make one heap of all your winnings
>   And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
> And lose, and start again at your beginnings
>   And never breathe a word about your loss.[79]

Although ostensibly promoting gambling, Kipling balances this requirement for risk-taking with calls for reason ('If you can keep your head when all about you/Are losing theirs'), patience ('If you can wait and not be tired by waiting'), social awareness, and moderation ('If all men count with you, but none too much'). Calculated risk-taking serves as a rite of passage, an important pitstop on what Kelly Boyd terms the 'roadmaps to manliness' constituted by the boys' texts of this period. She argues that tales such as 'Manhood Achieved' (1913) construct masculinity as 'a matter of attitude, discipline, stoicism and achievement' which 'is effected by a process of change and is not a basic biological imperative'.[80] If idealised masculinity is not a state but a *process* of becoming, the risk-taking in children's Arthuriana and texts such as Kipling's provides checkpoints at which its progress can be monitored, testing boys' abilities to deal in considered, not reckless, ways with the hypothetical and the contingent.

By depicting this 'hypothetical masculinity', these Arthurian texts teach boy readers not necessarily how to act in their everyday lives – lives untouched by swords in stones or Holy Grails or vicious foes clad in coloured armour – but how to extrapolate generalised lessons from these episodes to help navigate the future and the unknown. Henry Gilbert acknowledges in his preface that

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[79] Rudyard Kipling, 'If' in *Selected Poems,* ed. Peter Keating (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 134-35.

[80] Kelly Boyd, *Manliness and the Boys' Story Paper in Britain: A Cultural History, 1855-1940* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 130.

although […] these stories of King Arthur and his men treat of knights and their
ladies, of magical trolls and wonder-working wizards, and it might seem for that
reason that they can have little or nothing in common with life of the present day, it
will be seen that the spirit in which they are told conveys something which every
boy can learn.[81]

Gilbert here acknowledges the 'strenuous' process of adapting Malory for children: it may
not be the story itself that is inherently educative or exemplary, he admits, but the ways in
which it can be shaped into a didactic tale. The 'spirit' in which he retells Malory is key to
this refashioning: it shifts the focus of the text to the developing boy and the ways in which
he copes with adversity and the unexpected. Gilbert points out that, for the contemporary
reader, some 'mysterious adventure might easily be waiting in the ruined and deserted
Roman town on the desolate moor, or even just round the mossy trunk of the next oak in
the forest-drive', venturing even that 'any fair lady or questing dog which he might meet
could turn out to be a wizard seeking to work woe upon him'.[82] While this is, of course,
unlikely, what is important is that Gilbert suggests the essence of chivalry lies not in
military aptitude, but in a willingness to accept and embrace the unknown. The illustration
of Owen, prostrate at Arthur's feet, at the front of Gilbert's text is significant, emphasising
the role of boyish youth in chivalric histories and suggesting the potential for the young
reader to appropriate the heroism of Arthur's knights. The ways in which he might do so
are explicit in Pyle's text:

Any man may be a king in that life in which he is placed if so be he may draw forth
the sword of success from out of the iron of circumstance. Wherefore when your
time of assay cometh, I do hope it may be with you as it was with Arthur that day.[83]

'Whenever your time of assay cometh' constructs a hypothetical masculinity whereby the
reader is encouraged to learn from the text a series of modes of responding to potential
situations, modes that if followed (as is also the case in Kipling's poem) will bring him

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[81] Gilbert, *King Arthur's Knights,* vi.
[82] Gilbert, *King Arthur's Knights,* vi.
[83] Pyle, *Story of King Arthur, 35.*

further to the goal of idealised manhood. Pyle's narrator aids the reader in extrapolating from the specifically medieval situations of the Arthurian legend a code of conduct for everyday life by offering allegorical asides at the end of each chapter. Upon Arthur taking Excalibur from the Lady of the Lake, the narrator generalises the episode to emphasise 'such happiness as cometh to one when he hath done his best endeavor and hath succeeded with great entirety in his undertaking'; later, Excalibur is allegorised as God's 'truth to aid you, like a shining sword' and 'Faith (for Faith containeth Truth as a scabbard containeth its sword)'.[84]

In many ways, Pyle's text reads like one of the publications on everyday heroism available to British and American children during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which distilled the virtues of chivalric and historical heroes into a series of more generalised, accessible virtues: endurance, perseverance, obedience. 'If you would become like to King Arthur,' Pyle's narrator advises the reader,

> you shall take all your triumphs as he took this victory, for you will not be turned aside from your final purposes by the great applause that many men may give you, but you will first finish your work that you have set yourself to perform, ere you give yourself ease to sit down and to enjoy the fruits of your victory.[85]

Emphasising the completion of work, the risk-taking that constitutes Pyle's idealised masculinity stands opposed to gambling, which was identified with the shirking of labour and a 'quick-fix' mentality. Furthermore, its specific focus on work 'that you have set yourself to perform' emphasises self-improvement and its rewards ('fruits of victory'). Pyle's use of the future and conditional tenses here is consistent with his vision of masculinity as something that exists, in part, as a way of responding to future circumstance, and can be partially self-taught through the emulation of Arthurian heroes.

With their emphasis on preparedness, adaptability and self-improvement, Pyle's and Gilbert's texts offer a paradigm of masculinity strikingly similar to that promoted by the

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[84] Pyle, *Story of King Arthur*, 76.
[85] Pyle, *Story of King Arthur*, 98.

British and American scouting movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The most famous of these, Robert Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts, appeared in the UK three years before the publication of Gilbert's text, and its American inspiration, William Forbush's boys' group 'Knights of King Arthur', was established in 1893 and may have motivated Pyle to produce his Arthuriad.[86] Scouting offered young boys a chance to translate the ideals of chivalric and military discourse into their real lives, and these Arthurian texts provide similar opportunities by distilling the adventures of Malory's knights into generalised life lessons. In *The Book of the Happy Warrior* Newbolt described the 'astonishing and almost world-wide success of the [scouting] movement'. Its ethos, he remarks,

> is not an appeal to the intellect, nor a habit imposed by teaching, nor even a reminder of inherited pride – it is a personal invitation to play the game of life after the manner most desired by the heart of boys. Come and make yourself a man, with a man's life; not a narrow, shut-in, selfish or idle or entirely specialised, but a useful, friendly, all-round life, with a wide outlook on the world you live in and the people you live among.[87]

Newbolt commends its ability to inculcate a 'wide outlook' in boys, the same sentiment that underpinned many of the arguments in favour of English Studies described in Chapter One. However, the 'wide outlook' that scouting provides, Newbolt suggests, bridges the gap between the repetitive 'habits' of education and those adventurous, red-blooded narratives of heroism that were perceived as beneficial for boys. Scouting enabled boys to learn a different, more important, lesson: how to achieve a masculinity associated with positive, liberal virtues, while also retaining the 'spice' of vigorous, physical adventure, or 'playing the game'.

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[86] Lucien Agosta suggests that Pyle was aware of the 'apparently unappeasable late nineteenth-century appetite for Arthurian works' following Forbush's creation of 'The Knights of King Arthur', and therefore suggested to Scribner's in 1902 that he write a book, similar in style to his previous work on Robin Hood, telling the story of King Arthur. See Agosta, *Howard Pyle*, 43.
[87] Newbolt, *Happy Warrior*, 282.

Indeed, Baden-Powell used the phrase 'play the game' frequently throughout his scouting literature.[88] This adoption of vigorous, sporting rhetoric reflects the origins of the institution in the Arthurian legend and its risky, exciting chivalric adventures, and also the aim of scouting to inculcate public school values in their lower class members. Baden-Powell intended scouting to

> take the place of the public school life which is only open to the comparatively few whose parents can afford it, and to give the mass of our rising generation some of the spirit of self-negation, self-discipline, sense of honour, responsibility, helpfulness to others, loyalty and patriotism which go to make 'character' and in which they have no kind of education in their schools whatever they may have in the way of *instruction*.[89]

Like Newbolt, Baden-Powell differentiates between curricular instruction and a more valuable form of 'life' education, which he identifies both with the public school and with chivalry. In *Yarns for Boy Scouts Told Round the Camp Fire* (1909), Baden-Powell referred to Arthur as the real founder of the movement, and likened boy scouts to questers for the Holy Grail. Similarly, Forbush's boys were encouraged to adopt a heroic knight as a role model; however, as Alan Lupack notes, the actual knight chosen was less important than the concept of learning by worthy example.[90] In 1916 Baden-Powell published *Young Knights of the Empire*, in which he likened boys all over the British Empire to chivalric heroes: 'fine, reliable men, ready to take the place of those who have gone away to fight

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[88] In *Scouting for Boys* (1908), Baden-Powell promotes football as a 'grand game for developing a lad physically and also morally' because he learns 'to play in his place and "play the game", and these are the best training for any game of life'. He urges scoutmasters to 'teach [boys] to be manly, to play the game whatever it may be, and not be merely onlookers and loafers'. He also adapted Newbolt's 'Vitaï Lampada' into a 'Scout Recitation' entitled 'Play the Game'. See Robert Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys: A Handbook for Instruction in Good Citizenship*, ed. Elleke Boehmer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 297-98; 336.

[89] British Scout Archives, Box D., Cadets, 1910-16. Article on Cadets and Cadet Training, dated 1916. Cited in Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell and the Origins of the Boy Scout Movement* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 90.

[90] Alan Lupack, 'Arthurian Youth Groups in America' in *Adapting the Arthurian Legends for Children: Essays on Arthurian Juvenilia*, ed. Barbara Tepa Lupack (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 63.

and who have fallen at the Front'.[91] The book comprised 'yarns of camp life and adventure such as the scouts go in for', emphasising the chivalric duties of loyalty and honour, but also more accessible virtues such as usefulness, friendliness, politeness, and kindness to animals. Scouting translated the virtues of adventurous chivalry into practical, accessible qualities that a young boy, regardless of class, could emulate and demonstrate in his everyday life. It provided the practical counterpart to the trend for 'everyday heroism' literature in the late nineteenth century, while retaining the 'spice' and excitement of chivalric hero stories. This is evident in other offshoots of the scouting movement, such as the American 'Knighthood of Youth' group, which encouraged children to emulate 'modern knights' alongside Arthurian figures: Thomas Edison, the 'knight of electricity' or Charles Lindbergh, 'a knight of the air'.[92]

These groups combined the excitement of chivalric risk-taking with an emphasis upon control and consideration for others by enabling boys to pit their wits against hazardous situations, but emphasising the need for a wider social awareness. A section in *Scouting For Boys* entitled 'Would You Do it?' adopts a model of hypothetical masculinity similar to that of Gilbert's and Pyle's texts, asking its young readers, 'Would any of you do that? If an enemy were firing down this street, and you had to take a message across to a house on the other side, would you do it?'[93] The scout, 'who has been accustomed to obey orders at once, whether there is risk about it or not' is posited as the masculine ideal in this scenario; however, it is important to note that the risk-taking Baden-Powell advocates is always undertaken in aid of a higher social cause: one's country, community, or the life of another. Although the Boy Scout movement continues to be linked unfavourably with aggressive militarism and the casualties of the First World War, such a view eclipses the central ideology of Baden-Powell's ethos.[94] The Boy Scouts were a product of his 'eccentricities and enthusiasms as a soldier', Allen Warren argues, but, more importantly,

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[91] Robert Baden-Powell, *Young Knights of the Empire: Their Code and Further Scout Yarns* (London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1916), 13.
[92] Lupack, 'Arthurian Youth Groups', 207.
[93] Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys,* 12.
[94] John Springhall suggests that the late Victorian and Edwardian youth movements in Britain were 'agencies of protest manipulated in the interests of social groups led by the old and middle aged against the absence of compulsory military service for boys'. See Springhall, 'The Boy Scouts, Class and Militarism in relation to British Youth Movements, 1908-1930', *International Review of Social History,* 16 (1971), 136.

his 'enthusiasm for scout training with its individualistic bias, its emphasis on personal character development […] its assertion of the responsibilities of the young officer […] and its vigorous antipathy to drill-based training'.[95] Warren perceives 'citizen training', not militarism, as the lynchpin of the scouting movement, developing earlier attempts by the Moral Instruction League to install 'Moral Instruction and Training', centred around civic and personal obligation, in schools.[96] Although Baden-Powell, and other leaders of scouting movements in the UK and the US, likened their boy charges to Arthurian knights, they were less concerned with endorsing militaristic, bodily risk than with promoting citizenship, based upon ideas of selflessness and social responsibility, and the ability for each individual to respond in a flexible, considered manner to circumstance. It is no coincidence that Baden-Powell vigorously opposed drill-based training and rote learning in schools: his scouting movement offered an education based around understanding of the boy as an individual.

Michael Rosenthal suggests that 'scouting neglects the richness of individual preference and difference, closing itself off entirely from the claim of human variety', and that it

> envisions a world of unchanging values and simple answers; once he joins, the young Scout need not bother himself about such things again. The world is firmly divided into two distinct sides – the empire and the other – and all the Scout must do is 'play the game' with pluck and good sportsmanship so that his side may win.[97]

Such an interpretation ignores the heavy emphasis that Baden-Powell himself placed upon the individual boy. Although scouting manuals offer a comprehensive array of scenarios for the young scout to consider and respond to, I would argue that these manuals are primarily concerned not with providing prescriptive, clear-cut answers, but with cultivating

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[95] Allen Warren, 'Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the Scout Movement and Citizen Training in Great Britain, 1900-1920', *English Historical Review,* 101.399 (1986), 387.
[96] Scouting combined this educational impulse with practical enjoyment for boys, offering three strands of citizen training: the militaristic, the educational, and the Christian. Warren credits the success of the Boy Scouts to Baden-Powell's ability to provide a scheme of citizen and character training for the young that managed to combine (albeit at times with friction) these ideologies. See Warren, 'Baden-Powell', 390.
[97] Rosenthal, *The Character Factory*, 130.

preparedness (emphasised by the scouting motto) and encouraging boys to cope with ambivalence in considered, thoughtful and socially responsible ways. 'Your Patrol Leaders and Scouts are therefore very like the knights and their retainers,' Baden-Powell advises, 'especially if you keep your honour ever before you, and do your best to help people who are in trouble or want assistance. Your motto is, "Be Prepared" to do this, and the motto of the knights was a similar one, "Be Always Ready".[98] Chivalry is offered not as a tapestry of anachronistic exemplars for children to emulate, but is distilled down to what Baden-Powell perceives as its essence: readiness. We can return to Pollard's preface to his *Romance of King Arthur,* in which he notes that

> the men and women who fill [the *Morte Darthur'*s] pages are not just names or figures to which adventures are tacked on. They are men and women of real flesh and blood, no two of them alike […] each with his own virtues and failings.[99]

Rather than attempting to offer the generalised Arthurian knight as a role model for 'chivalry', Pollard acknowledges the complexity of the *Morte*, weighing up the comparative merits of its characters and emphasising the importance of individuality, suggesting that readers may find different role models in the story, and acquire different moral lessons from its pages. He identifies here the enduring appeal of the *Morte* for children's adapters, as a series of characters and situations waiting to be probed, analysed and developed in line with authors' individual biases and concerns. The remainder of the thesis will examine the increasingly original retellings of the mid-twentieth century, as authors drew progressively on their own lives and experiences of the Arthurian legend to inform their adaptations of Malory's work.

V. Conclusion

In *The Book of the Happy Warrior*, Henry Newbolt urges his boy readers, 'learn to be a man yourself, not a half-developed or lop-sided creature, but a man full grown, full of all life that can be got from men'.[100] Newbolt advocates the acquisition of a vigorous, healthy

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[98] Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys,* 213.
[99] Pollard, *Romance of King Arthur,* viii.
[100] Newbolt, *Happy Warrior,* 283.

masculinity, characterised by physical aptitude through its association with sport. He proposes 'the school of happy warriors', the title of which encapsulates the close, and sometimes fraught, connection in Newbolt's work between the rhetorics of education and warfare. Anxieties about how to render the martial, chivalric heroism of medieval legend appropriate for a modern reader are evident in the huge variety of adventure stories marketed to young, usually male, readers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Britain and America. Such stories construct adventure as the act of physical risk-taking in an unknown, perilous location, designed to excite the reader through their presentation of jeopardy. However, alongside these stories we also witness a movement towards 'everyday heroism', identifying heroic behaviour not in the display of chivalric martial skill but in the performance of accessible virtues characterised by selfless regard for others, perseverance and moderation. The works of Howard Pyle and Henry Gilbert draw on both these approaches to render Arthurian adventure exciting for their young audience through the inclusion of daring child heroes, but ultimately to promote a series of character virtues centred around consideration. Anticipating Alfred Pollard's musings upon the Arthurian legend in his *Romance of King Arthur,* published during the horrors of World War One, these texts attempt to negotiate between the indulgent portrayal of adventure as pleasurable 'sport', resulting in the 'revenues' of honour and knightly respectability, and the call for 'measure' found within the *Morte Darthur* itself. They ultimately endorse risk-management rather than risk-taking, positing adventure as crucial to the attainment of heroic masculinity but eclipsing its bodily risk by focusing on the need for moderation and responsibility. In this way, they can be read in tandem with the developing scouting movements in the US and UK, which tempered the risk of adventure by prioritising the development of individual character virtues and 'citizenship' over martial heroics.

Where the schoolroom texts examined in Chapter One aimed to encourage a 'wide outlook' on life through their appropriation of Malory's *Morte* for the consideration of hypothetical questions, the works of Pyle and Gilbert harness and extend this hypothetical element through creative innovations to Malory's text, implicating a specifically male child reader in a series of discourses related to masculinity, risk-taking and heroism. T. H. White's *The Sword in the Stone,* written in the 1930s, draws upon this model of hypothetical masculinity through its narration of the young Arthur's transition to manhood

via a series of testing situations orchestrated by the magical Merlin. However, as Chapter Three will demonstrate, White's Arthurian tetralogy departs dramatically from the healthy, 'red-blooded' adventures of texts like Pyle's and Gilbert's. We witness in *The Once and Future King* the gradual replacement of exciting adventures with psychological trauma, as Arthur's knights become burdened with torturing neuroses borne of damaged and deficient childhoods. In White's post-Freudian retelling, risk-taking masculinities become masculinities at risk.

The ill-made adult and the mother's curse: psychoanalysing the Arthurian child in T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*

At the beginning of *The Ill-Made Knight*, published in 1941, T. H. White's young Lancelot examines his reflection in the polished surface of a helmet:

> He turned the hat in various directions, hoping to get an average idea of his face from the different distortions which the bulges made. He was trying to find out what he was, and he was afraid of what he would find.
>
> The boy thought that there was something wrong with him. All through his life – even when he was a great man with the world at his feet – he was to feel this gap: something at the bottom of his heart of which he was aware, and ashamed, but which he did not understand. There is no need for us to try to understand it. We do not have to dabble in a place which he preferred to keep secret.[1]

Poised here between the state of being a boy and a 'great man with the world at his feet', Lancelot suffers a crisis of identity and selfhood. The helmet, symbol of the chivalric glory that awaits the young man in his career at Arthur's Round Table, serves simultaneously to predict and symbolise his identity and to call it into question, offering a distorted and continually shifting reflection. Its bulges mirror Lancelot's perceived flaws, throwing his self-doubt and shame into sharp relief. 'There is no need for us to try to understand it,' the narrator declares, yet the rest of Lancelot's book is concerned with probing, dabbling in, this 'secret place' that is for Lancelot the locus of his distortion, doubt and self-loathing. Through the title the 'ill-made knight', an epithet that both foregrounds the formative influence of youth and warns of its potentially detrimental effects in later life, White locates the site of this conflict in Lancelot's childhood. His adaptation of the *Morte Darthur* continues the trend set by Howard Pyle and Henry Gilbert, introducing Malory's knights in their youth and tracing their development from children to adults. The first book of the tetralogy, *The Sword in the Stone,* is almost entirely original, focusing on the adventurous childhood of 'the Wart' (Arthur) and his joyful education in self-reliance under the

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[1] T. H. White, *The Once and Future King* (London: Harper Collins, 1996), 339. First published 1958.

watchful eye of Merlin and his magical powers. Yet the following two books – *The Witch in the Wood* and *The Ill-Made Knight* – dramatise the gradual deterioration of this optimistic vision, as the intrepid child on a quest for self-improvement becomes embroiled in a battle against his own mental and emotional obstacles.[2]

Lancelot 'had spent his childhood learning to be a fighter', the narrator tells us, which 'had left him no time for birds'-nesting like other boys'.[3] He has not, it is implied, enjoyed the education in self-reliance that characterised Arthur's childhood under the tutelage of Merlin. Instead, White frequently alludes to some unspecified lack in Lancelot's upbringing, a 'cupboard skeleton' linked to his deficient formative years. Malory makes no mention of Lancelot's childhood, but White devotes the first five chapters of *The Ill-Made Knight* to filling this gap, linking the childhood he invents to the character traits he identifies in Malory's adult knight. His Lancelot runs away to England without telling his parents, claiming 'there would only be a fuss', and asking his Uncle Dap 'indifferently' to break the news. We are told that Lancelot chooses to spend three years as a child in one room, only emerging to eat and sleep, while he learns to fight. Overseen by his uncle, keeper of the armoury, Lancelot obsessively perfects the arts of battle, supported by 'daydreams' of becoming the best knight in the world at Arthur's court. His 'ferocity against himself' manifests as 'shame and self-loathing' which, the narrator explains, 'had been planted there when he was tiny, by something which it is now too late to trace'.[4] Even his failure to achieve the Grail is linked to childhood deficiency: recounting his Grail Quest experience to Arthur, Lancelot recalls how he saw Galahad taken away by a white knight. 'I was sad that I couldn't go too,' he admits. 'Do you remember, when you were little, how

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[2] White's first three books, *The Sword in the Stone* (1939), *The Witch in the Wood* (1940) and *The Ill-Made Knight* (1941) were published separately. In 1940, White wrote the final volume, *The Candle in the Wind,* but this was not published until 1958, when all four books appeared as a combined tetralogy, *The Once and Future King*. White wanted *The Book of Merlyn,* written in 1941, to serve as a fifth and final book in the series, but lost the battle with his publishers over its inclusion. As a result, he revised *The Sword in the Stone* to incorporate material from *Merlyn,* while *The Witch in the Wood* was repeatedly revised in the 1940s after suggestions from his friends and publisher. The revised versions appear in the 1958 tetralogy. This chapter will examine both the combined 1958 version and the 1939 and 1940 editions of *The Sword in the Stone* and *The Witch in the Wood* respectively. Both versions are relevant to discussion of White's interpretations of Malory, and much of the critical reception of White's work relates to the earlier individual editions of the texts. Owing to the amount of quotation from *The Once and Future King* in this chapter, the notes will hereafter use the abbreviation 'OFK'.

[3] White, *OFK*, 385.

[4] White, *OFK,* 352; 345; 398.

children used to pick sides for a game and perhaps you wouldn't be picked at all? It felt like that, but worse'.[5] White ends *The Ill-Made Knight* with an episode from the *Morte Darthur,* the healing of Sir Urry. The concluding quotation from Malory – 'Sir Lancelot wept, as he had been a child that had been beaten' – acquires new and fitting resonance in White's hands. Malory's beaten child becomes Freud's beaten child, a poignant figure whose troubled upbringing has resulted in a life of nebulous guilt, remorse and mental self-flagellation.[6]

All this is difficult to understand, the narrator suggests,

> unless you realise from the start that Lancelot was not romantic and debonair. Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites would have found it difficult to recognise this rather sullen and unsatisfactory child, with the ugly face, who did not disclose to anybody that he was living on dreams and prayers. They might have wondered what store of ferocity he had against himself, that could set him to break his own body so young.[7]

White directly opposes his version of Lancelot to the idealised portrayals of the nineteenth century. Although he concedes that Lancelot believed, 'like the man in Lord Tennyson, that people could only have the strength of ten on account of their hearts being pure', this devotion to chastity is critiqued in White's version, posited as a 'personal puzzle', a perverse masochistic tendency that hinders Lancelot from achieving happiness. Unlike the handsome Lancelot of Victorian poetry and painting, White's knight is, in the words of the

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[5] White, *OFK,* 507.

[6] White, *OFK,* 557. Freud's 1919 essay 'A Child is being Beaten' focuses on the link between beating and auto-erotic sexual fantasy; however, it also highlights the role of shame and guilt, the function of memory and the development of the ego, all of which will be discussed in relation to Lancelot and to White himself. It is also interesting to note that White's depiction of Lancelot examining his face in the helmet appears to anticipate Lacan's 'mirror stage' of ego development, whereby the infant approaches mastery of his bodily unity through identification with his self-image in a mirror. The implication that Lancelot has not yet identified with his self-image foreshadows his fragmented sense of self and masochistic struggles later in the text. See Elisabeth Roudinesco, 'The Mirror Stage: An Obliterated Archive' in *The Cambridge Companion to Lacan,* ed. Jean-Michel Rabaté (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 25-34.

[7] White, *OFK,* 345.

narrator, 'ugly as an African ape', with a 'face like Quasimodo'.[8] Furthermore, White's description of Lancelot as 'unsatisfactory' suggests he does not embody the child associated with the age of Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites, a child implied to be sociable, aesthetically pleasing and self-confident. This unsatisfactory child rages against his fractured identity, engages in both mental and physical self-harm, is painfully aware of his aesthetic imperfections and exists partially in a hallucinatory dream-world. Complicating earlier constructions of the malleable, receptive child on a quest towards self-improvement, White's lengthy reworking of the *Morte* replaces the child of the nineteenth century with a damaged, dysfunctional child. His unique portrait of the troubled children of Camelot departs dramatically from the currents of children's Arthuriana in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and still has a fraught relationship with the category 'children's literature'.[9] A text permeated by the author's anger towards his parents and doubts regarding his own sexuality and masculinity, White's *Once and Future King* mischievously complicates the trajectories of child development and self-improvement offered by previous adaptations of the *Morte*. The product of a culture that encouraged self-analysis and constructed lives through the developmental narratives of psychology, in which psychological ideas were increasingly brought to bear on the arena of child-rearing and education, White's adaptation focuses on the vulnerability of childhood, its potential as a site of trauma, its susceptibility not only to didacticism but to damage. Blurring the boundaries between adult's and children's literature, the complex implied reader of *The Once and Future King* exists simultaneously as child and adult, reflecting White's preoccupation with his childhood trauma and fascination with adult maladjustment.

I. Ancient wrong: generational trauma in *The Once and Future King*

'It is so fatally easy to make young children believe that they are horrible', White's narrator remarks, considering the case of Lancelot. In the 'secret parts of his peculiar brain,' he reveals, 'those unhappy and inextricable tangles which he felt at the roots, the boy was

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[8] White, *OFK*, 342; 398.
[9] Elisabeth Brewer discusses the difficulties of classifying *OFK* as either adult's or children's literature in *T. H. White's The Once and Future King* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993); the issue will be discussed later in this chapter, and in Chapter Four.

disabled by something which we cannot explain'.[10] *The Once and Future King* is preoccupied with roots, a word which here signifies simultaneously the source of Lancelot's shameful feelings and his upbringing, conflating them as one and the same. It is a text full of young children who have been made to believe they are horrible. Gareth brings white heather to Morgause's bedroom 'as an apology for being whipped'.[11] Mordred, born with a deformity after his brothers had moved to Camelot, and having survived Arthur's attempt to drown him as a child, is left to suffer Morgause's 'maternal powers'. She had 'loved and forgotten him by turns', and so he ends up 'misshapen, intelligent, critical' and 'embittered'.[12] White initially posits Arthur as an exception: he has been 'beautifully brought up', 'protected with love', and consequently is 'not one of those interesting characters whose subtle motives can be discussed'.[13] However, we are later told that the 'misery of his life' is linked to feelings of shame and guilt from his youth, when he murdered the May Day babies on Merlin's advice, 'frightened by horrible prophecies'. Having depicted a carefree, idealised childhood in *The Sword in the Stone* – 'a kind of wish-fulfilment of the things I should like to have happened to me when I was a boy', as White described it to his friend L. J. Potts in 1938 – focused around magic and the development of self-reliance, White in his subsequent books presents a series of damaged adults, including Arthur, whose miseries are the products of their formative years.[14] 'For once shamed may never be recovered,' reads the epigraph to *The Ill-Made Knight,* taken from Malory's Roman War episode, and this focus on the lasting and pernicious effects of youthful shame is key to the entire structure of White's Arthuriad.[15]

In applying a psychological interpretation to the characters of the Arthurian legend and focusing on the repercussions of childhood suffering in later life, White discovered what he deemed a 'perfect tragedy' latent in Malory's text, beginning with Morgause's

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[10] White, *OFK,* 397-98.
[11] White, *OFK,* 291.
[12] White, *OFK,* 568.
[13] White, *OFK,* 420-21.
[14] Sylvia Townsend Warner, *T. H. White: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 98.
[15] King Arthur tells his knights that he deems it folly to stand fast in battle when they are outnumbered. Lancelot disagrees, remarking that 'for once shamed may never be recovered'. The quotation emphasises Lancelot's preoccupation with shame and his reputation, a characteristic emphasised in White's version. See Thomas Wright (ed.), *The History of King Arthur and of the Knights of the Round Table, Compiled by Sir Thomas Malory,* vol. 1 (London: Reeves & Turner, 1889), 183.

incestuous seduction of Arthur and culminating in Mordred's treachery and Arthur's death. In 1937, he had picked up a copy of the *Morte Darthur* for the first time since writing his undergraduate thesis, and was 'thrilled and astonished to find that [...] the thing was a perfect tragedy, with a beginning, a middle and an end implicit in the beginning'.[16] His observations run counter to the tendency of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Malory criticism to bemoan the incoherent, sprawling nature of the *Morte*. In 1922, E. K. Chambers produced an English Association pamphlet on Malory, offering the opinion that the author 'rather bungled his structural problem'. 'We expect a work of fiction,' Chambers observed, 'to have a beginning, a middle, and an end; to progress, however deviously, through the medium of consistent personalities, to an intelligible issue. The *Morte Darthur* does not satisfy this expectation'.[17] As early as 1889, Frederick Ryland had expressed a similar sentiment: 'What pleasure,' he asked, 'is to be got from a work of fiction without plot and without psychological analysis, and wholly innocent of realism?'[18] While late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century criticism of the *Morte Darthur* often pointed out its value as a text showcasing 'the more enduring qualities of our common humanity', this was frequently coupled with an acknowledgement that Malory's theme was sometimes compromised by his incoherent, paratactic style, found lacking in comparison to the rich realism of the 'modern novel'.[19] In 1921 an article in *The Times of India* acknowledged that, unlike 'modern writers', Malory does not evince 'order, compression, lucidity, restraint' but simply 'the spontaneity, the usefulness, the warm glow of an unfettered spirit'.[20] Malory criticism during the first half of the twentieth century focused on this disparate, 'spontaneous' style by investigating the multiple sources of the *Morte,* especially after the discovery of the Winchester Manuscript in 1934 caused Malory scholar Eugène Vinaver to publish several articles analysing the *Morte* as a series of discrete works rather than a single unified narrative.[21]

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[16] Townsend Warner, *T. H. White*, 98.

[17] E. K. Chambers, *Sir Thomas Malory [English Association Pamphlet No. 51]* (Kent: E. Clarke & Son, 1922), 4.

[18] Frederick Ryland, 'The *Morte d'Arthur'*, *English Illustrated Magazine*, 6 (1888-9), 55.

[19] W. E. Mead, *Selections from Sir Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur* (Boston: Ginn, 1897), lxii.

[20] 'Malory's *Morte Darthur'*, *Times of India*, 2 Feb 1921, 11.

[21] See the introductory discussion in Eugène Vinaver (ed.), *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

White, however, demonstrated no interest in what he termed the 'tedious roots' of Malory's text, nor did he follow contemporary critical trends in condemning its structural flaws and insisting on its disparate nature. In a letter to Potts in 1947, White wrote, 'I don't think it's much good my worrying more about Malory's sources or manuscripts. I've done too much of it already, for a "creative artist"'.[22] Although he acknowledged Malory's 'habit of tacking sources together without caring whether they fitted', identified in contemporaneous criticism, White offers another view, in which the author in fact handled his sources in an innovative and creative way. Malory 'must have been a man of the most penetrating intellect', he concludes, judging by his

> synthesis of contemptible and rambling sources into a whole which has beginning, middle and end: which satisfies every rule of Aristotle's definition of tragedy: which has characters who are true to their own nature and work together insensibly towards the tragic climax.[23]

Although examining the *Morte* with a critical eye, White's approach is one of 'creative artist', in that his analysis of the *Morte* forms a starting point for his own extensive additions to the text, elucidating those aspects he perceives as latent within Malory's narrative. Conceiving of the *Morte* as a tragedy in Aristotelian terms, the 'atmosphere of inevitability' clear from the beginning, White set about delineating the root causes of the fall of Camelot, a process which led him to consider the makeup of the characters as 'real people with recognisable reactions which could be forecast':

> Mordred was hateful; Kay a decent chap with an inferiority complex; Gawain that rarest of literary productions, a swine with a streak of solid decency. He was a sterling fellow to his own clan. Arthur, Lancelot and even Galahad were really glorious people – not pre-Raphaelite prigs. Anyway, I somehow started writing a book.[24]

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[22] See Francois Gallix (ed.), *Letters to a Friend: The Correspondence between T. H. White and L. J. Potts* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1982), 200.

[23] See White's 'autobiographical fragment', cited in Kurth Sprague, *T. H. White's Troubled Heart: Women in The Once and Future King* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2007), 183.

[24] Letter from White to Potts, 14 Jan 1938. See Gallix, *Letters*, 93.

In White's references to 'inferiority complex' and 'pre-Raphaelite prigs', we can perceive the origins of a new intervention in Arthurian adaptation, one that incorporates the language of twentieth-century psychology and strives to differentiate itself from the idealism of Victorian and Edwardian versions by offering characters who are not heroic 'types' but whose flaws are the subject of detailed exploration and discussion. His text complicates the heroism of Lancelot and King Arthur by emphasising its attendant mental and emotional strain, and bestows unusual attention on those characters often overlooked or dismissed as one-dimensionally villainous in previous children's adaptations – Morgause, the Orkney brothers and Mordred – revealing a fascination with outcasts, misfits and non-normative childhoods. Where many earlier children's versions adapted the *Morte* as prose 'selections' or acknowledged the structural confusion of Malory's text, White groups these stories into a single, coherent narrative supported by his analysis of its 'perfect tragedy'.

Potts responded positively to White's analysis. 'How odd it is,' he wrote in 1940, 'that I should only now have realised what a novel the *Morte d'Arthur* is. Academic people are pretty bad, but how on earth *have* they managed to read this book and not be fascinated by the character?'[25] As academic criticism of the *Morte* became more focussed on Malory's diverse sources, we find White in the late 1930s ignoring this trend, returning, in many ways, to the 'common humanity' and 'timelessness' that nineteenth-century critics had identified in the tale, but updating Malory's characters in accordance with modern understanding of psychology and personality. White was heavily critical of the Victorian revival of the *Morte* ('Malory's knights […] were now tricked out in a fantastic version of plate, in which the cauldrons were iron ivy-leaves and God knows what'), and the 'bowdlerisation of Victorian editors'. He suggested that the 'muslin dreams' of Tennyson had disguised the nature of Malory's characters as 'real people' by portraying them as allegorised types:

> I am reduced to the shameful necessity of repeating in the simplest language – for it
> has become a fact altogether neglected – that the characters in Mallory [sic] are *real*
> characters, not 'knights-in-armour': that his Gawaine was passionate, his Lancelot

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[25] Letter from Potts to White, 25 Apr 1940. See Gallix, *Letters,* 118.

muddled, his Guenever domineering, his Arthur kind: that the plot of his Morte d'Arthur was the tragic nemesis which I have endeavoured to reproduce.[26]

In his version of the *Morte*, White maintains the focus on 'humanity' – which he identifies as personality, motivation and action – praised by Victorian critics and formalised in the pedagogical adaptations of the early twentieth century. However, his narrative method updates the legend, offering the structure, plot and 'psychological analysis' that Chambers and Ryland perceived as lacking. White's focus on character and humanity is inflected by a twentieth-century preoccupation with the fragility of human development, as well as a reluctance to idealise or allegorise the personae of the legend. Martin Kellman commented that 'White takes on Malory and Tennyson and all the others in an attempt to explain the character of Lancelot and his complex relationships and succeeds in delineating a portrait brimming with credible reality for a generation immersed in Freud'.[27] In 'taking on' Malory and his previous adapters, White interrogates the model of normative youthful development that these versions had taken for granted. Where previous adaptations had offered themselves *to* the child, White's text also meditates upon the nature of childhood itself through its extensive depictions of Malory's knights as vulnerable children. He offers the post-Freudian generation a vision of the legend in which characters are constructed in developmental psychological terms, locating both their adult difficulties, and the entire trajectory of the Arthurian 'tragedy', in youthful trauma.

The theme is clear from the beginning of the tetralogy's second book, *The Witch in the Wood,* to which White, in the revised version, added an epigraph in verse:

When shall I be dead and rid
Of the wrong my father did?
How long, how long, till spade and hearse
Put to sleep my mother's curse?[28]

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[26] Cited in Sprague, *Troubled Heart,* 129-30.
[27] Martin Kellman, *T. H. White and the Matter of Britain: A Literary Overview* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), 130.
[28] White, *OFK,* 224.

The lines are taken from A. E. Housman's 'The Welsh Marches', a poem that explores the effects of ancient military conflict between the Saxons and the Welsh through a narrator who is the product of rape during battle upon the Welsh marches. Visualising himself as 'the knot that makes one flesh of two', the narrator is 'sick with pain', his very existence conceptualised as an endless reiteration of violence and slaughter.[29] Where Housman's 'mother's curse' refers to the wrong visited *upon* the mother, White's deployment of the phrase assigns blame. Housman's poem meditates upon 'ancient wrong', a destructive and enduring cycle of historical violence and revenge, but White's text is concerned with the direct effects of maternal neglect or abuse upon the developing child. He referred to the theme of *The Witch in the Wood* as 'that bloody bitch Morgause' in a letter to his friend, the Bloomsbury group writer and literary critic David Garnett.[30] This vitriol is evident throughout the text in White's portrayal of the queen: she 'tortures' her children by calling them 'Sweet fatherless lambkins', is 'so selfish and cared so little for them that they were allowed to run wild', is narcissistic to the point of delusion, seduces a young boy and is satisfied by his resulting suicide, and envisages herself, while her children pine for her affection, as 'a sort of happy Niobe surrounded by soft little mouths and hands'.[31] In the revised version of the text, published as part of the *Once and Future King* tetralogy in 1958, White gave Morgause the epithet 'The Queen of Air and Darkness'. Arthur tells Lancelot that she raised her children 'with so little love or security that they find it difficult to understand warm-hearted people themselves. They are suspicious and frightened'.[32] First depicted in the 1958 text boiling alive a cat out of boredom, and found in the earlier version bathing in a concoction of snail's blood, rotten seaweed, frog's spawn and other nauseating ingredients, Morgause is a cold, indifferent and 'exquisite' creature who has brought up her children, 'perhaps through indifference or through laziness or even through some kind of possessive cruelty', with an 'imperfect sense of right and wrong'.[33] Raised knowing 'too much about cruelty to be surprised by it', regularly abandoned by their mother for a week at a time, the Orkney children are so desperate to procure her affection that they are driven to

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[29] A. E. Housman, 'The Welsh Marches' in *The Collected Poems of A. E. Housman* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1946), 44-45.

[30] Cited in Alan Lupack, '"The Once and Future King": The Book that Grows Up', *Arthuriana,* 11.3 (2001), 105.

[31] T. H. White, *The Witch in the Wood* (London: Collins, 1940), 231; 15; 199.

[32] White, *OFK,* 357.

[33] White, *OFK,* 225.

the brutal slaughter of a unicorn, an act which leaves the young Gareth sick with guilt and self-loathing, plucking longingly at Morgause's skirts as she glides past, unseeing.[34] The narrator observes that 'there was something childish about them when they were together', positing the adult brothers as existing in a state of regression or truncated childhood which he links with Morgause's manipulative maternal behaviour.[35] In White's version of the *Morte Darthur*, the boundaries between childhood and adulthood are problematised by the enduring presence of youthful conflicts and the lasting effects of the 'mother's curse'.

In 1939 White wrote to Potts, observing that 'Morgause […] is really more important in the doom than Guenever is, both through being associated with the Cornwall feud and through the incest theme […] I had to show her as a bad mother and the kind of person who would bear more of the incest onus than my hero'.[36] In White's unified creative vision, Morgause is key to the Aristotelian tragedy, the root cause of Camelot's doom. Importantly, her culpability is explicitly linked to her maternal failings and their effect upon her children; as the narrator observes in the final book of the tetralogy, 'It is the mother's not the lover's lust that rots the mind. It is that which condemns the tragic character to his walking death'.[37] Through her link with Mordred – 'she existed in him like the vampire […] he dabbled in the same cruel magic' – Morgause by proxy brings about the end of the Arthurian kingdom. The collapse of the Arthurian realm is ultimately blamed on bad parenting and its psychological damage to the child. In ensuring she carries 'more of the incest onus than my hero', White uses Morgause as a scapegoat in order to preserve the integrity of Arthur's character, to posit the 'mother's curse' as the cause of the Round Table's collapse, rather than the lustful errors of the naive young king. Several previous adaptations had omitted the incest story from the *Morte*, simply referring to Arthur's son (or even 'nephew') without mentioning his origins and having Mordred behave out of his own 'wickedness' as a way of upholding the heroism of Arthur.[38] White's leap to mother-blaming as a means of absolving Arthur is not entirely out of place in a post-Freudian age, as I will demonstrate, but his focus on Morgause is unparalleled by any adaptation before Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon* in 1982. This addition to the story is the

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[34] White, *OFK*, 256.
[35] White, *OFK*, 569.
[36] Townsend Warner, *T. H. White*, 130.
[37] White, *OFK*, 666.
[38] Including those by R. S. Bate, Mary Macleod and Henry Gilbert.

idiosyncratic contribution of a man preoccupied with the lasting effects of his fraught relationship with his mother.

Writing to David Garnett in 1940, White referred to his mother as 'a witch', and the portrayal of the witch in the wood draws heavily upon his memories of Constance White.[39] In a letter to his friend, the museum director Sydney Cockerell, in 1939, White wrote:

> My mother was (is) a woman for whom all love had to be dependent. She chased away from her her husband, her lover and her only son. All these fled from her possessive selfishness, and she was left to extract her meed of affection from more slavish minds. She became a lover of dogs. This meant that the dogs had to love her.[40]

In the figure of Morgause, 'an insatiable carnivore who lived on the affections of her dogs, her children and her lovers' and a witch who uses a grisly spell to control and seduce the young Arthur, White locates both the downfall of the Arthurian realm and his own emotional damage.[41] The real incest theme of the story – both Arthur's and White's – is 'the maternal rape on the child', suggests White's biographer, Sylvia Townsend Warner. 'I didn't get much security out of her,' White admitted. 'Either there were the dreadful parental quarrels and spankings of me when I was tiny or there were excessive scenes of affection during which she wooed me to love her – not her to love me. It was my love that she extracted, not hers that she gave'.[42] We find this dramatised in *The Witch in the Wood,* where Morgause 'dandled and caressed' young Gareth, but 'would not cease from crying until he was crying too'.[43] We also find some of White in the narrator's poignant speculation regarding the Orkney children, tellingly couched in the first person plural: 'Indeed, they did love her. Perhaps we all give the best of our hearts uncritically – to those who hardly think about us in return'.[44] The influence of his bad mother (and equally bad father) on White's adult self was publicly acknowledged in the last year of his life, during a

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[39] Garnett, David (ed.), *The White/Garnett Letters* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968), 75.
[40] Townsend Warner, *T. H. White,* 124.
[41] White, *OFK,* 568.
[42] Townsend Warner, *T. H. White,* 130; 28.
[43] White, *Witch in the Wood*, 199.
[44] White, *OFK,* 232.

lecture tour of the US.[45] So great was the personal resonance of *The Witch in the Wood* that White referred to it as 'that cursed book'. 'I hate Morgause so much that I can't write about her,' he told Potts in 1940.[46] In October 1935, White had written to Potts that he was being psychoanalysed, and a preoccupation with his formative years is evident from his introspective correspondence with friends at the time, during which he blames his parents for his homosexuality, his frigidity, his sense of inferiority, his relentless drive for self-improvement, even his facial hair.[47] It is also evident in his construction of his Arthurian characters, many of whom are portrayed as the damaged products of deficient upbringing.

Perhaps, *The Once and Future King* ventures, 'there was something childish about all the paladins of Arthur's story'.[48] Indeed, the majority of Arthur's knights in White's text exist in a liminal state, the reality of their adulthood marred by unresolved childhood conflicts that continue to resurface. They carry their childish resentments and struggles with them into adulthood, a disastrous dynamic that ultimately results in the fall of the Round Table. 'Sisters, mothers, grandmothers: everything was rooted in the past!', the narrator observes. 'Actions of any sort in one generation might have incalculable consequences in another'.[49] One of White's working titles for his Arthuriad was 'Ancient Wrong', another Housman quotation, which encapsulates both his Aristotelian view of the story and his focus on enduring generational trauma.[50] Depicted as damaged products of their childhood experiences, White's knights and their conflicting desires, impulses and vendettas are ultimately uncontainable by any organised system of ideology or governance, a fact of which Arthur becomes hopelessly and painfully aware towards the end of the final book, *The Candle in the Wind*:

> Now, with his forehead resting on the papers and his eyes closed, the King was
> trying not to realise. For if there was such a thing as original sin, if man was on the

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[45] 'My parents loathed each other and were separated, divorced, when I was about fourteen or so,' he recounted. 'This meant that my home and education collapsed about my ears; and ever since I have been arming myself against disaster. This is why I learn'. See Townsend Warner, *T. H. White,* 23.

[46] Letter from White to Potts, 6 Dec 1940. See Gallix, *Letters,* 120.

[47] His mother complained, when White was a boy, that his lips were 'growing *sensual*'; ashamed, White grew a beard and moustache as an adult to hide them.

[48] White, *OFK,* 569.

[49] White, *OFK,* 688.

[50] Townsend Warner, *T. H. White,* 176.

whole a villain, if the Bible was right in saying that the heart of men was deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, then the purpose of life had been a vain one. Chivalry and justice became a child's illusions.

Shortly before the battle that will claim Arthur's life, White's text comes full circle. Chivalry and justice, the goals of his childhood education, the qualities associated with his transition to maturity, are simply the idealistic daydreams of an 'eccentric necromancer with a weakness for humanity'.[51] They are linked with childhood, a concept that White increasingly problematises as his tetralogy progresses. By the end of *The Candle in the Wind*, childhood has become equated not only with naivety – for this is also true of *The Sword in the Stone* with its focus on education – but with suffering, self-loathing and a life of remorse. It is telling that, at this point, the greatest criticism Arthur can offer of his failed 'chivalry and justice' is to disparage them as 'a child's illusions'. This stands in stark contrast to the faith placed in the malleable and dutiful child by Arthurian adaptations earlier in the century. The child of *The Once and Future King* is still malleable, but White's text explores in detail the negative side of this susceptibility, the child's sensitivity to youthful trauma and its influence in later life. His Arthuriad can be read alongside new models of child development that emerged in the early twentieth century following the growth of psychology and its application to child-rearing, which placed increasing emphasis on the fragility of the child mind. White draws upon these models and upon his own experience of psychoanalysis to problematise paradigms of normative child development, focusing on children whose integration within the adult world is disrupted or complicated.

II. Preventing the abnormal child: twentieth-century psychology

In an entry in her unpublished memoirs, *All This Interested Me*, Constance White contemplates the malleable nature of the child mind:

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[51] White, *OFK*, 686; 691.

I've often thought how interesting it would be to experiment with child training on a large scale. Words are so powerful. It is hard to realise what a great influence they have over people's minds.

For instance, if you say in the hearing of a child, 'He (or she) is shy,' that child although it has never been shy in all its life, will very likely become shy […] Greed, Fear, Cruelty, all manner of evil may be implanted in immature minds simply by words.[52]

As Kurth Sprague points out, these words are an uncomfortable echo of the narrator's observation in *The Once and Future King:* 'it is so fatally easy to make young children believe they are horrible'. Although Constance refers to 'child training', the process she contemplates aims not at guiding the child towards social and behavioural ideals, but the reverse: in imbuing the vulnerable child with precisely those impulses that will prevent his or her smooth transition to adulthood and assimilation into society. Constance focuses not on normative trajectories of child development, but rather on ways in which the mischievous, manipulative adult can disrupt these trajectories. That she has idly considered 'how interesting' such 'experiments' would be points towards a streak of sadism and dispassionate cruelty, realised in White's portrayal of Morgause. However, Constance's fascination with the malleability of the young mind and the role of external influence in shaping the adult personality is not simply an idiosyncratic streak of malice, but can be read in tandem with the 'experiments' of developmental and behavioural psychology during the early twentieth century, which identified the impressionability of the child at an early age and the implications of this for later life.

Nikolas Rose notes that the growth of academic psychology in Britain was remarkably slow: at the outbreak of the Second World War, there were only six university chairs in Psychology and a combined lecturing staff of about thirty. It was *outside* the

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[52] Cited in Sprague, *Troubled Heart,* 43. Contained in two large notebooks and numbering over 300 pages, Constance White's memoirs are currently held as part of the T. H. White collection at the Harry Ransom Center, Texas. It is possible that she had begun the journals at White's request: in them, she mentions that he had asked her 'to write about love'. To avoid confusion between the two Whites, Constance will be referred to by her first name for the remainder of the chapter.

academy, he observes, that psychology found its 'growth points' in Britain.[53] Specifically, the discipline proliferated during the early twentieth century out of its perceived relevance to questions of childhood and child-rearing. The 'mental hygiene' movement of the 1920s and 1930s, derived from the work of psychologist Adolf Meyer and influenced by Freud's psychoanalytic ideas, contributed to the establishment of a variety of facilities in Britain and the US for the assessment of children. Initially a movement that sought to improve hospital conditions for the mentally ill, mental hygiene became increasingly concerned with the prevention of these defects using modern science. Examination of mental illness alongside crime and delinquency highlighted the roots of 'maladjustment' in early life, leading to burgeoning interest in the observation and analysis of children. This analysis was based upon two modern branches of mental and social science: psychoanalysis, which located mental illness in early childhood experience, and behaviourism, which emphasised the role of early environmental influences in shaping adult habits and character traits.[54] In 1928, J. W. Bridges, examining the movement in Britain, Canada and the US, noted that

> since mental disease and maladjustment frequently have their beginning in childhood, it is necessary that we should know more about the mental and physical development of the normal child, and about the various factors which may interfere with the normal or desirable course of development.[55]

As a result, several institutions emerged that aimed both to safeguard the mental health of the child and to understand the effects of early life on adult behaviour. The British Child Study Association was founded in 1894, followed by the Childhood Society and the Parents' National Education Union in Britain. The trend continued with the establishment of the Child Guidance Council in 1927 and the Institute for the Scientific Treatment of Delinquency in 1932 (early members included Freud and Jung). By the Second World War, there were around sixty child guidance clinics in Britain.[56] As Bridges notes, the movement had much in common with eugenics, although it emphasised the influence of environmental

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[53] Nikolas Rose, 'Assembling the Modern Self' in *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present,* ed. Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1997), 228.
[54] Rose, 'Assembling the Modern Self', 229.
[55] J. W. Bridges, 'The Mental Hygiene Movement', *Canadian Public Health Association,* 19.1 (1928), 6.
[56] Rose, 'Assembling the Modern Self', 229.

factors alongside genetics. This overlap is significant: mental hygiene, as Bridges suggests, might in fact be called 'positive mental hygiene'. Its aim was to prevent 'undesirable attitudes […] which may lead to social maladjustment and some forms of mental disease', and thus it was implicitly predicated upon a set of values established to be 'normal' and desirable.[57]

The mental hygiene movement was accompanied by a growing relationship between psychology and guidance on the 'training' of children. Child-rearing advice became shaped by norms of infant behaviour established by developmental psychologists, with 'milestones' mapping the correct points at which certain infant behaviours should take place. The British publication *Mother and Child,* beginning in the 1920s, offered articles on raising children by authorities involved in psychiatry, psychology and psychiatric social work. In 1934, American psychologist Arnold Gesell published *An Atlas of Infant Behaviour,* proposing a 'developmental schedule' for children based on observational research, predicated upon the assumption that healthy child growth could be 'mapped' in stages and achieved through 'developmental tasks' at each stage of the life cycle.[58] Stephen Lassonde refers to the 'triumph of the developmental paradigm by 1950', a move which

> greatly intensified the desire to understand and predict children's advance from one stage of growth to the next, and reflect[ed] the deepening conviction that children's psychological health was embedded in specific, chronological, sequenced maturation.[59]

This sequenced maturation was explored by psychologists in the early twentieth century and given its most systematic and formal articulation by Robert J. Havighurst in 1948, who outlined developmental tasks from the basic – 'learning to walk', 'learning to take solid foods' in infancy and early childhood – to the more complex, such as 'achieving a masculine or feminine social role' and 'desiring and achieving socially responsible

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[57] Bridges, 'Mental Hygiene', 4.
[58] Stephen Lassonde, 'Ten is the New Fourteen: Age Compression and "Real" Childhood' in *Reinventing Childhood After World War II,* ed. Paula S. Fass and Michael Grossberg (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 56.
[59] Lassonde, 'Ten is the New Fourteen', 52.

behaviour' in adolescence.[60] As Kenneth Kidd notes, 'the general pressure of developmental discourse was normative rather than interrogative'.[61] It was concerned with establishing acceptable behaviours to the exclusion of those traits perceived as 'deviant'. Drawing on Freudian psychoanalysis, these traits were often linked to sexuality. A 1935 paper in the *British Medical Journal* outlined the 'social aims of mental hygiene', including the prevention of 'an emotional lack of balance and control' and 'problems of personality', but also those 'disturbances of personality' with a 'sex origin'. It debated the question of whether to offer sex education to children, fearing 'maladjustment in married life, with consequent domestic unhappiness'.[62] Although child guidance literature rarely referred directly to homosexuality, euphemistic allusions to heterosexual inadequacy indicate a concern with sexual behaviours perceived as abnormal, and, as Christina Hardyment notes, childcare manuals began to 'recommend measures designed to forestall Freudian-style traumas, although they refused to recognise Freud openly'.[63] In American child guidance literature, as Julia Grant has demonstrated, direct references to homosexuality as an undesirable result of childhood problems were more common.[64] The developmental paradigm aimed to produce heterosexual adults who were happily integrated into the social and domestic spheres; behaviour that did not fit this model was perceived as deviant and rooted in childhood problems.

In 1937 the psychiatrist Douglas MacCalman, a key figure in the British child guidance movement, observed that 'the normal child has to bear vast personal and environmental strains if he is to grow up to healthy adulthood'.[65] Peter Stearns concludes that a nineteenth-century belief in the 'sturdy innocence' of children who were 'capable of considerable self-correction' was replaced in the early twentieth century by rhetoric that portrayed children as 'more fragile, readily overburdened, requiring careful handling [...]

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[60] Robert J. Havighurst, *Developmental Tasks and Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).

[61] Kenneth B. Kidd, *Freud in Oz: At the Intersections of Psychoanalysis and Children's Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 165.

[62] 'Social Aims of Mental Hygiene', *British Medical Journal*, 2.3902 (1935), 754-55.

[63] Christina Hardyment, *Dream Babies: Childcare Advice from John Locke to Gina Ford*, rev. ed. (London: Frances Lincoln, 2007), 157.

[64] See Julia Grant, 'A "Real Boy" and Not a Sissy: Gender, Childhood, and Masculinity, 1890-1940', *Journal of Social History*, 37.4 (2004), 829-51.

[65] D. R. MacCalman, 'The Management of the Difficult Child', *Journal of the Royal Institute of Public Health and Hygiene*, 1 (1937), 93.

lest their shaky self-esteem be crushed'.[66] Hardyment points out that many observers during this period remarked upon the growing number of neurotic children, but were unable to provide an adequate reason for their appearance.[67] In 1938 a psychiatrist, writing for a popular audience in *Mother and Child*, referred dramatically to the 'dangerous age of childhood'.[68] White's *Once and Future King* explores the consequences of neglect or abuse during this 'dangerous age' through the characters of Lancelot, Mordred and the Orkney brothers, and the tragic consequences of their 'shaky self-esteem'. His portraits of these characters demonstrate a fascination with the perverse, deviant child: the very child that mental hygiene and developmental psychology aimed to prevent. White's autobiographical writings demonstrate that he likened himself to this aberrant child, his 'maladjustment' to normative models of sexuality, sociability and masculinity the product of a troubled upbringing.

He recalls being told that his mother and father were once found wrestling with a pistol, 'one on either side of my cot, each claiming that he or she was going to shoot the other and himself or herself, but in any case beginning with me'. White had no personal recollection of these scenes, speculating that 'the censor of my mind has obliterated them as too terrible'.[69] The episode can be read as a grotesque variation of Freud's 'family romance', in which the child fantasises about regaining the full attention of his or her parents, often at the expense of other siblings. White, an only child, regains his parents' attention, but only in terms of becoming the object of their murderous intent.[70] Invoking Freud's concept of repression and the suppressive activities of the ego, the 'censor of the mind', White suggests that the 'real harm' of his life occurred during his childhood.[71] In a diary entry discussing his dreams in 1946, he suggests that 'part of this may have an actual reminiscence of some quarrel in the nursery before I could walk'.[72] White's 'quarrel in the

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[66] Peter N. Stearns, *Anxious Parents: A History of Modern Child-Rearing in America* (London: New York University Press, 2004), 3-4. Although Stearns focuses on America, he also notes parallels between American developments in child-rearing and those in Britain and Europe.
[67] Hardyment, *Dream Babies*, 105-106.
[68] R. G. Gordon, 'Address to mothers: the dangerous age of childhood', *Mother and Child,* 9 (1938), 84.
[69] White's 'autobiographical fragment', cited in Sprague, *Troubled Heart,* 175.
[70] See Edward Erwin (ed.), *The Freud Encyclopedia: Theory, Therapy, and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 187.
[71] White's 'autobiographical fragment', cited in Sprague, *Troubled Heart,* 174.
[72] White's 'autobiographical fragment', cited in Sprague, *Troubled Heart,* 156.

nursery' is a pervasive theme of his autobiographical writing, particularly when analysing his sexuality. He underwent psychoanalysis on several occasions, beginning in 1935, and in 1936 wrote to David Garnett praising the practice: 'personally, I think [psychoanalysis] is the greatest thing in the world […] and if I had any guts I should write and publish my sexual autobiography, for the benefit of other poor devils'.[73] The 'benefit' he foresaw is unclear, but it is apparent that psychoanalysis prompted increased awareness of his own sexual and social identity.

White refers to a 'dim and frightening memory, brought out by psychoanalysis, of some sort of trouble about being circumcised by my father's brother. I have seen the very knife in dreams'.[74] This frightening visualisation of the damaging of his masculinity is significant. Although there is no way of knowing whether the memory is real, it is a powerful symbol of the conflicts that plagued White throughout his life. In *England Have My Bones* (1936), an early memoir of a year spent in England, White contemplated his masculinity:

> I wonder whether all little boys believe themselves the worst in the world. In my case it was a fixed belief with all its consequences. I think I must have had a mistaken mother. When she pleaded so movingly that I should grow up a big, brave and honourable man, she was conditioning me to fear the reverse.[75]

Anticipating Lancelot and the Orkney brothers, those boys made to believe they are horrible, White's comment locates his sexual anxieties in his mother's actions. His use of the term 'conditioning' alludes to behaviourist psychological principles and echoes Constance's 'child-training', and his reference to a 'fixed belief with all its consequences' indicates his sexual angst in later life. White's troubles with his masculine identity have been well documented by Sylvia Townsend Warner and Kurth Sprague.[76] His failed, half-

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[73] See Garnett, *Letters*, 19.
[74] Cited in Sprague, *Troubled Heart*, 174-75.
[75] T. H. White, *England Have My Bones* (New York: Macmillan, 1936), 350.
[76] In *T. H. White's Troubled Heart*, Sprague explores the ways in which White's perceived misogynistic tendencies shaped his writing of *OFK*, particularly the characters of Guinevere and Morgause. Townsend Warner documents White's romantic failures and doomed 'solicitude for

hearted attempts to seduce women; his unrequited love for Zed, the young son of a friend; his repeated attempts to enlist in World War Two in various capacities and his solitary life with his dog, Brownie, whom he envisaged as both wife and mother, suggest a sexuality in crisis. He acknowledged a tendency towards sadism, which he attributed to a great-grandfather who was a 'notorious flagellant', and, as Garnett observed, this desire to 'prove the love felt for him by acts of cruelty' resulted in White destroying 'every passionate love he had inspired'.[77] In recalling his mother's pleading that he might grow up a 'big, brave and honourable man', White implicitly acknowledges that he has failed to follow this trajectory of normative masculine development. His diaries and letters frequently meditate upon the loneliness of his life and acknowledge his status as both spatially and metaphorically separate from society.[78] His failure to participate in World War Two appears to have only further problematised his confused masculinity: ultimately identifying himself as a pacifist, a group who, as Sonya Rose points out, were frequently perceived as 'irresponsible and sexually suspect anti-citizens', White's inability to participate in the war also excluded him from means of consolidating a shaky masculine and social identity.[79] In 1940 he noted that because he had moved to Ireland shortly before the outbreak of war, he had no English ration or identity card. 'When the time comes for my age-group to be conscripted,' he remarked, 'it is improbable that anybody will know of my existence'. He speculated that 'my life is an isolated one, which might renew itself by living in a crowd again', and he made several attempts to join the war effort which were unsuccessful. Far from a 'big, brave and honourable man', he perceived himself making 'sad and terrified dashes from one hunted corner to the next'.[80]

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what was young and wild and dauntless and dependent', particularly the case of the young boy, Zed. See Townsend Warner, *T. H. White*, 278.

[77] See Sprague, *Troubled Heart*, 30. White wrote in 1942 that 'I only kill the things I love very much' (see Townsend Warner, *T. H. White*, 196).

[78] In 1960 White had written in his diary, 'I expect to make rather a good death. The essence of death is loneliness, and I have had plenty of practice at this'. He had camped for several days on the remote islands of Inniskea and Burhou, remarking that he loved the 'holy solitude' provided by such places, and chose to live in remote locations isolated from human company. See Townsend Warner, *T. H. White*, 342; 282.

[79] Sonya O. Rose, 'Temperate Heroes: Concepts of Masculinity in Second World War Britain', in *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, ed. Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 189.

[80] Townsend Warner, *T. H. White*, 168; 122.

There is a certain amount of angry defiance and even pride detectable in White's analysis of himself as the abnormal adult that early twentieth-century models of child-rearing aimed to avert: isolated, sexually confused and wracked with bitter neuroses. 'Six months ago I suddenly realised the fact (with pleasure) that I was not a normal human being,' he wrote to Garnett in 1943. 'It was a great relief'.[81] In a diary entry of 1945, he declared 'I hate people and I hate myself', but then refuted this: 'No, I don't hate myself. The fact is that when I am alone with my books and dogs we are the best company in the world'.[82] This pride in his idiosyncrasy is evident, too, in his dealing with the *Morte Darthur*, expressing no interest in the work of contemporaneous Malory scholars and dismissing the efforts of those adapters who had preceded him. The product of this defiance, White's Arthuriad offers a unique and troubled interpretation of the *Morte* in which the ideologies of normative child development that underpin previous versions are disrupted and complicated. Initially focused on the child's quest for idealised masculinity in *The Sword in the Stone*, White's text proceeds to distort and destroy this vision. Acknowledging in *The Ill-Made Knight* that Arthur 'had been beautifully brought up' and 'protected with love' like the child in the womb, the narrator also remarks that

> the effect of such an education was that he had grown up without any of the useful accomplishments for living – without malice, vanity, suspicion, cruelty, and the commoner forms of selfishness. Jealousy seemed to him the most ignoble of vices. He was sadly unfitted for hating his best friend or for torturing his wife. He had been given too much love and trust to be good at these things.[83]

The narrator's sardonic summary of the qualities that constitute 'useful accomplishments for living' suggests disillusionment with the world, and an impatient dismissal of characters whose childhoods were characterised by loving care and attention. White is not interested in having the legend conform to these standards, as previous versions had done. The perversions and troubled sexuality White identified in himself are reflected in *The Once and Future King,* as he reworks Malory's narrative away from Arthur and towards the outcasts, misfits and deviants who have failed to integrate smoothly into adult society.

[81] Townsend Warner, *T. H. White*, 197-98.
[82] Townsend Warner, *T. H. White*, 224.
[83] White, *OFK*, 420-21.

   This is reflected in his portrayal of Lancelot, 'in love' with both Arthur and Guinevere. He strives to become the best knight in the world 'so that Arthur would love him'. Having 'fallen in love with Arthur on the night of the wedding feast […] he carried with him in his heart to France the picture of that bright Northern King, at supper, flushed and glorious from his wars'.[84] Although White takes great pains to explain the adultery of Lancelot and Guinevere to the reader, and to identify the complexity of Guinevere's distinct feelings for her husband and her lover, no such clarification is offered in the case of Lancelot and Arthur. Lancelot 'loved Arthur and he loved Guenever and he hated himself', the narrator states simply, and was 'disabled by something which we cannot explain'.[85] His inability to explain this homoerotic attraction suggests both confusion regarding his own sexuality, and a reluctance to classify Lancelot's romantic behaviour according to standard conventions. It echoes sentiments he had expressed in a letter to Mary Potts: 'I don't know whether I am heterosexual or homosexual at the moment, and don't much care'.[86] Instead, White's text undermines or destabilises conventional masculinities. It satirises chivalric warfare through the comic presentation of Sir Grummore and King Pellinore and their farcical fights in heavy armour. The heroic Galahad, epitome of 'muscular Christianity', becomes, bathetically, 'a vegetarian and teetotaller' who 'makes believe he is a vairgin [sic]'. The struggle of the Orkney brothers to please Morgause by adopting the masculine roles of 'mighty hunters' results in their repulsive botched slaughter of the unicorn.[87] White displays a fascination with the character of Mordred, presented as 'a foppish man with a crooked shoulder', and 'everything which Arthur was not'. This 'misshapen, intelligent, critical' character, lost in a 'civilisation which was too straightforward for purely intellectual criticism', epitomises White's fascination with outcasts and 'misshapen' personalities.[88] In this 'genuinely idiosyncratic classic of English literature', to use the words of Martin Kellman, we can perceive the paradigm of heroic masculine development problematised, complicated and disrupted by a man driven by awareness of his own exclusion from this model.[89] The resulting text has perplexed critics and holds a troubled

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[84] White, *OFK*, 340.
[85] White, *OFK*, 397-98.
[86] Letter from White to Mary Potts, 7 Mar 1937. See Gallix, *Letters*, 90.
[87] White, *OFK*, 473; 279.
[88] White, *OFK*, 562; 568.
[89] Kellman, *T. H. White and the Matter of Britain*, 102.

relationship with children and children's literature, its implied reader figuring White's disruption of the child development narrative and reflecting the confused relationship between adulthood and childhood evident in his autobiographical writing.

III. 'We are all children': White's implied reader

In 1963, Walt Disney released an animated film of *The Sword in the Stone*.[90] Based on White's 1939 version of the book, the film is a light-hearted, colourful and musical affair that revolves around Arthur's education under the tuition of Merlin. The wizard, as Susan Aronstein notes, is here depicted not as White's 'professor of political philosophy', but as 'the spokesman for technology, education, and the American Dream'.[91] As in White's original novel, the film revolves around tableaux demonstrating the education and development of the young 'Wart', as he is turned into a fish and a bird and taught to write by Merlin's owl, Archimedes. Merlin's magic is a major focal point, realised in entertaining scenes of self-washing dishes and his shape-shifting duel with the unsavoury witch Madam Mim. As Disney's film demonstrates, White's initial version of *The Sword in the Stone* had much in common with earlier twentieth-century adaptations of the *Morte* for children, in its focus on the teaching of self-reliance, consideration and forethought, emphasised in the film to echo the philosophy of the American Dream. However, where the Disney version ends with Arthur's dramatic pulling of the sword from the stone, White's text features a chapter detailing his coronation, culminating with an ominous speech from Merlin. 'I know the sorrows before you,' he warns,

> and the joys, and how there will never again be anybody who dares to call you by the friendly name of Wart. In future it will be your glorious doom to take up the

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[90] Having obtained the film rights to White's novel in 1939, the company began the initial storyboards in 1949, and the film was cleared to enter production in 1960. See Rob Gossedge, '*The Sword in the Stone:* American *Translatio* and Disney's Antimedievalism' in *The Disney Middle Ages: A Fairy Tale and Fantasy Past,* ed. Tison Pugh and Susan Aronstein (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 115-33.
[91] Susan Aronstein, *Arthurian Cinema and the Politics of Nostalgia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 87.

burden and to enjoy the nobility of your proper title: so now I shall crave the privilege of being the very first of your subjects to address you with it.[92]

The bestowing upon Arthur of his proper title marks more than just his ascension to the throne. The abandonment of the childish nickname 'Wart' also signifies his transition to the joys and sorrows of adulthood, and the inevitable burden of his 'glorious doom'. Following the Disney-friendly delights of Arthur's childhood in *The Sword in the Stone*, White's tetralogy progressively problematises the notion of a happy childhood, offering portraits of the tormented Lancelot and the bitter, neglected Orkney children to counterbalance Arthur's joyful education with Merlin. White's 1958 revised version of *The Sword in the Stone* removed the whimsical battle between Merlin and Madam Mim, and, by the end of the 1958 tetralogy, Arthur's fond memories of his youthful adventures are overshadowed by bitter regret at his seduction by Morgause and subsequent murder of the May Day babies, from which 'sprung the misery of [his] life'.[93] In the *Book of Merlyn*, written in 1941 and envisaged as the conclusion to White's Arthuriad, the narrator notes that Arthur's 'childhood had vanished'.[94] White's increasing focus on disrupted child development and on youthful trauma complicates the question of his intended audience. His understanding of *The Sword in the Stone* as wish-fulfilment implies the adult White returning to a state of idealised childhood through the creation of the text, but also shaping the text according to an adult awareness of the inadequacy of his actual childhood. It demonstrates a confused blurring of the boundaries between the adult and the child self that is manifest in White's construction of his implied reader.

'It seems impossible to determine whether it is for grown-ups or children', White wrote of *The Sword in the Stone* in 1938.[95] Critics seem to have experienced the same problem: Ralph Thomson, writing in the *New York Times* in 1939, termed the text 'a fairy tale for adults – and doubtless for certain types of children too'.[96] He linked it to *Alice in Wonderland*, as did the *Chicago Daily Tribune* in the same year, identifying *The Sword in the Stone* with *Alice* and *The Wind in the Willows*: 'like them […] it is a tale of infinite

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[92] White, *OFK*, 222.
[93] White, *OFK*, 630.
[94] White, *OFK*, 803.
[95] Gallix, *Letters*, 94.
[96] Ralph Thompson, 'Books of the Times', *New York Times*, 2 Jan 1939, 28.

phantasy from which imaginative children can pluck threads of joy just as their elders do'.[97] White's perceived link with Lewis Carroll seems to lie in his ability to address children and adults simultaneously. In *The Narrator's Voice: The Dilemma of Children's Fiction* (1991), Barbara Wall charts the struggle of writers from the nineteenth century onwards to find an appropriate 'voice' with which to address children. She suggests that Carroll 'put his narratee, and hence his child audience, first, and showed how it was possible both to address children unselfconsciously, not caring if other adults overheard, and to share a story with them'. However, she notes, he is 'always inviting his other Alice, his narratee-Alice – and indeed his implied reader – to join him in amused appreciation of her directness, earnestness and poise', but also to 'laugh at, to see as confused and absurd, the naively self-possessed Alice-character'. His triumph, Wall observes, 'proves that in certain circumstances single address to children can in fact become dual address'.[98] Michael Payne identifies in A. A. Milne's 1926 *Winnie-the-Pooh* a similar strategy, a 'double-consciousness', in which the reader 'is invited to identify simultaneously with the youthful perspective of a more or less innocent fictional character and with the more critically reflexive persona of the narrator'.[99] We witness the use of dual address on multiple occasions in *The Once and Future King*, moments where certain comments are likely to possess greater resonance for the adult reader while not completely eluding the child: in Merlin's remark to Wart that he cured the traumatised, noseless Wat with 'the wonders of analytical psychology and plastic surgery'; in the narrator's literary allusions to 'the base Indian' and 'Cleopatra in the poem'; in Wart's simple response to the parable of Elijah and the Rabbi Jachanan, 'I still think it was a shame that the cow died', designed to foreground his naivety to the adult reader. In the narrator's snide comment, 'unfortunately [Sir Bors] was a misogynist, and like most people of that sort, he had the female failing of indiscretion', we witness both an attempt to clarify adult character traits to a child, but also an idiosyncratic streak of bitterness that appears to allude to White's own experience and, furthermore, perhaps a sense of courting the approval of an adult audience with this pithy observation on gender stereotypes.[100]

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[97] 'Skilfully Done Phantasy', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 7 Jan 1939, 15.
[98] Barbara Wall, *The Narrator's Voice: The Dilemma of Children's Fiction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), 102; 110.
[99] Michael Payne, 'What Difference Has Theory Made? From Freud to Adam Phillips', *College Literature*, 32.2 (2005), 1.
[100] White, *OFK*, 124; 91; 415.

Wall suggests that 'a manner of discourse which is based on direct address to children – overt or covert – is an inescapable and indispensable element in a genuine literature for children'. Paying attention to the voice of the narrator can 'enable adult readers to determine whether or not a book is for children'.[101] Yet critical reception of White's *Once and Future King,* even today, struggles to place it as an adults' or children's book; White's narrative voice does not identify clearly its implied reader or offer 'direct address' only to children. Garnett, writing to White in 1941, commented of *The Sword in the Stone* that 'it is poetry: it is for children & we are all children & happiest when anyone can make [us] believe we are'.[102] The difficulty of identifying the implied reader in White's Arthuriad is encapsulated and explained by Garnett's comment: *we are all children*. He echoes Virginia Woolf's sentiments on the *Alice* books: they 'are not books for children; they are the only books in which we *become* children'.[103] In White's text, humans exist in a liminal, hybrid state as adult products of the childhood conflicts they relive and revisit. Like 'all the paladins of Arthur's story', about which there was something 'childish', White's implied reader is simultaneously child and adult, alternately reminded of his or her status as adult and made to 'become', to 'believe' they are, a child. Furthermore, although *The Sword in the Stone* appeals to a 'boyish' love of mischief and adventure in its implied reader, the implied reader of the tetralogy as it progresses is largely gender-neutral, reflecting White's interest in children and adults who did not conform to normative social or sexual roles. Instead of focusing on the socialisation of a gendered implied reader into normative behavioural ideals, White's narrative is concerned with analysing and explaining a fraught and perilous world for an implied reader characterised by naivety and exclusion from certain forms of knowledge. Perry Nodelman suggests that children's books 'invite their readers, not just adults but also children, to think about what it means to be a child and what it means, therefore, to know less than older people do', and this exploration of a state of 'knowing less' is characteristic of White's narrative style.[104]

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[101] Wall, *The Narrator's Voice,* 199.

[102] Letter from Garnett to White, 4 Jun 1941. See Garnett, *Letters,* 83.

[103] Virginia Woolf, 'Lewis Carroll' [first published 1939], in *Aspects of Alice: Lewis Carroll's Dreamchild as Seen through the Critics' Looking-Glasses, 1865-1971,* ed. Robert Phillips (London: Penguin Books, 1981), 79 (my italics).

[104] Perry Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008), 22.

'The Wart did not know what Merlyn was talking about,' the narrator notes in *The Sword in the Stone*,

> but he liked him to talk. He did not like the grown-ups who talked down to him like a baby, but the ones who just went on talking in their usual way, leaving him to leap along in their wake, jumping at meanings, guessing, clutching at known words, and chuckling at complicated jokes as they suddenly dawned. He had the glee of the porpoise then, pouring and leaping through strange seas.[105]

White captures the joy of the adventurous child in the dynamic comparison to the porpoise, 'leaping through strange seas', his use of present participles describing the child engaged in the continuous act of interpreting the world around him. However, this child can also venture into the adult world of the text's 'complicated jokes', many of which would elude a young reader. Neither fully child nor adult, White's implied reader leaps along in his wake, like Wart, 'jumping at meanings, guessing, clutching at known words, and chuckling at complicated jokes as they suddenly dawned'. Many of White's narratorial asides seem to be simultaneously addressing the child and the adult, such as the following:

> There is a thing called knowledge of the world, which people do not have until they are middle-aged. It is something which cannot be taught to younger people, because it is not logical and does not obey laws which are constant. It has no rules […] The slow discovery of the seventh sense, by which both men and women contrive to ride the waves of a world in which there is war, adultery, compromise, fear, stultification and hypocrisy, this discovery is not a matter for triumph […] We only carry on with our famous knowledge of the world, riding the queer waves in a habitual, petrifying way, because we have reached a stage of deadlock in which we can think of nothing else to do.[106]

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[105] White, *The Sword in the Stone* (London: Harper Collins, 1998), 68.
[106] White, *OFK*, 408-409.

In this passage, White matter-of-factly explains the psychology of growing up to the child, prefacing a discussion of Guinevere's character, and simultaneously delivers a blunt, perceptive observation of the 'grown-up' psyche, likely to resonate poignantly with an adult. Nodelman suggests that children's literature 'might be understood to sublimate or keep present but leave unsaid […] a variety of forms of knowledge – sexual, cultural, historical – theoretically only available to and only understandable by adults'.[107] White's text differs from Nodelman's definition in this respect: rather than sublimating or omitting these forms of knowledge, he adopts almost the opposite approach, taking pains to explain them in tangible, familiar terms rather than in abstract and obscure ways, while maintaining their resonance with the adult reader. Instead of avoiding the issue of Guinevere's adultery, like most previous adaptations, White tackles it directly. He notes the complexity of the issue – 'It is difficult to explain about Guenever, unless it is possible to love two people at the same time' – but explains in detail that Guinevere felt 'respect […] gratitude, kindness, love, and a sense of protection' for Arthur, 'everything except the passion of romance', largely because of the eight-year age difference between them. At twenty-two, he notes, 'the age of thirty seems to be on the verge of senility', focalising the narrative through the eyes of youth. 'Probably it is not possible to love two people in the same way, but there are different kinds of love,' White explains, such as the love a woman feels for her children and her husband, and men feeling 'a lusty thought for one woman while they are feeling a love of the heart for another'.[108] Guinevere falls in love with Lancelot after he sends all his vanquished captives to kneel at her throne. White's explanation that 'it was like a birthday party, so many presents' offers clarification for an apparent child reader, but his comment that Lancelot and Guinevere's eyes met as soon as he entered the room 'with the click of two magnets coming together' and looked at each other 'with the wide pupils of madness' alludes more subtly to adult schemas of human attraction.[109]

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[107] Nodelman, *Hidden Adult*, 206.
[108] White, *OFK*, 391.
[109] White, *OFK*, 393; 395.

Initial critical acclaim for White's Arthurian work centred on the psychological realism of his characters.[110] Ben Ray Redman, writing in the *Saturday Review* in 1940, observed that

> Mr White has dug in the legendary soil of the *Morte Darthur* for the emotional and psychological roots of its immortal figures […] Not content with saying, This is what they did, he has asked, Why did they do it? And, What did the living mean to them? And his answers, given with power and beauty as well as with humorous insight, transform those figures into characters in the fullest meaning of the word.[111]

In 'digging for the emotional and psychological roots' of the *Morte Darthur,* White also drew upon his own, and the result is a unique rendition of Malory's classic shaped by a poignant sense of existing on the margins, excluded from certain forms of knowledge or from the acceptance of society. The strength of White's psychological insight, and perhaps the reason it tends to baffle critics and reviewers, is that it is frequently couched in terms intelligible by both adults and children. For example, his discussion of Elaine's feelings for Lancelot:

> [Elaine] was not moping for Lancelot, nor did she weep for him on her pillow. She hardly ever thought of him. He had worn a place for himself in some corner of her heart, as a sea shell, always boring against the rock, might do. The making of the place had been her pain. But now the shell was safely in the rock. It was lodged, and ground no longer.[112]

The figuring of long-past unrequited love, poignant but no longer painful, as a sea shell in a rock attempts to explain the complexities of adult romantic love in concrete, physical terms intelligible by a child, but also carries poetic resonance with the adult reader, likely to be more empathetically appreciative of White's perceptive simile. In his constant bid to

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[110] Historical novelist Alfred Leo Duggan in 1958 claimed that 'in three fields particularly [White] excels. He can draw living people; he can describe a landscape; and he can enter into the inmost minds of birds and beasts'. See 'Arthurian Achievement', *Times Literary Supplement*, 25 Apr 1958, 224.
[111] Ben Ray Redman, 'Arthurian Cycle', *Saturday Review*, 9 Nov 1940, 5.
[112] White, *OFK*, 439.

'explain' the actions of Arthur's knights to the child reader ('it is difficult to explain about Guenever'; 'it is difficult to explain [Morgan le Fay]'; 'it is almost impossible to explain about Lancelot') White reaches out for ever more poetic, perceptive figurative language; he seems so insightful into the human condition because of his attempts to render it intelligible for a child reader and thus to dramatise it in visual or tangible terms. A woman acquiring knowledge of the world is like a baby learning to balance: 'You can't teach a baby to walk by explaining the matter logically – she has to learn the strange poise of walking by experience'. Elaine, stumbling upon Lancelot after years of separation, 'recognised [him] in two heartbeats. The first beat was a rising one which faltered at the top. The second one caught up with it, picked its momentum from the crest of the wave, and both came down together like a rearing horse that falls'.[113] White's explanations of character simultaneously cast the reader in the role of naive, innocent observer, for whom figurative language is necessary to dramatise the nuances of the human condition, and seasoned, experienced, world-weary sympathiser, for whom the comparisons and observations both resonate and surprise with their originality and applicability. At the same time, they offer knowledge of the world and yet nostalgically evoke a simpler state of being, in which such knowledge has yet to be acquired.

IV. Conclusion

'The steady growth of Mr White's popularity is a strange feature of our disillusioned post-war world,' Christine Brooke-Rose remarked in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1959. 'An easy explanation is that people are tired of psychological and social realism and yearn for pageantry, magic and ritual'.[114] This is, of course, far too easy an explanation, and bizarrely misconceived in its implication that White's text lacks 'psychological realism'. White, through his construction of a hybrid child/adult implied reader, simultaneously nostalgic and poignantly psychologically aware, offers all of these in *The Once and Future King*. His focus on damaged children and troubled adults on the margins of society, and his bleak analysis of the belligerent impulses of humankind, reflect the disillusionment of a post-war readership and the lifelong struggles of a man who failed to integrate within it.

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[113] White, *OFK*, 408; 440.
[114] Christine Brooke-Rose, 'Return from Avilion', *Times Literary Supplement*, 25 Dec 1959, 755.

However, White also offers joyful glimpses of the innocence of childhood and the 'pageantry' of education and magic. One of the main strengths of *The Once and Future King* is that through his nuanced, 'timeless' portrayals of character, and a narrative style that places the implied reader in a similar state of timelessness, White allows psychology and pageant, realism and ritual, to coexist. His observations of human action are both poetic and nostalgic, placing the reader back, as Garnett suggested, into the simplicity of childhood while simultaneously resonating with a more seasoned, implicitly adult knowledge of life. It is a strategy that, later in the century, came to be identified with the 'Golden Age' of children's literature, and shaped several adaptations of the *Morte* for children in the 1950s.

'*Monty Python* was not that far away': the instability of Arthur in the 1950s

'Mr White is a literary eccentric, as much at home in the mire and marvels of medieval Britain as anybody not a professional historian can ever have been,' Naomi Lewis wrote in the *New Statesman* in 1958. 'Are we to count his Arthur, though, as the representative Arthur of our day?'[1] The answer appears to have been no. In 1953, children's author Roger Lancelyn Green commented that 'the great legends' – Arthur and Charlemagne, Beowulf and Sigurd – 'are still waiting for their true interpreters'. The Arthurian stories have 'been retold again and again for young readers, but never yet in a version which has endured or deserved to do so'.[2] Although White's version does in fact endure as a popular text today, discussion of Arthurian adaptation during the 1940s and 1950s often ignores or downplays his contribution.[3] An article published in the American *Elementary English Review* entitled 'The Arthurian Legends: Editions Suitable for School Use' (1940) recommended a series of both British and American adaptations for children, including those by Howard Pyle, Mary Macleod and Alfred Pollard. White's version does not appear on the list, although the author, May Dalrymple, suggests that familiarity with these other texts 'will later increase [the reader's] enjoyment of […] stories in which there are allusions to the ancient tales, such as Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, or T. H. White's *The Sword in the Stone*'.[4] Whether a result of its length, the difficulty of identifying its demographic, or the fact that, as Dalrymple suggests, it at times departs from and elaborates upon the *Morte* to the extent that it constitutes allusion more than direct adaptation, we find evidence in the 1940s and 1950s that White's text had not provided a definitive Arthur for the modern age.

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[1] Naomi Lewis, 'Whose Arthur?' *New Statesman* 15 (12 July 1958), 50.

[2] Roger Lancelyn Green, 'In Quest of King Arthur', *Times Literary Supplement*, 26 Jun 1953, 412.

[3] As demonstrated in Chapter Three, much early critical discussion of White's tetralogy does not categorise the text as a children's book. Although it was largely well received by critics, reviews tended to focus on the text as a creative entity in its own right, and to overlook its position within adaptation of the *Morte* for children.

[4] May Dalrymple, 'The Arthurian Legends: Editions Suitable for School Use', *Elementary English Review*, 17.8 (1940), 317.

In 1946 Brian Kennedy Cooke, a representative of the British Council in Italy, published *King Arthur of Britain,* an adaptation of the *Morte* for children. In his introduction, Cooke delivered a damning appraisal of previous efforts from the end of the nineteenth century:

> A lamentable fashion arose towards the end of the last century of producing insipid special versions for children, illustrated with two-dimensional dummies in pasteboard armour, which kindly but undiscerning aunts and uncles could pick up without efforts on the Christmas bookstalls. These things came between the late Victorian or Edwardian child and Malory. And so the great work, which has some claim to be regarded as the earliest novel in our language, has fallen into some neglect.[5]

After a proliferation of editions in the first two decades of the twentieth century, many designed for use in schools, adaptation of the *Morte* for children had entered a period of stagnation. Andrew Lynch notes that from 1920 to 1945, it consisted mainly of reprints of earlier versions which 'settled down comfortably in publishers' lists […] while at an even greater cultural distance from the great Victorians, especially Tennyson, who still inspired them'.[6] By the mid-1940s, according to Cooke, this gulf had grown intolerably large. 'It is to be hoped,' he commented acerbically, 'we have now outgrown the strange habit of thinking that the story must be bowdlerised and rewritten in a manner compounded of mawkishness and whimsy before it can be presented to a child'.[7] Similarly, Erica J. Royde-Smith, writing in the *Times Literary Supplement* in May 1944, criticised the 'saccharine halo that modern enthusiasts have forced upon this almost mythical warrior's memory'.[8] In the 1950s, however, the *Morte* was rescued from its period of stagnation. In this decade we find six authors – Roger Lancelyn Green, Alice Hadfield, Phyllis Briggs, Barbara Leonie Picard, Antonia Fraser and John Steinbeck – reworking the legend, several of whom acknowledged the influence of Victorian and Edwardian versions upon their childhood, and

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[5] Brian Kennedy Cooke, *King Arthur of Britain* (London: Edmund Ward, 1946), 8.
[6] Andrew Lynch, '*Le Morte Darthur* for Children: Malory's Third Tradition' in *Adapting the Arthurian Legends for Children: Essays on Arthurian Juvenilia,* ed. Barbara Tepa Lupack (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 27.
[7] Cooke, *King Arthur,* 8.
[8] Erica J. Royde-Smith, 'A Live King Arthur', *Times Literary Supplement,* 27 May 1944, 257.

at least one of whom was indeed resentful of the 'saccharine halo' cast over King Arthur by previous adaptations.[9] There was clearly a sense that the 1950s required a new Arthur, that old-fashioned versions were no longer applicable in a world shaken by two wars and radically altered in terms of empire, class and gender roles. But if White confused reviewers by straddling the pre-modern and the modern with his nostalgic, psychological depiction of the Arthurian story, the texts that follow him are even more generically diverse. They suggest a continuing and growing uncertainty regarding the presentation of King Arthur for children, manifested in varied constructions of childhood and the child reader. These texts illustrate how versatile the Arthur story had become in its application to the modern age, their divergent approaches anticipating and paving the way for the radical rewritings of the later twentieth century.

I. True knights and treachery: Phyllis Briggs

Phyllis Briggs's *King Arthur and his Knights* (ca.1950) is the most conservative of these adaptations, offering an overtly moralistic narrative and a construction of the child reader that has much in common with the didactic school texts and adventure stories of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Briggs's text was published as part of the Regent Classics series, which offered 'the world's best-loved and most famous stories, presented in an easily read type and in attractive format'.[10] It appears on the list alongside nineteenth-century titles such as *The Coral Island, Treasure Island* and *Alice in Wonderland*. This positioning of Briggs's text alongside other Victorian 'classics' hints at its relative lack of innovation, especially when compared with the lengthy and original retellings of Pyle and White. Despite some novel additions to the *Morte,* Briggs's text ultimately retains an old-fashioned, didactic tone. She gives greater prominence to the role of women in the story: when Guinevere plans a dinner party for twenty-four knights to show her disregard for Lancelot, 'she made out a list of all she would invite, and she planned the dinner and what they should eat, just as any housewife would do in any century'. Briggs posits Guinevere as a sympathetic, domestic figure, a type of the modern 1950s housewife rather than Arthur's

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[9] Steinbeck was critical of the censorship that occurred in Victorian versions, declaring 'I'll have no part of the cleaning up for boys'. See John Steinbeck, *The Acts of King Arthur and his Noble Knights* (London: Penguin Classics, 2001), 306.

[10] Phyllis Briggs, *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* (London: Dean & Son, 1957), 2. First published ca.1950.

cold, adulterous queen. As the knights of the Round Table prepare to leave for battle with the Romans, the narrator reminds us, 'the work of the women [was not] forgotten. In many a cold turret-room and baronial hall the fair ladies sat and sewed banner and pennant with silk and wool and gold thread'. Most notable, however, is a focus on the wrongdoing of Arthur's knights, a critique of those who were 'not always good'. Sometimes, Briggs's narrator suggests, 'they were greedy or cruel or careless'.[11] An example is Gawain, who 'knew not how hot blood and anger should bring down his vaulting pride', and kills a lady in a 'red mist' of bloodlust, or Sir Lionel, who attacks a knight out of 'hot-headed youth and inexperience'.[12] Briggs devotes more space than most adapters to King Mark, focusing on his foul temperament and treachery: his chapter is entitled 'The Coward Knight'.

While it is tempting to read in Briggs's adaptation a post-war critique of knightly violence, it should be noted that in all of these examples, the errant (in both senses of the word) knight is used as an example to reinforce, rather than undermine, the chivalric enterprise, and this enterprise is not re-interpreted for the modern age but adheres to Malorian conventions. Although Briggs punctures the trope of masculine endurance by acknowledging that men feel fear ('what man does not at times?'), she returns to an assertion of martial chivalric values and an emphasis on duty that echoes nineteenth- and early twentieth-century texts: the fearful knight 'must still do that which is his duty or be deemed recreant and false'. An admission that sometimes knights were greedy, cruel or careless is followed by 'and King Arthur would have none of them', emphasising the purity of his own knights. Gawain's tale is used to remind the reader that 'a good knight is better for being humble'. Lionel, though 'hot-headed' and inexperienced, is ultimately commended for his bravery: 'as a true knight should he went straight on despite his mortal fears'.[13] King Mark's failures to follow the chivalric code are explicated in ways that serve to affirm it: 'Ah, shameful deed! Oh, most unknightly deed!', Sir Amant cries after Mark kills a man who refused to help him accomplish a cowardly act. Dying on the field of battle is still lauded as the mark of a 'true knight', and the book closes by praising the 'golden age of chivalry'.[14]

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[11] Briggs, *King Arthur*, 191; 50; 24.
[12] Briggs, *King Arthur*, 30; 57.
[13] Briggs, *King Arthur*, 25; 30; 57.
[14] Briggs, *King Arthur*, 246.

A brief look at another of Briggs's children's works, *Son of Black Beauty* (1954), reveals an implied child reader in need of moral instruction. The text is framed as a didactic narrative: 'I want to tell all young colts starting out in life all about myself, so that they can keep out of some of the troubles I found'.[15] Characters frequently offer thinly disguised moral advice to the protagonist – as soon as he is born and reluctant to walk on his unstable legs, his mother warns him 'Don't be idle, son […] It's one of the worst ways to begin life' – and the story ends with his injunction to 'take a lesson from me'.[16] In a 1967 essay, 'Didacticism in Modern Dress', literary critic John Rowe Townsend suggested that 'the urge to instruct the young is deeply built into human nature', and that 'if one looks at the "quality" children's books of today, and still more at what is written about them, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that didacticism is still very much alive'.[17] The style of Briggs's texts suggests that there was still a perceived market for overt didacticism in the children's literature of the 1950s. However, as criticism of 'insipid special versions for children' demonstrates, there was also a backlash against this didacticism among certain children's writers. In his popular 1946 survey of children's literature, *Tellers of Tales*, Oxford scholar, biographer and children's writer Roger Lancelyn Green traced the 'long and hard struggle to be won against the extreme and misguided enthusiasm for dull learning […] that characterised children's literature from the early nineteenth century onwards.[18] Criticising the tactic of 'writing down' to children, Green devoted much of his career to the analysis of children's literature and the production of appealing texts for a young audience.

II. Mystery, magic and the mythopoeic: Roger Lancelyn Green

Children's author Ian Serraillier, reviewing Green's *King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table* (1953), approved of the author's effort, acknowledging that 'the great legends, like the best fairytales, need to be freshly interpreted from age to age'.[19] The question of

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[15] Briggs, *Son of Black Beauty* (London: Thames, 1954), 11.
[16] Briggs, *Son of Black Beauty,* 12; 245.
[17] John Rowe Townsend, 'Didacticism in Modern Dress' in *Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature,* ed. Sheila A. Egoff et al. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996), 56.
[18] Roger Lancelyn Green, *Tellers of Tales: Children's Books and their Authors from 1800 to 1964,* 4th edn. (London: Edmund Ward, 1965), 13.
[19] Ian Serraillier, 'Knights and Ladies', *Times Literary Supplement,* 27 Nov 1953, 760.

how to interpret these legends for a mid-twentieth-century audience was one that preoccupied Green throughout his career of writing for, and about, children. 'To make a nursery classic out of an adult classic is an art which seems to have died with the nineteenth century,' he wrote in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1953, and a brief overview of his children's works suggests Green spent his prolific career attempting to resurrect this art: *The Adventures of Robin Hood, Tales of the Greek Heroes* and *Myths of the Norsemen* all appeared in the 1950s, followed by stories from Shakespeare, Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece and Thebes in later decades.[20] Often manifesting as an interest in offering mythological tales to children, Green's predominant focus was the concept of the children's 'classic', the origins of which he located in the late nineteenth century. Quick to dismiss the overly didactic tales of the early 1800s, Green concentrated instead on what he termed the 'Golden Age' of children's literature (a coinage inspired by Kenneth Grahame's book of the same name), offering particular praise for the authors he encountered during his own childhood: Rider Haggard, Lewis Carroll and J. M. Barrie.

Originally published for a child audience, *Tellers of Tales* was revised two decades later after it was realised that adults – particularly librarians and training teachers – were overwhelmingly its audience. Where its predecessor offered simple praise for children's classics and snippets of biographical interest about their authors to interest its child readers (Haggard, Green claims, had a life just as exciting as the plot of any of his novels), the revised 1965 version attempted to get to grips with what constituted the best children's literature, those books 'for which the shelf of honour is reserved'. Green had unwittingly met a growing need that developed in tandem with the production of children's literature in the mid-twentieth century: adult desires for advice on how to make judicious selections from the vast array of literature for children being published with renewed vigour following the end of the paper shortages of World War II, and for which the rise in children's libraries and the creation of specialist publishers such as Puffin Books had created increased demand.[21] Children's literature was subject to much discussion in this period, with adults attempting to analyse the qualities that constituted a 'classic' children's text. Partly the

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[20] Green, 'In Quest of King Arthur', 412.

[21] Puffin Books was created in 1939, four years after the founding of Penguin Books. Originally a collection of non-fiction picture books, fiction soon followed, and Puffin survived wartime struggles with paper rationing to publish classics such as C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe,* Noel Streatfeild's *Ballet Shoes,* and E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web* in the 1950s.

quest of enterprising adults who wished to replicate these formulae in order to make a profit – Alfred Dunning published a series of articles in *The Bookman* in the 1930s offering advice on how to become a successful children's writer – partly the speculation of interested literary critics and partly the arbitrary judgement of publications devoted to producing lists of recommendations, this subjection of children's literature to intense analysis marked the beginning of modern children's literary theory, calling into question the nature of children as readers, adults as writers and even childhood itself.[22] One of the main focal points of this endeavour was the creation of a literary canon for children through lists of 'classic' texts, although this approach was in itself subject to criticism and debate.

In 1958 the *Sunday Times* drew up a list of the 'One Hundred Best Books for Children', which was soon hotly contested by a writer in the *Times Literary Supplement*, who lamented its 'glaring omissions' and declared the making of book-lists a 'fascinating, insidious, and fundamentally unsound occupation'.[23] He anticipated children's author Philippa Pearce's disparaging response to this apparent need to categorise and compartmentalise children's literature. In 1965, Pearce lamented the 'fragmentation' that she perceived resulting from this trend, suggesting that the importance of children's literature was diminished by those who attempted to classify, summarise and assess its worth: 'they haven't had time to pause and draw back from the trees in order to see the wood'. Pearce called for '*the* book about children's books' to be written, noting that there were still many questions to be answered:

> What effect on children's literature had the coming of compulsory elementary education towards the end of the last century? What explains our own post-war boom not only in the publication of children's books but of good children's books? A footnote, please, on pony-books: where did they come from, and are they really going out? And why? Why? And career-books? And Enid Blyton – who is going to

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[22] Alfred Dunning, 'Writing for Children', *Bookman* 82.490 (July 1932), 226.
[23] Christopher Francis Battiscombe, 'Ancient and Modern', *Times Literary Supplement*, 11 Apr 1958, 200.

give us a really illuminating account of that astounding social-literary phenomenon?[24]

Pearce's outburst evokes the vitality of children's literature in the middle of the twentieth century, its diverse nature and its complex relationship with socioeconomic forces. It expresses a desire not to list, classify and recommend books for children, but to *explain* them, to reassess the entire enterprise by examining those books, and the children who read them, as products of their time. Authors such as F. J. Harvey Darton had already made interventions in this field, but it was the 1960s that saw children's literary criticism gain momentum in its quest to answer the kinds of questions Pearce so insistently posed.[25] Pearce mentioned the revised version of Green's *Tellers of Tales* in her article but insinuated that it had not yet satisfied her requirements for *the* book about children's books. Green's overview is decidedly different in focus to Pearce's imagined ideal: instead of exploring contemporary and recent children's literature in relation to socioeconomic and literary trends, Green looks backwards at the literature of the Golden Age in his quest to pinpoint the elusive qualities that constitute a children's 'classic', offering a personal, subjective and introspective construction of childhood characterised by nostalgia.

Although he insists on the enduring relevance of Golden Age texts for the contemporary child, Green acknowledges that socioeconomic factors have shaped the contemporary child in a very different mould to his Victorian counterpart. 'Quite how lonely and isolated life was a hundred years ago is very hard to imagine,' he notes in *Tellers of Tales:*

Nowadays we are constantly going out, mingling in crowds, meeting dozens of people, going away to schools, or out into the world to earn our own livings, whether we are boys or girls, in numberless ways that Charlotte Younger could

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[24] Philippa A. Pearce, 'Books about Books: Themes in Search of an Author', *Times Literary Supplement,* 17 Jun 1965, 509.

[25] See F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932). Darton's text is still in print today. Other notable children's literary critics from the mid-twentieth century include Margery Fisher and John Rowe Townsend; see *Intent Upon Reading: A Critical Appraisal of Modern Fiction for Children* (Leicester: Brockhampton Press, 1961) and *Written for Children: An Outline of English-Language Children's Literature* (London: Garnet Miller, 1965) respectively.

never have dreamt of. Families are so small nowadays, and the home so restless and unsettled, that we have little idea of the all-absorbing importance of family life in the Victorian age.[26]

Green devoted much of his work to the question of how to write for this sociable, enterprising, unsettled (and, implicitly, middle-class) modern child, a child not dissimilar from White's addressee in *The Once and Future King*. His curious use of the first person plural in 'whether we are boys or girls' is key to understanding his conception of childhood, his fascination with the 'classic' texts of the Golden Age and his insistence upon their enduring relevance. Throughout his writing, Green constructs childhood as a self-contained world characterised by magic and enchantment, a world isolated from that of adulthood both spatially and through its aura of innocence or 'unknowing'. Importantly, however, it is a world that nostalgic adults can access through the act of reading, reliving the state of childhood through metaphorical travel to its enchanted, demarcated spaces. We are all adult *and* child, men and women *and* boys and girls, Green suggests, and good children's literature offers us privileged temporary access to the lost realm of childhood.

The 1965 edition of *Tellers of Tales,* offering an expanded overview for adults of those texts Green identifies as classics, concludes that

> there is a hidden element in these books, and in some of the best romantic adventure stories, which accounts for this: but the element *is* hidden – we may call it 'the mythopoeic' or 'the numinous' without pinning it down in any precise way – and we seek for it in vain here in this our life which hides so many mysteries. But sometimes, like reflections in a mirror of things that we cannot see in themselves, we catch a glimpse for a moment of what we seek – only it is always gone before we can give it a name or a shape – and most often we catch at least its echo or its shadow in our hearts as we read those kind of books which we call poetry, fairy tales, romances, tales of wonder and imagination.[27]

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[26] Roger Lancelyn Green, *Tellers of Tales,* 1st edn. (Leicester: Edmund Ward, 1946), 66.
[27] Green, *Tellers of Tales,* 4th edn., 269.

Green's use of the terms 'mythopoeic' and 'numinous' reflect his close association with J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, both of whom tutored Green as a student of Merton College, Oxford, during his undergraduate and MA degrees. Green was also a member of literary society The Inklings alongside his tutors, and became close friends with Lewis, co-writing his biography in 1974. His analysis of children's literature alludes to these closely connected writers, particularly their work on the relationship between fantasy and knowledge. In his 1947 essay *On Fairy-Stories,* Tolkien emphasised the importance, within fantasy literature, of securing the reader's belief in the fictional world and ensuring its internal logical coherence.[28] His 1931 poem 'Mythopoeia' was written to convince C. S. Lewis that myth-making entails not fabrication or 'lies […] breathed through silver', but emphasis upon deeper truths, and that, like God, the myth-maker uses his creation to impart a deeply felt, intangible knowledge of the world, a 'spirit out of sense'.[29] Lewis's *Narnia* stories are often discussed alongside Tolkien's work as examples of mythopoeia, and Lewis explored this notion of intangible knowledge through his analysis of the 'numinous' in *The Problem of Pain* (1940): the perception of awe-inspiring, transcendent mystery experienced when encountering something 'wholly Other' than oneself, something which, in Green's words, we cannot give 'a name or a shape'.[30]

Green's writing on children's literature incorporates these interlinked concepts, emphasising the 'unknowable' but powerful effect of the fantasy worlds of children's literature. Truly great books for the young, he suggests, appeal to some indefinable quality within both adults and children; they offer a sense of magic and mystery that is irresistibly compelling for reasons we cannot truly understand. This motif of an 'echo' or 'shadow' is

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[28] See J. R. R. Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories', in *Essays Presented to Charles Williams,* ed. C. S. Lewis (London: Oxford University Press, 1947). The essay was originally delivered as the Andrew Lang Lecture at the University of St. Andrews in 1939, while Green was studying for his undergraduate degree at Merton College. Given Green's interest in Andrew Lang – he returned to Merton to produce his MA dissertation on Lang in 1944, with Tolkien as his tutor – and relationship with Tolkien and Lewis, it is reasonable to assume that Green would have been familiar with the content of Tolkien's lecture before it was eventually published in 1947.

[29] J. R. R. Tolkien, 'Mythopoeia', in *Tree and Leaf* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1964).

[30] See Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (London: Centenary Press, 1940). Colin Duriez and David C. Downing have examined the role of the numinous in the *Narnia* books: see *A Field Guide to Narnia* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 2005) and *Into the Wardrobe: C. S. Lewis and the Narnia Chronicles* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2005) respectively. For an overview of the mythopoeic in the work of Tolkien and Lewis, see *Truths Breathed Through Silver: The Inklings' Moral and Mythopoeic Legacy,* ed. Jonathan B. Himes, Joe R. Christopher and Salwa Khoddam (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008).

commonplace in his writing, reflecting Tolkien's 'faint echo and dim picture of the world' in 'Mythopoeia', as is the idea of children's books possessing a kind of 'magic'. *Peter Pan* is 'one of the wonders of literature' because it does just this, Green suggests: there is a 'strange indescribable magic which hangs mysteriously about it, like mists half hiding and half revealing some wonderful Never-Never-Land of the imagination'.[31] The *Narnia* books also manage to harness this intangible quality: they offer 'a fourth dimension, that of the spirit […] which gives them their quality of vividness, and makes them leave behind an echo and a taste that do not fade'.[32] Green's sense of something elusive – we only catch it 'for a moment'; it is 'always gone' – suggests a preoccupation with loss, a nostalgic longing for a world rendered all the more appealing through the knowledge that it can only ever be transient and temporary.

John Gillis, exploring the concept of 'islanding' children in Western culture, suggests that 'adults have not only islanded children physically but have also constructed mythical landscapes that sustain childhood in its idealised forms, even when it is no longer sustainable in the real world'.[33] These landscapes 'constitute a kind of parallel universe, one that bears a similarity to physical geography but has the virtue of being invulnerable to both temporal and spatial changes that are constantly transforming the real world'. It is perhaps no coincidence that Green offers most praise for those children's texts that provide these mythopoeic landscapes, similar in space and geography to the real world and yet remarkably different – Narnia, Wonderland, Never-Never-Land – within which a nostalgic construction of childhood and its virtues, a construction otherwise impossible to articulate, can be dramatised and preserved. In 'The Golden Age of Children's Books' (1962), Green described children's literature thus:

> We may sail adventuring in I know not how many directions, but to the Never, Never Land we shall always return – led away for magic moments by the Boy who wouldn't grow up, before turning refreshed and reinvigorated to seek those joys in

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[31] Green, *Tellers of Tales*, 4th edn., 219.

[32] Green, *Tellers of Tales*, 4th edn., 278.

[33] John Gillis, 'The Islanding of Children – Reshaping the Mythical Landscapes of Childhood' in *Designing Modern Childhoods: History, Space, and the Material Culture of Children* ed. Marta Gutman and Ning de Coninck-Smith (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 317.

the world of real men and women from which he was for ever shut out. For such, to all of us whatever age, is the true message of all great children's books.[34]

His articulation of children's literature as a physical journey indicates an 'islanding' of childhood, an attempt to conceptualise its complexities and curiosities and to come to terms with its inexplicable aspects by positing it as a physical and sacred space, pervaded by nebulous qualities collectively explicated as 'magic' or enchantment. As David Matthews notes of Tolkien's 'On Fairy Stories', 'true reading must always be nostalgic, because it always looks back to the kind of belief of which the child is capable. Adults can only enjoy the marvellous if they *read like children*'.[35] For Green, reading like a child involves suspending disbelief and embracing innocence. Unlike the prescriptive children's literature of the early nineteenth century, which is underpinned by an assumption that it is possible to *know* the child and that adults possess a duty to teach it, Green's conceptualisation of childness and children's literature hinges instead on acceptance, and even celebration, of youth as a state of 'unknowing', a quality he articulates through the representation of childhood as an enchanted space outside the governance of temporal laws and logic, through which we can only travel for brief moments. This construction is at the heart of Green's children's writing, much of which is based around myth and legend, and which uses the 'mythical landscape' as shorthand to express and explore the innocence of childhood. Myths, he notes in the prologue to *A Book of Myths* (1965) are 'a strange mixture of the cruel and horrific with the beautiful and mysterious', produced when we 'ceased to be animals and became human beings, and, as a very small child does […] started to ask questions'.[36] They are linked with a child-like state of curiosity, an attempt to know the world, but ultimately reinforce a sense of elusive magic and unknowability.

In 1953, Green produced his adaptation of Malory's *Morte* for children, *King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table*, published by Puffin Books. His interpretation embellishes Malory's text to focus on the numinous, mysterious truths offered by a magical fantasy world. It is accompanied by striking woodcut-style illustrations (produced by artist

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[34] Roger Lancelyn Green, 'The Golden Age of Children's Books' in Egoff et al. (eds), *Only Connect,* 16.

[35] David Matthews, *Medievalism: A Critical History* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015), 138.

[36] Roger Lancelyn Green, *A Book of Myths* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1965), 1.

Lotte Reiniger using strips of black paper) that lend a surreal, abstract quality to the setting, emphasising the otherworldly aspect of the *Morte'*s enchanted forests, fortresses and lakes (fig. 6).
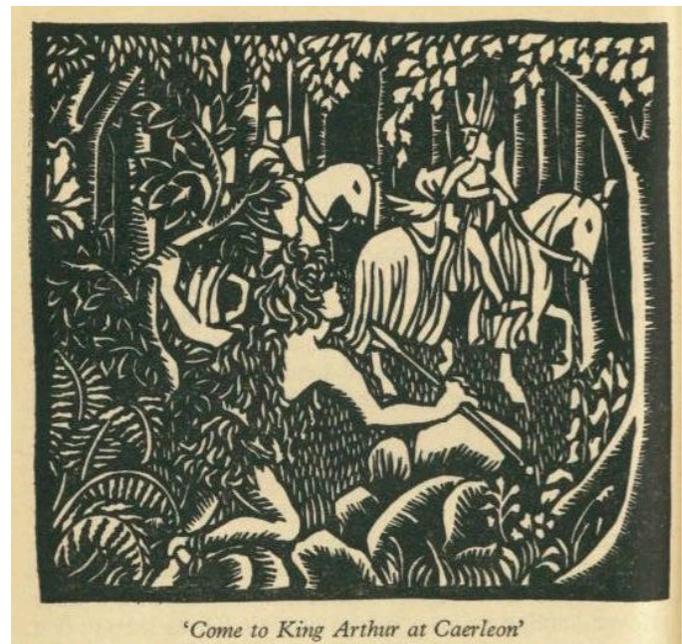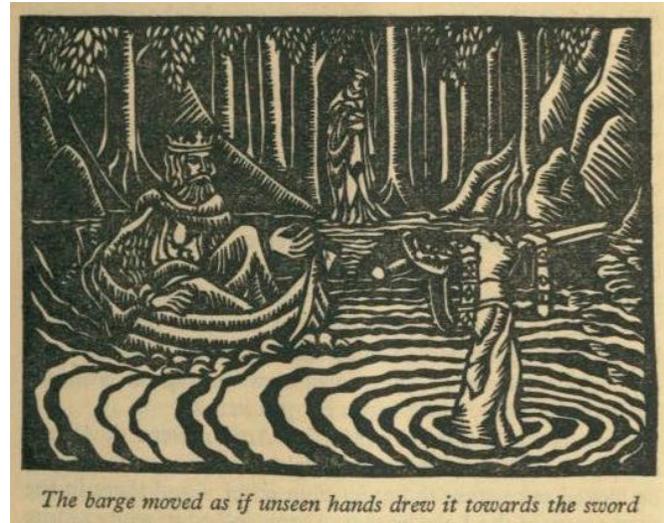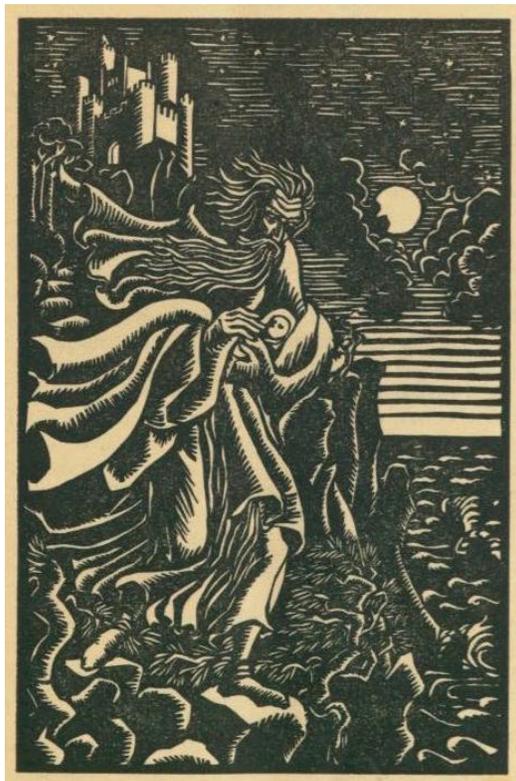
Figure 6. Illustrations by Lotte Reiniger in Roger Lancelyn Green, *King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table* (London: Penguin Books, 1955), 15; 30; 176 (clockwise from left).

These illustrations both captivate the reader with their ethereal nature, but also emphasise the distance between the Arthurian setting and the world as we know it, lacking the detailed

flourish and realism of Howard Pyle's woodcuts. Green referred to Malory as 'half-understood by young readers […] but all the more mysterious and provocative for that', as offering 'an enchanted place midway between this world, whose wonders were opening to them, and a world of the spirit, where imagination was the only geographer'.[37] The charm – or magic – of the *Morte* for children, Green implies, lies at least partly in their inability to fully understand it; into the very geography of the Arthurian legend is inscribed the innocence of childhood, both within the text and throughout the illustrations. In his preface, Green attempts to differentiate his 1953 version for children from those of his predecessors. He overlooks White's contribution, complaining that 'scarcely any writer in English has done more than condense the narrative of Sir Thomas Malory, cutting and simplifying him according to the age of their audience'.[38] The reason for this becomes clearer in the 1965 edition of *Tellers of Tales:* praising White's *Mistress Masham's Repose* (1946), Green is not so complimentary about *The Once and Future King,* which he claims 'varies from cheap schoolboy travesty to superb interpretation of unexpected aspects of medieval life', but whose appeal 'seems to be mainly to such adults as are not affronted by this popular perversion of one of the world's greatest romantic myths'.[39] Green criticised White's 'crude and heavy jocularity', and his own version of the *Morte* suggests an attempt to preserve the 'romance' that White revelled in subverting. Noting that 'there is a certain coherence, but no fixed plan' in Malory's narrative (a conclusion drawn from Eugène Vinaver's decision to publish the stories separately in 1947), Green suggests his new approach will 'make each adventure a part of one fixed pattern'.[40]

Although human failings have a part to play in this narrative – Guinevere's adultery, Mordred's jealousy, Gawain's temper – the wider 'fixed pattern' implies that the collapse of the Arthurian realm was the result of higher forces. The adder that brings about the final battle between Arthur and Mordred, for example, is ascribed with spiritual and moral significance, 'as evil as the serpent which tempted Eve', suggesting a fated inevitability to the end of Camelot. References to 'the clouds that were gathering thickly over all the rest of the world' and 'the powers of evil, seeking now more and more

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[37] Green, 'In Quest of King Arthur', 412.
[38] Roger Lancelyn Green, *King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table* (London: Penguin Books, 1955), 11.
[39] Green, *Tellers of Tales*, 4th edn., 274.
[40] Green, *King Arthur*, 11.

desperately to find some tiny loophole through which to climb into the stronghold of good'
posit the story of King Arthur as just one example of the mysterious and incomprehensible
machinations of fate and spiritual forces.[41] Where White's narrator takes great pains to
explain the actions, motivations and psychology of the Arthurian characters, Green explains
the inconsistencies and mysteries of Malory's narrative with simple and vague references to
fate. He places the reader in the position of innocent child, following the story with an
inescapable sense that there is something they do not, and cannot, quite understand. They
share with the knights of Camelot a sense of awe and naivety in the face of higher powers:
when Merlin declares to the Round Table that he must depart, 'to sleep my long sleep until
the time appointed, when the next Circle of Logres shall again be formed upon the earth',
he tells them simply, 'These are things that you may not understand'.[42] Arthur asks Merlin
why he cannot escape Nimue using his magic arts; Merlin simply replies 'Nay, it is my
fate', and no further explanation is given. Characters frequently prophesise what 'shall'
happen, 'though [they] know not how'; there is a sense of fated inevitability that likens the
implied reader to an unknowing child, excluded from adult knowledge of the world.[43]

Green's adaptation eschews White's 'crude jocularity' in favour of a more distant
approach. Having hypothesised that White's 'popular perversion' of the Arthurian story is
more successful with adults than children, Green clearly differentiates his narrative strategy
from that of White: where the implied reader of *The Once and Future King* shifts between
childhood and adulthood and is given involved explanation of the human failings of the
Arthurian characters, Green's text signifies its intended child audience through an implied
reader for whom certain aspects of life cannot – and should not – be explained. Where
White invokes the innocence of the child only to contrast it sadly with the trauma that
awaits him or her, Green celebrates childhood as a state of unknowing. Phyllis Briggs
concluded her adaptation of the *Morte* for children by praising the 'golden age of chivalry';
in Green's hands, the golden age of chivalry becomes the golden age of childhood. The
Arthurian landscape here is a space of innocence, islanding its characters in a perpetual
state of ignorance regarding the wider machinations of the world, preserving rather than
attempting to dispel the unknowing nature of childhood. Its 'magic' is the denial of

[41] Green, *King Arthur,* 273; 190.
[42] Green, *King Arthur,* 64.
[43] Green, *King Arthur,* 65; 233.

knowledge, the preservation of some mysterious, numinous quality identified with childhood. In this way, it reflects the nostalgic conception of children's literature that underpinned Green's life's work: as a self-contained, enchanted space distant from reality and subject to its own incomprehensible, emotional 'magics', a space in which innocence is preserved and protected. This ideology underlies Green's criticism of Alice Hadfield's 1953 adaptation, in which he accused her of 'sacrific[ing] all the magic' of the Arthurian legend and 'giv[ing] nothing in its place', lamenting her 'over-simplification' and 'utter denial of "the charm of mystery and distance, the background of the unknown"'.[44]

III. Spiritual warfare: Alice Hadfield

Hadfield's 1953 *King Arthur and the Round Table* can claim the accolade of being named by John F. Kennedy's mother, in the wake of his death, as one of his favourite books. A week after Kennedy's assassination, his widow Jacqueline spoke to a journalist, Theodore White, recalling that her husband loved listening to the soundtrack of *Camelot* the musical. She suggested Kennedy's love for the Arthurian legend originated in childhood, portraying him as 'this lonely, little sick boy…scarlet fever…this little boy sick so much of the time, reading in bed, reading history…reading the Knights of the Round Table'.[45] Nicholas Knight points out that Kennedy could not have read *The Knights of the Round Table* when he had scarlet fever, as that occurred in February 1920 when he was only three years old. However, Kennedy's mother, Rose, corroborated Jacqueline's depiction of the former president: 'He liked stories of adventure and chivalry…He had a strong romantic and idealistic streak…I remembered him in his boyhood reading and rereading his copy of *King Arthur and the Round Table*'.[46] She names the version as that by Alice Hadfield, another curious discrepancy: Hadfield's version was published when Kennedy was thirty-six years old, certainly not 'in his boyhood'. Although clearly not a formative influence on the president of the United States, that it was claimed to be so is perhaps revealing, and the adaptation is still used in American schools today. It offered a new interpretive focus for the Arthurian legend in the 1950s, removing the class-based hierarchies of knighthood

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[44] Green, 'In Quest of King Arthur', 412.

[45] Cited in Nicholas W. Knight, '"Lancer": Myth-Making and the Kennedy Camelot', *Avalon to Camelot*, 2.1 (1986), 29.

[46] Cited in Knight, 'Myth-Making', 29.

found in medieval and Victorian versions and instead proposing a new, egalitarian model of heroism based upon spiritual worth and endeavour.

Hadfield was an Oxford history graduate and the first female editor at Oxford University Press in 1933. She was also a colleague, close friend, and biographer of the writer Charles Williams, who worked for Oxford University Press from 1908 until his death in 1945, authored two volumes of Arthurian poetry in the 1930s and 1940s, and was a member of The Inklings alongside Tolkien and Lewis. Hadfield worked with Williams at his request on his unfinished book *The Figure of Arthur*.[47] 'We can say that for readers of English, the Arthurian story is coloured and will be coloured forever by what C. W. made of it', Hadfield asserts in her biography of Williams.[48] That he forever coloured future interpretation of the Arthurian story is, of course, debatable, but we certainly find Williams's influence in Hadfield's own adaptation, which also incorporates multiple passages of direct quotation from *Idylls of the King*. She includes Taliessin, the eponymous character of Williams's best-known Arthurian sequence, in her text, and introduces an element of what Andrew Lynch terms 'spiritual warfare' to the story, derived from Williams's concepts of coinherence, substitution, and exchange. She highlights this focus in her preface, noting that the world of Arthur 'is a religious world, where Jesus Christ is ever present to the minds of these knights, and His service is as clear and real as that of the King'.[49] Arthur's miraculous pulling of the sword from the stone is portrayed as a calling from God, and Hadfield suggests that the entire Arthurian story depicts 'the attempt of King Arthur to make Britain as like heaven as possible, through his knights of the Round Table'.[50] Green criticised Hadfield for sacrificing the magic and mystery of the legend, but in fact Hadfield offers a very different kind of magic: both texts construct an Arthurian world presided over by higher powers, but where Green's remains mysterious and his text evokes a sense of fated inevitability and human impotence, Hadfield's offers an optimistic religious narrative which presents the possibility of spiritual and human communication, and the ability of mankind to better itself through the correct interpretation of spiritual cues.

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[47] Alice Mary Hadfield, *An Introduction to Charles Williams (*London: Robert Hale, 1959), vii.
[48] Hadfield, *Charles Williams,* 145.
[49] Lynch, '*Le Morte Darthur* for Children', 29.
[50] Alice Mary Hadfield, *King Arthur and the Round Table* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1953), 169.

Hadfield incorporates Williams's notion of Christ's 'Hallows' (the Grail, the Lance and the Crown of Thorns), the mythology of which had been the subject of renewed scholarship in the early twentieth century and an inspiration for Williams.[51] She uses the Hallows to explain the 'strange things' that happen to Balin on his quest: by bringing them into the 'sinful life of the world', he effects a sequence of disasters. Where Green refers simply to the 'powers of magic' governing Balin's actions, Hadfield gives these an explicitly religious focus and depicts them as physical symbols. Furthermore, her narrator notes that 'during the years of war and trouble before King Arthur won back the holy land of Britain for Christ, the Hallows had not been often seen. But as the worship of Christ was restored they began to appear again'. The reappearance of these icons emphasises the spiritualised vision of chivalry put forward in Hadfield's text, in which religious quests are prioritised over earthly needs and Camelot is first and foremost a centre of Christianity, rather than battle: the Round Table is reinterpreted as representing 'the highest standard of thought and living, a life in Christ in thought and action'.[52] Hadfield's narrator refers to the 'spiritual struggles which in the new generation had replaced the tournament battles of the old', and depicts Lancelot experiencing the realisation that Galahad's moral and spiritual goodness is 'more important than the quests and battles of the other knights, and […] the basis of the laws and vows of the King himself'.[53] This is the overarching moral of Hadfield's adaptation, and the religious focus of the text is emphasised at every stage through detailed explanation of religious phenomena and symbols: the Hallows, Joseph of Arimathea, the city of Sarras, Percivale's spiritual visions, and the sweet smell and plentiful food that always accompanied sightings of the Grail. This was a novel shift in adaptation of the *Morte Darthur* for children: many Victorian and Edwardian versions omitted the Grail Quest altogether, or marginalised it in order to make space for tales of knightly battle and adventure, whereas the episode occupies a quarter of Hadfield's narrative, and the symbolism of the Grail and Hallows underpins the entire text. Lancelot, towards the end of the book, recalls 'all that had happened since those far-off days, the strange countries he

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[51] Rob Gossedge identifies a rejuvenated interest in the Holy Grail after World War One, initiated by the scholarship of Jessie L. Weston and furthered by T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. He also identifies the influence of scholar A. E. Waite, who wrote extensively on occult and esoteric subjects, including the Grail. Williams had discussed both Weston and Waite at length, Hadfield notes in her biography. See Rob Gossedge, '"The Old Order Changeth": Arthurian literary production from Tennyson to White' (PhD diss., Cardiff University, 2007), Chapter 3.
[52] Hadfield, *King Arthur*, 38; 35; 44.
[53] Hadfield, *King Arthur*, 147.

had travelled in, his long love of the Queen and his new finding of his son', noting that 'the Grail had run through it all and brought him finally back to this same castle where it had all begun'.[54]

While Green's characters are apparently helpless and ignorant in the face of fate, Hadfield alludes to the possibility that better human action could have prevented the downfall of the Round Table. Noting that the knights on the Grail quest failed because they should have asked questions of the Holy Cup, engaging with it rather than simply adoring it passively, she explains, 'It is this approach, this appearance of heavenly things, and the failure to behave rightly towards them, that the famous history of Britain under King Arthur is really about'. Indeed, the chapter that narrates Gawain's failure to achieve the Grail is called, 'Sir Gawaine and the Question Not Asked'. Hadfield manages to rewrite the seduction of Merlin (traditionally identified as the son of a fiend) as a religious parable: 'All traffickers in spirits know that they are controlled by the Ruler of Spirits, the Holy Ghost, but Merlin's pride in himself, which betrayed him into Vivien's hands, took from him that reliance on the Holy Spirit which could have cleared his vision'.[55] Unlike other children's versions, in which Merlin's fate is portrayed as inevitable, Hadfield's text suggests it could have been avoided through greater spiritual devotion. Ultimately, it is human error that brings about the fall of the Round Table; but specifically a lapse in religious understanding and devotion. An 'ideal of brotherhood and justice in Christ had been formed by King Arthur', Hadfield notes, 'but first the Hallows were misused, and withdrew, and then the whole effort faltered and failed through the clog and drag of sin'.[56]

Despite this emphasis on the 'clog and drag of sin', Hadfield's narrative ultimately offers an optimistic vision in which spiritual redemption is always possible. She focuses not on Lancelot's breaking of his knightly vows and failure to achieve the Grail, but the fact that these events move him 'into a deeper state where good came out of evil', one of 'those states of love which Galahad was meant to bring about in the world'. She explicitly suggests, unlike Malory, that Lancelot 'was as true a citizen of the spiritual world as he was

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[54] Hadfield, *King Arthur*, 163.
[55] Hadfield, *King Arthur*, 114; 220; 101.
[56] Hadfield, *King Arthur*, 203; 207.

of Camelot'.[57] Even the 'proud and impatient, jealous and hot-tempered' Gawain, she suggests, 'was not a cruel or wicked man', but his martial strengths were simply not suited to the Grail Quest. Although there is no evidence that Hadfield had encountered *The Once and Future King*, this note on the redeeming features of the Orkney brothers contrasts markedly with White's interpretation, where the fall of the Round Table is explicitly linked to Morgause and her sons. While acknowledging the earthly failures of Arthur's knights, Hadfield offers a concurrent note of hope: 'it was whispered that the King was not dead, that he had only been taken by the Lord into another place, and he would come again and free the land from tyranny and set up again the rule of justice and right'.[58] The religious framework offers the possibility that religious devotion may one day give rise to another Camelot, in which Britain succeeds in becoming a holy land under the rightful and just rule of the resurrected King Arthur.

The aim of knighthood, Hadfield's narrator declares, 'was for every man to lead the best possible life, following the teaching of Christ'. King Arthur's knights

> regarded the keeping of their vows of knighthood as the source of their skill in battle, which was the reason why the good men always won and the traitors always lost. If it looks too simple to be true to us, we must beware lest we have lost the clarity of heart which sees the connection between right living and a happy daily life.[59]

The narrator acknowledges the simplicity of this spiritual ideology of chivalry while simultaneously insisting on its accuracy, evincing a longing for such clear-cut moral narratives and for the 'clarity of heart' to enact them. Although the modern age may no longer function in this way, the conditional 'if it looks too simple' affirms and endorses the spiritual-chivalric code in the face of modern moral decay, optimistically suggesting its endurance and that it could, and should, be reinstated through 'clarity of heart'. This 'right living' can take several forms; Hadfield's text is grounded upon a 'doctrine of equality' in which 'thinking and acting rightly' is more important for knighthood than fighting; the tales

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[57] Hadfield, *King Arthur*, 122-23; 163.
[58] Hadfield, *King Arthur*, 225.
[59] Hadfield, *King Arthur*, 198.

of Balin, Galahad, Percivale and the young Arthur are framed as proof that 'God's grace will strike anywhere, and must be expected everywhere'. Such a reading is free from the traditional class-based hierarchy of knighthood; Hadfield's spiritual vision is one that overlooks such earthly distinctions in favour of prioritising moral and religious worth. In this interpretation of the legend, 'the poorest peasant of Britain in his smock […] was a more courteous and valiant gentleman than was a belted knight beyond the sea'.[60]

Set p. 219

Mordred hurled himself forward to smite the king
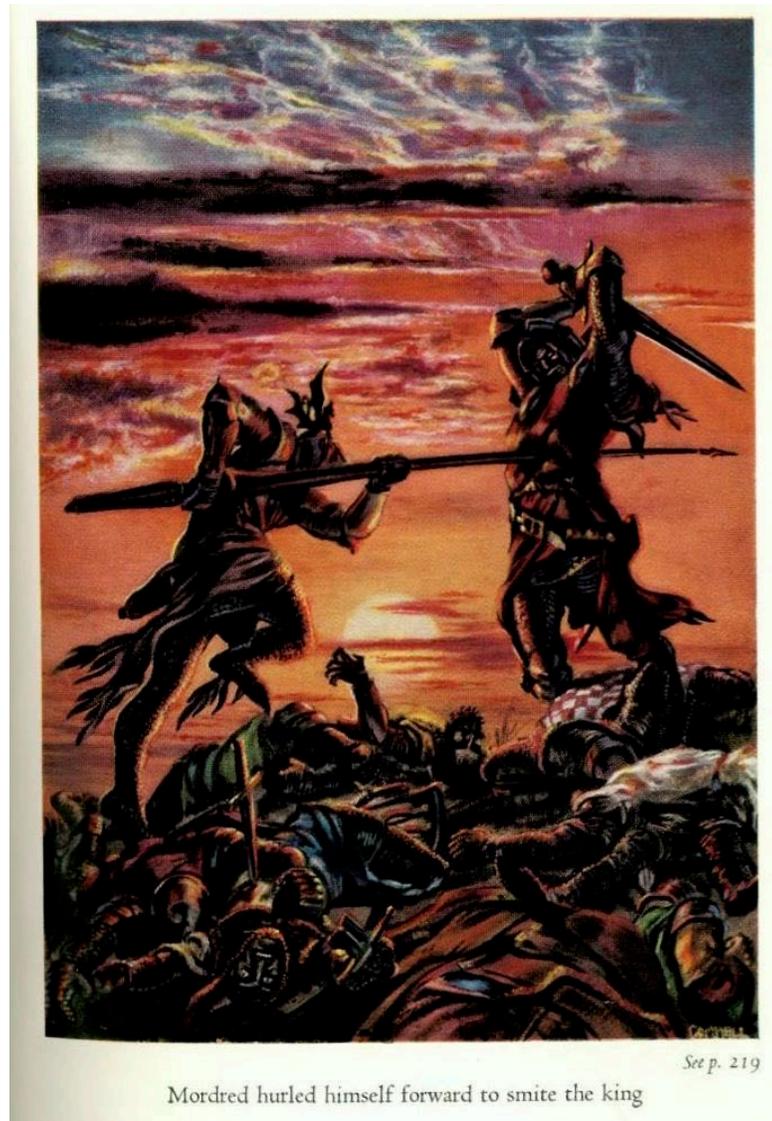
Figure 7. 'Mordred hurled himself forward to smite the king'.
Illustration by Donald Seton Cammell in Alice Hadfield, *King Arthur and the Round Table* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1953), 216.

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[60] Hadfield, *King Arthur*, 200; 51.

Long stood Sir Bedivere
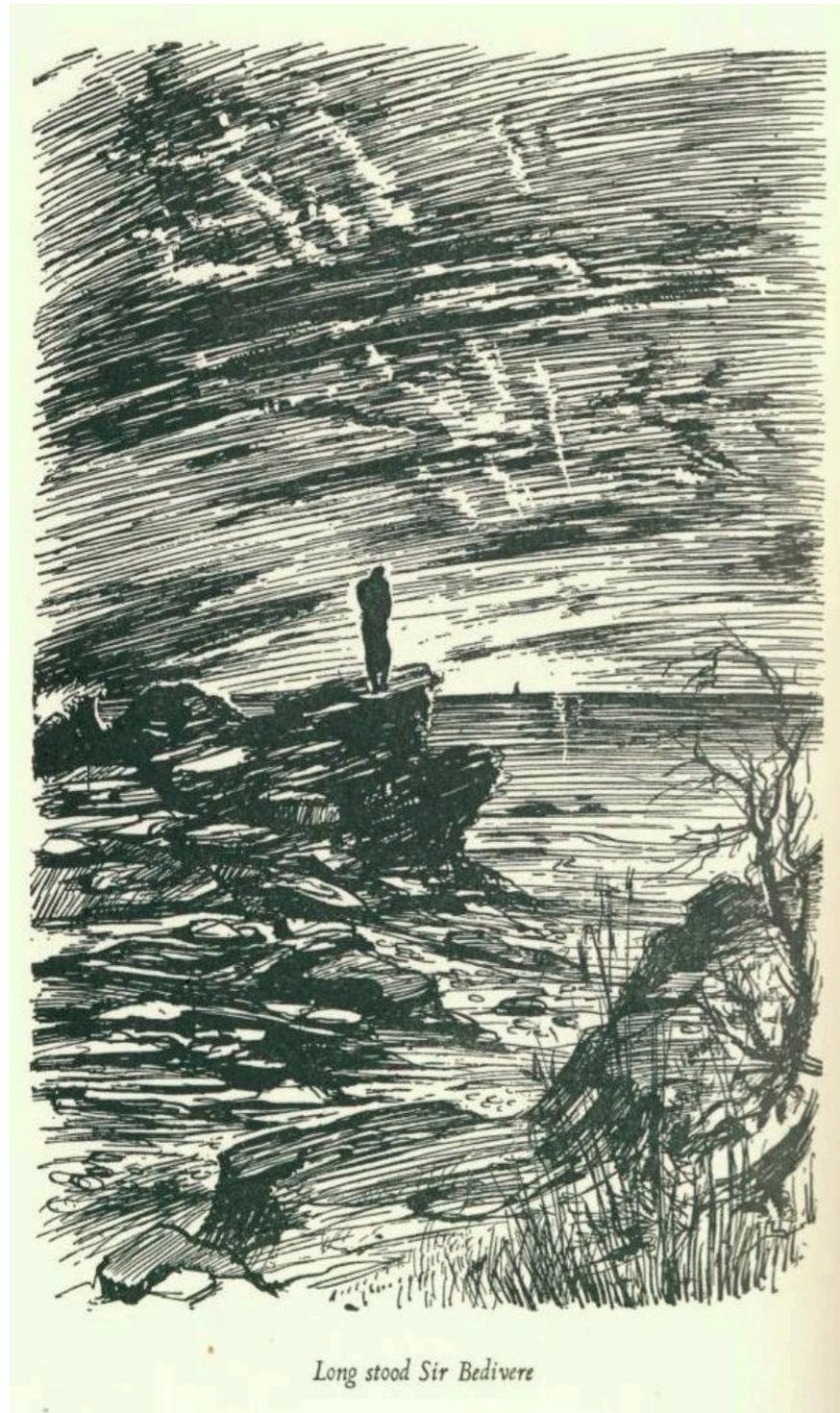
Figure 8. 'Long stood Sir Bedivere'. Illustration by Donald Seton Cammell in Hadfield, *King Arthur*, 224.
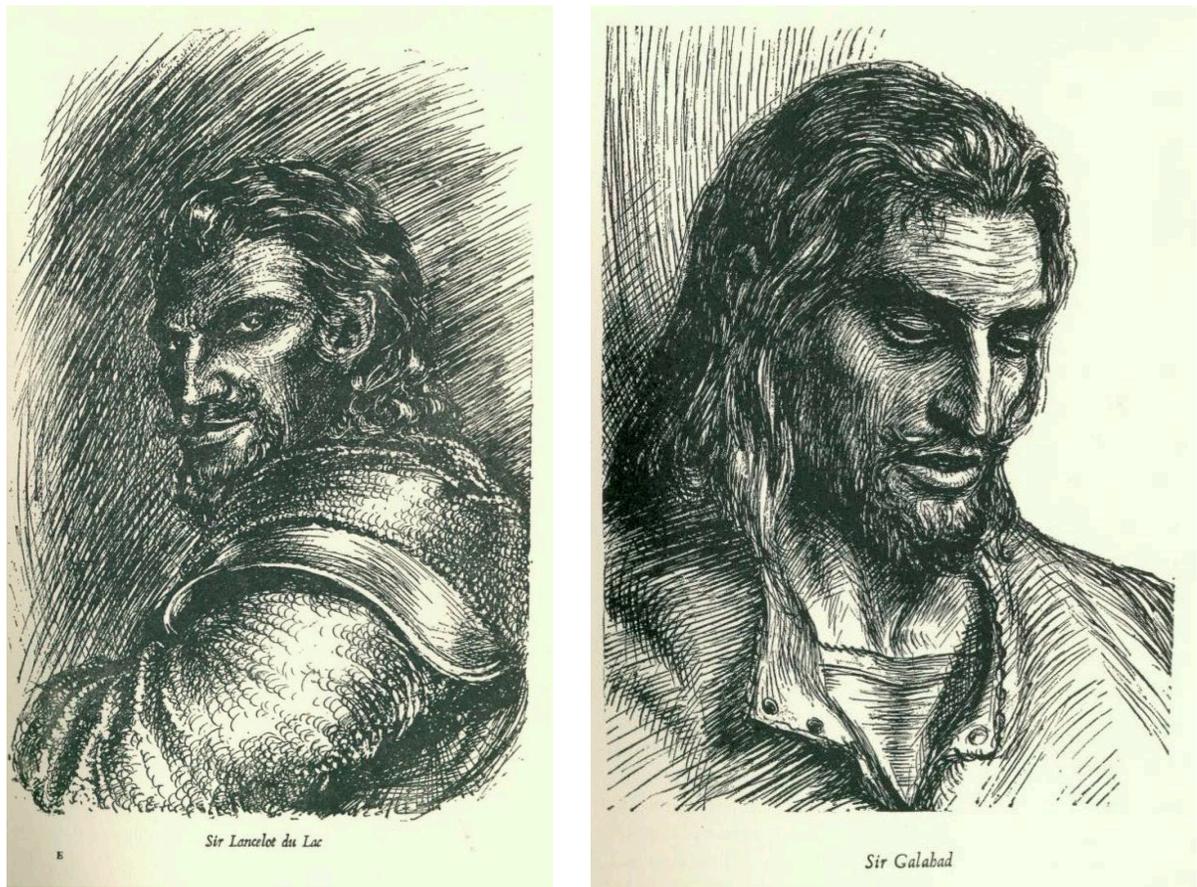
Figure 9. 'Sir Lancelot du Lac' and 'Sir Galahad'. Illustrations by Donald Seton Cammell
in Hadfield, *King Arthur*, 57; 153.

This construction of the humble spiritual knight, who achieves success through his
wits, kindness and religious devotion, echoes some aspects of Charles Kingsley's 'muscular
Christianity' from the mid-nineteenth century.[61] However, where muscular Christianity
focused on using the refined masculine body as a tool for energetic evangelism, Hadfield's
optimistic notion of the 'right living' knight overlooks the physical and the martial. The
illustrations accompanying her text, by Donald Seton Cammell, revel in the dynamic
depiction of energetic knights in the midst of adventure, with dramatic strokes that capture
both the vigour of the martial body and the darkness against which knighthood must fight,

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[61] Inspired by medieval chivalry, which Kingsley viewed as a reaction to effeminate, repressive
monasticism, muscular Christianity prioritised the martial energy of the masculine body. For more
detailed discussion of its role in the medieval revival, see Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot:
Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981)

particularly in the illustration of Arthur and Mordred's final battle amidst a blood-red sunset (fig. 7). The penultimate illustration, of the lone Sir Bedivere atop a cliff following the departure of Arthur, emphasises the importance of the errant knight in his fraught struggle with imposing evil (fig. 8). However, the text also features close-up, detailed portraits of Lancelot and Galahad, unencumbered by the trappings of armour and free from the contortions of battle, causing the reader to consider the knightly psyche alongside the knightly body (fig. 9). These suggest a different type of knight: a contemplative, spiritual warrior, who relies on emotional and mental rather than physical strength. Many of the battle scenes from the original *Morte* are omitted from Hadfield's text – when knights are killed, we are reminded that they are traitors to Arthur's spiritual Camelot – and are gradually phased out as she explores the potential of a younger band of knights, for whom 'thinking and acting rightly were more important […] than fighting'.[62]

In her preface, Hadfield declares that 'whatever century we are reading of, the meaning behind the story of Arthur shines through and speaks to our own minds in our own age', and she lends the story contemporary significance by continually glossing its locations in relation to present-day Britain: Camelot as Winchester, Joyous Gard as Alnwick Castle, Joseph of Arimathea sailing to Glastonbury. Influenced by Williams's religious thinking and focusing on the lost spiritual potential of Arthur's Camelot, thwarted through the 'clog and drag of sin' but posited as still attainable through humble and moral 'right living', Hadfield offers an optimistic, religious vision of how to relate to Arthur in modern-day Britain. The jacket blurb advises that 'the book can be read and enjoyed by readers of twelve and under, though the older "young" will see a great deal more in it'. Although her adaptation received little critical interest, its spiritualised, egalitarian version of the Arthurian legend clearly appealed to the 'older young' of the Kennedy administration, and the text features today on the Core Knowledge Foundation's recommended curriculum for fourth-graders in American schools.[63] Extensive teacher's notes are supplied by the Foundation to accompany the text, and there are striking similarities between these and the exercises offered in Dorothy Macardle's school version:

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[62] Hadfield, *King Arthur*, 145.

[63] See Jennifer England, *Teacher's Guide to the Core Classics Edition of Alice M. Hadfield's King Arthur and the Round Table* (Core Knowledge Foundation, 2005). Accessed 19 Feb 2015: http://www.coreknowledge.org/mimik/mimik_uploads/documents/57/CCKA.pdf.

questions that relate to comprehension of the plot and the vocabulary and grammar of the text; creative writing and drama tasks that involve students adopting the mindset of certain characters; and questions that involve consideration of ethics, such as 'Does Arthur prove himself a rightful king?' In many ways, Hadfield's 'clear, straightforward rendering of the immortal stories' has much in common with the specialised educational adaptations of the early twentieth century, packaging the legend in such a way as to reflect a clear moral outlook and considering its relevance to the present day, which apparently appealed to its American readers from the 1960s onwards. We find the child – specifically, the school child – used again to focus adult enquiries into the meaning of Arthur and to channel a new, spiritual and egalitarian model of chivalry partially divorced from medieval specificity. Emerging the same year as Green's version, Hadfield's text evinces very different assumptions regarding children, and has more in common with Victorian and Edwardian texts in which the child exists to be taught than with Green's romantic notions about the innocence and mystery of childhood. Both Green's and Hadfield's texts, however, eschew White's psychologically incisive approach in favour of capturing, perhaps restoring, the mystery and magic of the legend for a child audience. Where Green emphasises the unknowable to reinforce his nostalgic conception of transient childhood, Hadfield invokes the numinous in order to emphasise the spiritual morality at the heart of the legend. These adaptations deploy a model of innocent childness to reflect and channel their concerns with the mysterious workings of fate and religion. They were soon followed, however, by a markedly different text that grappled with the more earthly aspects of the legend.

IV. Pastiche and popular culture: Antonia Fraser and Barbara Leonie Picard

A year after Green published his *King Arthur,* the young Antonia Fraser (then Antonia Pakenham), produced her own adaptation of the *Morte* for children. Publisher George Weidenfeld had been commissioned to produce illustrated children's classics for Marks and Spencer; Fraser, his new editorial assistant, told him they couldn't simply reprint Malory's *Morte* for children as it was 'written in the fifteenth century and quite unreadable'.[64] Weidenfeld suggested she write a new version; six weeks later, after several trips to the

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[64] Daniel Snowman, 'Antonia Fraser', *History Today,* 50.10 (2000). Accessed 19 Feb 2015: https://www.questia.com/magazine/1G1-66157031/antonia-fraser

British Museum, Fraser produced her 70,000 word adaptation. Andrew Lynch notes that Fraser's text 'plays unpredictably and amusingly with the usual story, often for suspenseful and romantic effects'.[65] An early scene sees a disgruntled Guinevere reacting to her father's news that she is to marry King Arthur:

> 'I hope it will not be too much trouble for the great king to walk up the aisle on his wedding-day,' she said crossly, flouncing away and withdrawing herself to the opposite end of the barge. Gazing over the side, it was Gwenevere who first noticed the four armed horsemen riding along the bank. Their lances glinted in the sun. She saw that their visors were down – a curious sight in the peaceful country, where knights did not generally ride four abreast in battle array. Gwenevere felt slightly frightened. She turned to go back to her women. At that moment an arrow whistled through the air and landed in the wooden deck of the barge. It quivered beside her and the princess gazed in horror at the menacing sight. It was an ambush![66]

Guinevere is seized by the leading knight and dragged to the edge of the barge, with no one to hear her screams. Suddenly, with a cry of 'Not so fast!', a knight in black armour, 'mounted on a magnificent black horse, with his lance poised in his hand', arrives to save the day. He quickly despatches the enemy knights before raising his visor, allowing Guinevere to look upon the face of her rescuer. 'Oh, this is the romance of which I dreamt', she thinks to herself as he helps her to her feet. Lancelot, for it is he who has rushed to the aid of the future queen, spies Arthur's betrothal ring upon Guinevere's finger. Realising her identity, his

> first instinct was to throw himself on his knees before his future queen. But some fatal impulse for adventure prevented him. He, too, like Gwenevere, yearned for romance; and what could be more romantic than the secret love of a knight for his future queen? Little knowing that Gwenevere had fallen head-over-heels in love with him, Lancelot agreed to ride with the princess in the barge.[67]

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[65] Lynch, '*Le Morte Darthur* for Children', 31.

[66] Antonia Fraser, *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* (London: Orion Books, 1993), 42-3. First published 1954.

[67] Fraser, *King Arthur*, 44.

With its description of the ominous enemy knights, focalised through the eyes of Guinevere as if through a panning camera lens, the drama of the quivering arrow on the deck of the ship, and romantic 'yearnings' and 'head-over-heels' secret passions, Fraser's 1954 version reads like a pastiche of set pieces from cinema, melodrama and the Mills and Boon novels of the 1930s. Like White, she applies a modern idiom to her adaptation of the *Morte* for children. Where White looks at Malory's text through the lens of developmental psychology and considers the Arthurian story in relation to the atrocities of modern warfare, Fraser updates the legend by shaping it according to the conventions of contemporary popular culture and mass entertainment.

Fraser heightens the drama of the Arthurian story through melodramatic set-pieces with a strong visual element, reminiscent of traditional cinema hero-and-villain tales. Her adaptation was produced a year after the 1953 MGM film *Knights of the Round Table*, the influence of which can be seen in her decision to begin the story with the plotting of Morgan Le Fay and her husband, Mordred the elder.[68] One can visualise Fraser's evil Mordred rubbing his hands gleefully in the style of a stock cinematic villain as he declares, 'This very night I shall be king in the place of Uther Pendragon. By foul means or fair I, Mordred, will sit upon the most powerful throne in Britain'.[69] Fraser's villains have 'cold, calculating hearts', they hiss at their opponents and their faces contort in triumph as they accomplish their wicked goals. Daggers are plunged into breasts, knights sink to the floor in pools of blood, arrows quiver on the decks of ships and characters cry 'Alas!' with regularity. In a dramatic showdown between the younger Mordred and his mother, Morgan Le Fay, he commands her in an 'icy voice' to 'Begone, witch, and never show your face before me again, else I will have you slain for the sorceress you are'. Morgan's response is to spring at Vivian's throat, screaming 'This is your doing, slut! You have turned my son against his mother!', making 'desperate attempts to claw and scratch Vivian with her long nails' in a histrionic display of villainous jealousy. It is not long before she plunges her

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[68] The film begins with the conspiracy between Mordred and Morgan, who are lovers. Fraser's tale begins in a similar way, although the elder Mordred is killed and his son, by the same name, becomes the main villain of the tale, to die eventually at the hand of Arthur as in Malory's *Morte*.
[69] Fraser, *King Arthur*, 2.

dagger deep into Vivian's 'cruel heart', crying malevolently, 'So perish all who thwart my designs!'[70]

The 1953 MGM film met with a lukewarm reception: Bosley Crowther, writing in the *New York Times*, opined that the 'poetic eloquence and grandeur' of Tennyson's *Idylls* and Malory's *Morte Darthur* had been replaced by 'a sweep of graphic action and romantic symbols that is straight Hollywood'.[71] One could say the same of Fraser's text, which revels in the graphic and the romantic. Upon drinking Bragwine's love potion, Tristram 'flung himself on his knees' before Isolde, crying, 'Such love burns in me, that I feel as if I am on fire with it', before they fall into each other's arms. Enid rouses the wounded Geraint with a 'piercing scream', before he does battle and faints in her embrace. When Lyonesse accepts Gareth's proposal, he 'dropped his reins and embraced [her] in the sight of the whole court'.[72] As we have seen, Fraser has Lancelot rescue Arthur's queen before he is aware of her identity, enabling a dramatic revelatory moment (another parallel with the film, although the latter heightens the suspense by keeping Lancelot in the dark until he attends the wedding). However, alongside its romantic cliché and pastiche, Fraser's text also delves into the minds of its lovers, apparently more concerned with individual character than with the imposition of moral narratives onto the text. Although far less nuanced and sophisticated than White's construction of Arthurian psyches, Fraser's text is equally concerned with motive and private feeling, and with bridging the gap between the mentality of the Middle Ages and that of the present day. Although nowadays 'it seems cruel that Gwenevere should have been compelled to marry Arthur instead of Lancelot, whom she loved', the narrator points out, 'one must remember that Gwenevere had been brought up to respect her father and his wishes. As a princess, she was conscious that more depended on her marriage than depended on the marriage of an ordinary girl'. Too honourable to risk her father's kingdom, 'she determined to keep her love for Lancelot hidden deep in her heart'.[73] Where Green and Hadfield invoked the innocent child to emphasise the numinous nature of the Arthur story, Fraser uses the unknowing child as a focal point for in-depth exploration

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[70] Fraser, *King Arthur*, 188; 193.
[71] Bosley Crowther, 'Knights of the Round Table (1953)', *New York Times*, 8 Jan 1954. Accessed 16 Sep 2015:
http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9B0CE3DB123EE53BBC4053DFB766838F649EDE.
[72] Fraser, *King Arthur*, 89; 120.
[73] Fraser, *King Arthur*, 46.

of Arthurian psyches. As in White's work, an apparent desire to explain the motives of Malory's characters to children leads to detailed analysis of their inner lives, inflected by the language of 1950s popular culture and romance. These are dramatised through musings in free indirect style, with liberal exclamations and rhetorical questions to heighten the drama.

When Lancelot finally reveals himself to Guinevere as 'the famous knight of Arthur's court, famous as far as Cameliard for his success with the ladies', she muses bitterly: 'Where were her dreams of romance now? Her romantic rescuer had probably delivered princesses by the dozen in his time, and made the same ardent speeches to them'.[74] Lancelot does, of course, rescue numerous damsels in the *Morte Darthur,* many of whom do in fact fall in love with him. By highlighting this fact and linking it with the jealousy of a dreamy romantic, Fraser adds a level of interiority to the tale that is inflected by the language of popular culture: 'success with the ladies', 'romantic rescuer'. Her reference to 'princesses by the dozen' satirises the endless 'damsel in distress' narratives of the *Morte,* and the courageous knight of Malory's tale is here transformed into the casual womaniser of romantic fiction. Where we can only infer the inner lives of Malory's characters by examining their actions, Fraser offers us insight into their mental states, frequently in hyperbolic, sentimental terms. Her plot hinges upon a framework of emotions, motives and desires; characters are fired by jealousy, hindered by pride, restrained by duty. They mask fear with bravado 'like many another brave man', 'brood in secret on […] fancied slights and wrongs' and are too stubborn to admit their faults. Significantly, this depth is also applied to the female characters of the legend (something often perceived as lacking in White's text), particularly to the enchantress figures of Vivian and Morgan Le Fay. Vivian's villainy is posited as the result of an implicitly loveless childhood. 'Have you no fondness at all for the old fool?', Morgan asks her, referring to Merlin. 'I have never known what that word means', Vivian replies contemptuously. 'What is affection? What is love? Both of them seem to lead people into trouble, and long ago I resolved not to let myself be trapped in the same way'. Such coldness from her pupil stirs even the malevolent Morgan's heart, for she 'was not devoid of all tender feelings: she had loved her husband

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[74] Fraser, *King Arthur,* 45.

passionately, and her ambitions were now wrapped up in her son, the younger Mordred'.[75] Echoing the developmental paradigms of White's text, the villainy of both of these women is identified as the product of perverse familial relationships: Vivian, starved of love, plots to kill others in cold blood; Morgan, driven by an aberrant devotion to her son, blindly destroys those who stand between him and the crown, including Vivian. Abandoned by his mother, Mordred is a 'sullen, unresponsive boy' whom Arthur cannot bring up to forget his 'evil parentage'. Damaged for life, he turns first against the king and then against his own mother, to whom he delivers the death 'she richly deserved' with a gilded dagger.

This focus on characters' emotional motivation is also a feature of Barbara Leonie Picard's 1955 *Stories of King Arthur and his Knights* which, like the works of Fraser and Briggs, places increased emphasis on the women of the *Morte*, anticipating Marion Zimmer Bradley's feminist reworking of the tale in *The Mists of Avalon* (1982) and reprising the role played by women writers in children's Arthuriana during the early twentieth century. A professional children's author who began writing fairy stories and legends during her stint as a volunteer fire-watcher in World War Two and went on to be shortlisted three times for the Carnegie Medal, Picard's works were meticulously researched, focusing on mythology and legend from worldwide traditions; Roger Lancelyn Green praised her skilful and accurate retelling of *Gilgamesh* in 1972.[76] Her adaptation of the *Morte* was no exception, following Malory's text closely and incorporating material from the thirteenth-century prose *Tristan* for her rendering of the Tristram and Isolde narrative. It is a largely straightforward retelling, most remarkable for its sympathetic psychological portrayal of Guinevere, who, like Fraser's character, married Arthur to please her father and soon bitterly regrets her decision. 'Would God that I had met you before ever I wed the king,' she tells Lancelot, and Picard explains the pleasure and agony of their forbidden love, particularly Guinevere's jealousy of Lancelot's courtesy to ladies and damsels who grow to love him, 'while she, who loved him above all else in the world, might show him, when in company, no more favour than she might show to any other'.[77] Picard develops the scenes between Lancelot and Guinevere with impassioned dialogue, and poignantly explains why

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[75] Fraser, *King Arthur*, 162.

[76] Roger Lancelyn Green, 'Review of *Three Ancient Kings* by Barbara Leonie Picard', *Folklore*, 83.3 (1972), 259-60.

[77] Picard, *Stories of King Arthur and his Knights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 75.

the two cannot marry after Arthur's death: 'they had no heart for it, for they knew that ever between them would be the memory of Arthur, whom they both had loved and honoured, and who had held them both so dear'.[78] Picard also brings the ladies Linette and Lionesse, brides of Gaheris and Gareth, back into the narrative: while in the *Morte* they are not mentioned again after their marriage, Picard's ladies implore Arthur to avenge the deaths of their husbands at Lancelot's hand, enhancing the continuity of the story and emphasising the role of chivalric women. It was perhaps this focus on psychology and interiority that prompted Green to comment in 1972 that Picard's work evinced 'a suggestion of the archaic, but little of the mythopoeic'.[79] Far from emphasising the inaccessible mystery of the Arthurian legend, Picard imbued it with psychological drama. Less conservative than Briggs's or Green's adaptations, less sensationalist than Fraser's and less overtly didactic than Hadfield's, Picard's adaptation sits somewhere in the middle, demonstrating the increasing involvement of female (and professional children's) writers with the *Morte* and the influence of White's psychological retelling of the story, and illustrating a gradual movement away from overt didacticism in children's literature.

Fraser ends her text noting that 'Arthur had given an example of leadership and courage which was never to be forgotten', and that 'today, over a thousand years later, we feel proud to remember that King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table are part of our national heritage'.[80] Although this ending endorses the values that Victorian and Edwardian adaptations perceived in the legend, much of the rest of Fraser's text works to undermine them. Just as White disparaged the idealistic notions of chivalry and justice as a 'child's illusions', Fraser aligns chivalry with errant adolescence in order to posit it as archaic and even foolish. Arthur's near-fatal encounter with Pellinore at the beginning of the *Morte* is moved towards the end of the book, where it constitutes a desperate attempt by the ageing king to recover his glory days through acting 'like a schoolboy playing truant'. Sought by a dubious damsel in need of a champion, the king ignores his instincts and behaves recklessly, saved only by Merlin who laments his susceptibility to 'such a hackneyed tale as the knight who fights at dawn, and the lady in distress whose castle is

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[78] Picard, *King Arthur*, 292.
[79] Green, 'Review of *Three Ancient Kings'*, 259-60.
[80] Fraser, *King Arthur*, 70; 201.

besieged and needs a champion'.[81] Subverting Arthurian conventions through gentle mockery, Fraser links the arrogant naivety of youth with the flaws inherent in the chivalric code that repeatedly endanger Malory's knights. Early in the text, the young Arthur rides along, thinking 'conceitedly' to himself, 'I am the finest king in Britain now'. Convinced that 'no one could teach him anything', Arthur ignores Merlin's warnings and ends up drugged by Morgan Le Fay, who steals his magic scabbard. Arthur's recklessness eventually results in censure from Merlin, whose patience is finally exhausted: 'Arthur Pendragon! […] There will come a time when you will regret your idiotic obstinacy!' He rides off 'in a huff, promising himself never to utter another word of advice to the stubborn fool who sat upon the throne' and leaves 'Arthur equally angry, and swearing in turn to give Merlin no further opportunity to gloat over him'.[82] This clash of egos and conflict over wounded pride is one of the reasons Merlin succumbs to Vivian's wiles, deserting Arthur in his hour of need. The petulant, naive childness of Fraser's text, and its corrupted parent-child relationships, represent anxieties about the Arthurian legend and its potential as moral exemplum, illustrating the human failures that Fraser perceives at the heart of the story.

As in Malory's own text, Fraser's characters are often 'oute of measure', and it is this inability to control their pride, jealousy and insecurity that results in destructive action. There is no single 'fate' to blame, as in Green's text, and no spiritual narrative of redemption offered alongside, as in Hadfield's version. Although the narrator notes in the second chapter that, had Arthur slain Morgan Le Fay, 'much bloodshed and sorrow in the future might have been avoided!', Morgan Le Fay is just one of a series of factors that combine to bring about the destruction of Camelot in a frenzy of tangled human emotions and personal traumas.[83] Although Fraser does not identify a clear root cause for the collapse of Camelot, unlike White, she follows White in exploring the interplay of emotional and psychological troubles that contributed to its downfall – albeit in a more hyperbolic, melodramatic fashion – and in using the figure of the child to delineate these conflicts. However, although White speculates that humans 'are nothing but figureheads to complex forces which seem to be under a kind of impulse' or 'machine[s] in an insensate universe', his tetralogy ends with the optimistic faith that

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[81] Fraser, *King Arthur,* 146; 153.
[82] Fraser, *King Arthur,* 194.
[83] Fraser, *King Arthur,* 19.

> There would be a day – there must be a day – when he [Arthur] would come back to Gramarye with a new Round Table which had no corners, just as the world had none – a table without boundaries between the nations who would sit to feast there. The hope of making it would lie in culture. If people could be persuaded to read and write, not just to eat and make love, there was still a chance that they might come to reason.[84]

While Fraser's adaptation also ends with the old king musing upon the failure of his endeavours, her adaptation offers no such hope, no attempt to fit contrary human impulse into a narrative of redemption predicated upon the importance of culture: her Arthur simply sits 'with his face buried in his hands, not knowing how to endure this terrible grief at the collapse of his life's work'.[85]

V. Conclusion

'The instability of Fraser's 1954 text,' Lynch notes,

> with its generic diversity, pop pastiche, and blend of 'heritage' with satirical elements, showed that 'King Arthurs' like Green's and Hadfield's, built on the neo-Tennysonian model, could not be written for very much longer. *Monty Python* was not that far away.[86]

Along with the generic instability that Lynch identifies, Fraser's text also evinces a moral instability: ethical codes are alternately undermined and reinstated, characters like Morgan Le Fay appear as stock villains but also invite readerly sympathy through revelations of their softer sides, and the fall of the Round Table is linked to a multiplicity of human failings: cowardice, jealousy, recklessness. Her child reader is a similarly unstable construct, at times subject to nuanced lessons in the psychology of the Arthurian characters, at times encouraged to revel in the dramatic crises of Camelot, and at times convinced that

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[84] White, *Once and Future King,* 689; 686; 697.
[85] Fraser, *King Arthur,* 185.
[86] Lynch, '*Le Morte Darthur* for Children', 30-31.

there is no moral message to be found in the collapse of the Round Table. Her text is, in many ways, illustrative of the diversity of Arthurian adaptation in the 1950s, as authors looked back to the legacy of Victorian and Edwardian adaptation but also sought to contend with a burgeoning and diverse post-war children's literary culture. The instability of Arthur in the 1950s necessitates an equally unstable child reader, as concerns about the didacticism of the legend are largely eclipsed by an awareness of its flexibility and its potential to be shaped according to the personal and social concerns of the author: as spiritual allegory, romantic thriller, or mysterious 'islanding' landscape of lost childhood. Given the diversity of adaptations from this period, it is unsurprising that 1975 saw the release of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail,* a bathetic, parodic (albeit affectionate) critique of the chivalric enterprise that met with, and continues to elicit, widespread critical acclaim.[87] Before Victorian idealism completely collapsed into irreverent parody, however, American author John Steinbeck spent several months in Somerset, attempting to make his own mark on the Arthurian legend. His unfinished text, originally intended for his young sons, and the correspondence Steinbeck entered into with friends during its production, exemplify how versatile children's Arthuriana had become by the late 1950s, and anticipate the radical rewritings of later decades.

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[87] For discussion of its reception, see Donald L. Hoffman, 'Not Dead Yet: *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* in the Twenty-First Century' in *Cinema Arthuriana: Twenty Essays*, ed. Kevin J. Harty (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2002), 136-48.

'For a little while a magician': potent childish fantasies in John Steinbeck's *Acts of King Arthur and his Noble Knights*

In John Steinbeck's unfinished *Acts of King Arthur and his Noble Knights* (1976), Lancelot escapes from the dungeon of the four witch queens and lodges with an abbess on his way back to Camelot. During the night, he dreams of Guinevere leaning over him and saying, 'You can't remake the world. There's little enough you can do to remake yourself'. Yet Lancelot then sees himself 'with a scaffold about him. And he was taking out bricks from his neck and shoulders and replacing them with others, neatly mortared but new looking'.[1] This vision of Lancelot 'remaking' himself can be contrasted with T. H. White's portrait of the introspective, self-doubting Lancelot, examining his reflection in the polished surface of a helmet, 'afraid of what he would find'.[2] Where White's Lancelot is wracked with self-doubt and confusion regarding his identity, an affliction that plagues him throughout *The Once and Future King*, Steinbeck's Lancelot is posited here as actively involved with his own self-fashioning, rather than anxiously scrutinising his reflections. Contradicting Guinevere's statement, he proceeds to engineer the literal construction of his selfhood. This episode is one of many in *Acts* that emphasise the transformative and revelatory power of dreams, particularly in association with the child. It follows an incident in which Lancelot becomes, temporarily, a 'magician' through the memory of empowering childhood fantasies, enabling him to understand and outsmart Malory's evil witch queens in a sequence that has the fantastical, ethereal quality of a dream. Drawing heavily on Steinbeck's own memories of being captivated by the 'wonder and the magic' of the *Morte,* aged nine, *Acts* offers a novel approach to Malory's text through its emphasis on the power of childhood dreams.

The image of Lancelot remodelling himself out of new bricks is in keeping with Steinbeck's construction of the imaginative child, who 'remakes' himself or herself through mental fantasies in order to cope with the demands of growing up. A product of his

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[1] John Steinbeck, *The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights,* ed. Chase Horton (London: Penguin Classics, 2001), 254. First published 1976.
[2] T. H. White, *The Once and Future King* (London: Harper Collins, 1996), 339.

childhood fascination with Malory, *Acts* was written with Steinbeck's young sons in mind, so that he might emphasise the 'wonder and the magic' to a new generation of child readers.[3] Where previous adaptations such as those by White and Fraser had likened the *Morte*'s characters to children in order to emphasise naivety, petulance, or truncated, abnormal development, Steinbeck instead harnesses the magic of childhood fantasies, recalling the ways in which the *Morte* furnished him with emotional support during his youth as he identified himself with its knights and their predicaments. *Acts* taps into this childish dream world, emphasising the potency of imaginative magic as a source of emotional strength and suggesting a hitherto unprecedented respect for the mental powers of the growing child. Frequently expressing a desire to offer something new and unique in his rendition of the *Morte*, Steinbeck differentiated himself both from previous adapters, including White, and from scholarly studies of Malory. In 1959 he stressed that he did not wish to emulate *The Once and Future King,* explaining, 'I have not been trying to write a popular book but a permanent book'.[4] His musings upon the 'permanent' nature of the *Morte* centre upon the dream-like, childish, even 'nonsensical' aspects of Malory's work. Although his adaptation cannot match White's in terms of originality, and the 'permanent' project was abandoned in 1965, its intervention lies in this focus on the childishness of the *Morte* and the ways in which Steinbeck moves toward a vision of 'childishness' as positive, creative and powerful.[5] His adaptation illuminates the ways in which the *Morte* for children has a tendency to modify and refigure its intended audience, as the imagined child reader becomes freighted with adult recollection and nostalgia: if these texts are for and about children, they are equally what Andrew Lynch terms 'private places of memory where adult writers and readers ponder the structures of their development and connect their lives'.[6]

I. Enter novelist: Steinbeck and the scholars

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[3] Steinbeck, preface to *Acts*, xiii. The preface will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.
[4] Steinbeck, *Acts*, 342.
[5] In 1976, eight years after the author's death, Steinbeck's close friend Chase Horton – introduced by his literary agent Elizabeth Otis to support him in research for the Malory project – published the unfinished and unedited manuscript, accompanied by a lengthy appendix comprising over 70 letters between Steinbeck, himself and Otis, some of which will be discussed in this chapter.
[6] Andrew Lynch, '*Le Morte Darthur* for Children: Malory's Third Tradition' in *Adapting the Arthurian Legends for Children: Essays on Arthurian Juvenilia,* ed. Barbara Tepa Lupack (New York; Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 4.

As early as 1956, Steinbeck wrote to his niece and her husband, Mr and Mrs David Heyler, with an announcement:

> I am taking on something I have always wanted to do. That is the reduction of Thomas Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* to simple readable prose without adding or taking away anything, simply to put it into modern spelling and to translate the obsolete words to modern ones and to straighten out some of the more involved sentences.[7]

'There is no rendering of [Malory] into modern English', Steinbeck remarked. His sweeping statement is of course incorrect, as adaptations of the *Morte* rendered in contemporary English had been produced steadily since the nineteenth century, and the versions of Green, Hadfield, Picard and Briggs had all appeared within the previous six years. The wilful ignorance of Steinbeck's observation implies his desire, even in the early stages of the project, to offer something more complex and original than those adaptations produced in recent years, and reveals a sense of possessiveness over Malory's text. In the same letter, Steinbeck suggests his decision to embark upon an adaptation of Malory may have been at least partly inspired by the discovery of the Winchester Manuscript in 1934. The manuscript was unearthed by Walter Oakeshott, librarian at Winchester College, while looking through an old safe. Within days Professor Eugène Vinaver, Malory scholar at the University of Manchester and at that time working on an edition of Caxton's *Morte Darthur*, had requested a viewing of the manuscript. Vinaver's three-volume edition of the Winchester Manuscript was published thirteen years later. Noting that it is 'now available in Oxford University Press, three volumes', Steinbeck claimed 'the Winchester is much more interesting and indicated some things which Caxton edited out'.[8] He announced his intention to use this as the basis of his adaptation rather than Caxton's edition, which had been the only available text prior to 1934. Steinbeck does not elaborate on why Winchester proves 'much more interesting', although he later refers to Caxton having removed its 'lovely nuances', but his reference to the manuscript when beginning his Arthurian project, and his decision to use it as his source, is significant. The Winchester Manuscript was first

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[7] Letter from Steinbeck to Mr and Mrs David Heyler, 19 Nov 1956. Cited in *Steinbeck: A Life in Letters*, ed. Elaine Steinbeck and Robert Wallsten (London: Heinemann, 1975), 540.
[8] Letter from Steinbeck to Elizabeth Otis, 3 Dec 1956. Cited in appendix to *Acts*, 299.

made accessible to the public in Eugène Vinaver's scholarly edition of 1947.[9] By choosing as his source a text that had only been available since then, Steinbeck ensured from the beginning that his adaptation rested on a different textual foundation to that of most others (including T. H. White, who finished his tetralogy in the early 1940s so definitely could not have used Winchester, and who had declared his lack of interest in contemporary Malory criticism).[10] Furthermore, his comment that Winchester contains 'some things which Caxton edited out' suggests a desire to get closer to Malory's original work and the intentions of the author himself, rather than Caxton's adulterated version, a theory supported by a growing fascination with Malory evident throughout Steinbeck's correspondence.

In 1957, in preparation for his Arthurian adaptation, Steinbeck met with Eugène Vinaver at the University of Manchester. Following the meeting, the pair established a friendship that saw Steinbeck travel to England on several occasions to meet with Vinaver, and witnessed a correspondence between the two in which Steinbeck sought approval and advice regarding his own interpretations of the *Morte*.[11] Steinbeck's choice of the Winchester Manuscript, and his early decision to meet with a scholar at the forefront of Malory editorship and criticism, indicates his desire to become involved in the academic debates prompted by the manuscript and Vinaver's edition. Vinaver's decision to divide the text into eight separate stories published under the title 'Works' and his insistence – to the end of his career – that the *Morte Darthur* was not a single, unified text, prompted almost universal critical disagreement and marked a turning point in Malory criticism. D. S. Brewer argued in 'Form in the *Morte Darthur*' (1952) that the *Morte did* possess

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[9] Vinaver was appointed Professor of French Language and Literature at the University of Manchester in 1933, a year before the discovery of the manuscript. He was a prominent Arthurian scholar, founding the Arthurian Society in Oxford in 1928 (now the Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature), its journal *Medium Aevum*, and the International Arthurian Society – still extant – in 1948.

[10] No evidence exists regarding the version of Malory's text used by the other adapters of the 1950s. It is possible that Hadfield, heavily influenced by Charles Williams, used the same text as him (a version of Caxton's print). Green was clearly aware of Vinaver's work, noting in his preface that the *Morte* had recently been shown to be a collection of separate stories. Whether Steinbeck was the first to adapt the Winchester Manuscript for children cannot be proven; however, what is important is that he *believed* himself to be offering a novel interpretation of the *Morte* founded on recent scholarly discoveries, and differentiated himself from other adapters for this reason.

[11] For a detailed overview of this correspondence, see Robin C. Mitchell, 'Steinbeck and Malory: A Correspondence with Eugène Vinaver', *Steinbeck Quarterly*, 10 (1977): 70-79.

continuity, and that it was formally neither short romance nor novel, but situated somewhere between the two. R. M. Lumiansky, in *Malory's Originality* (1964), collated a series of essays from leading scholars designed to prove the unity of Malory's 'hoole booke'. The discovery of the Winchester Manuscript also initiated a new direction in investigations of Malory himself: objective outlines of the biography of the mysterious author and his source materials were increasingly accompanied by debates regarding his creative intentions and his treatment of said materials. Unlike White, who deliberately isolated himself from Malory scholarship, Steinbeck initially attempted to ground his text in contemporaneous academic developments, particularly those relating to Malory's biography. However, as I will establish, Steinbeck's adaptation ultimately adopted a similar trajectory to that of White, as he began to eschew 'scholarly' interpretations – perceived as lifeless and overly 'objective' – in favour of subjective readings rooted in his own childhood experience of the *Morte*. The child, in Steinbeck's text, serves to focus these readings, and thus to figure the author's analysis of his own self: as scholar, author, reader, and adult.

Steinbeck's early correspondence during the writing of *Acts* indicates confidence that he was suitably prepared and possessed legitimate credentials to produce a version of the *Morte* with scholarly foundations. 'I have had some Anglo-Saxon and of course, like everyone else, have read a good deal of Old and Middle English', he wrote to his literary agent Elizabeth Otis in 1956. Immediately following this sentence, he corrects himself: 'Why I say "everyone else", I don't know because I find that very few people have'.[12] This qualification suggests that Steinbeck was keen to emphasise the academic basis of his Arthurian adaptation, something he identifies as unusual. However, previous adaptations of the *Morte* for children had often rested on similarly scholarly foundations: the classroom texts of the early twentieth century, produced by university academics; the work of White, who, although he declared himself uninterested in Malory scholarship, had produced an undergraduate dissertation on the *Morte* while at Cambridge*;* the texts of Roger Lancelyn Green and Alice Hadfield, and their relationship to the scholarship of Tolkien, Lewis and Charles Williams. I would venture, then, that Steinbeck's self-congratulatory statement (and his confusing separation of 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'Old English') actually hint at

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[12] Letter from Steinbeck to Otis, 3 Dec 1956. Cited in appendix to *Acts*, 298.

underlying insecurities regarding his academic legitimacy, perhaps resulting from his sporadic attendance at Stanford University between 1919 and 1925, and his eventual decision to abandon university without a degree in 1925. He apparently attempted to compensate for this lack through 'long and arduous and expensive' Arthurian research. This is supported by his frequent citations of critical and reference texts in his correspondence on *Acts*, and the lengths to which he went for his research: trips to Italy, a move to Somerset, and acquiring medieval manuscripts on microfilm.[13] Steinbeck noted the help he had received from scholars in his research on Malory, commenting that 'far from resenting my intrusion, they have all gone out of their way to give me every possible help'.[14] Although he was 'highly gratified by the respect and encouragement of the authorities in the field', his use of the word 'intrusion' implies that he viewed himself as fundamentally different from the scholars in his dealings with Malory's text.[15] Whether this stemmed from insecurity or not, we cannot be sure, but Steinbeck soon came to embrace his perceived isolation from the 'scholarly community', concluding that it offered him a distinct advantage in his adaptation of the *Morte*.

As he began to work on *Acts* in earnest, Steinbeck wrote to his friend, Chase Horton, and Elizabeth Otis regarding Thomas Malory. Incredulously, he asked 'Why has nobody read this man? Increasingly I come to believe that the scholars have not read him at all – at least not with the intention of understanding what Malory meant and what he conveyed to his listeners'.[16] Although initially seeking to situate himself within a scholarly community, Steinbeck soon set himself apart, rhetorically, from this community. His stance towards scholarship became adversarial: 'Malory has been studied as a translator, as a soldier, as a rebel, as a religious, as an expert in courtesy, as nearly everything you think of except one, and that is what he was – a novelist', he wrote in 1957.[17] His use of the anachronistic term 'novelist' for the fifteenth-century author is significant, suggesting his

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[13] In a letter to Otis on 7 Jul 1958, Steinbeck wrote that 'the long and arduous and expensive research toward my new work on the *Morte d'Arthur* is just about complete […] I know you are aware of the hundreds of books bought, rented and consulted, of the microfilms of manuscripts unavailable for study, of the endless correspondence with scholars in the field, and finally the two trips to England and one to Italy to turn up new sources of information and to become familiar with the actual scenes which must have influenced Malory'. See appendix to *Acts*, 317.

[14] He mentions in particular Dr. Buhler of the Morgan Library, and Vinaver.

[15] Letter from Steinbeck to Otis, 7 Aug 1957. Cited in appendix to *Acts*, 310.

[16] Letter from Steinbeck to Otis and Horton, 11 Jul 1958. Cited in appendix to *Acts*, 323.

[17] Letter from Steinbeck to Otis and Horton, 26 Apr 1957. Cited in appendix to *Acts*, 304.

personal identification, as a writer, with Malory. He implies that, as a fellow novelist, he is uniquely placed to investigate and elucidate this aspect of Malory's character; or, at least, he is more interested in doing so than previous adapters. Otis responded to Steinbeck's analysis of Malory as novelist by calling it 'one of the most impressive letters that you or anyone else has ever written'. 'The creative process has started,' she announced, somewhat dramatically: 'Time, place, feel. Enter novelist'.[18] Her response corroborated Steinbeck's own conviction that his credentials as *novelist,* his experience of the complexities of the creative process, granted him unique insight into Malory as author. Many previous adapters of the *Morte* for children were also, of course, relating to Malory as novelists. However, after White, it is Steinbeck who most explicitly juxtaposes his position as novelist with that of scholars, and his corresponding departures from Malory's original text can be linked to this approach. Although both authors draw on their academic understanding of Malory – White's undergraduate dissertation on the *Morte Darthur,* now lost, was said to have much in common with *The Once and Future King* – their interpretation of the story is predominantly informed by their own subjective, emotional responses to the text, and they prioritise this dynamic above what Steinbeck dismissed rather bathetically as the 'diggings and scramblings' of scholarship.[19]

In his quest to understand 'what Malory meant', Steinbeck focused increasingly upon the fifteenth-century author himself, rather than just his text, seeing the *Morte* not only as the story of Arthur but as 'the story of Sir Thomas Malory and his times and the story of his dreams and goodness'.[20] Malory 'had himself as literary material', Steinbeck suggests, 'his vices and failures, his hopes and angers and alarms, his insecurities for the future and his puzzlement about the past'.[21] Steinbeck's fascination with Malory the man differs from the enquiries into his identity that emerged sporadically following G. L. Kittredge's research in 1896.[22] Where these studies were concerned with the practical

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[18] Letter from Otis to Steinbeck, 3 May 1957. Cited in appendix to *Acts,* 305.

[19] Steinbeck, preface to *Acts,* xii. For brief discussion of White's lost dissertation, see Elisabeth Brewer, *T. H. White's The Once and Future King* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), 4.

[20] Letter from Steinbeck to Otis and Horton, 26 Apr 1957. Cited in appendix to *Acts,* 305.

[21] Letter from Steinbeck to Otis and Horton, 14 Mar 1958. Cited in appendix to *Acts,* 315.

[22] In 1897, George Lyman Kittredge published 'Who Was Sir Thomas Malory?' identifying Malory for the first time as a knight from Newbold Revell. This is widely accepted today, although there have been studies throughout the twentieth century that attempt to dispute or qualify Kittredge's findings, such as Edward Hicks's *Sir Thomas Malory, His Turbulent Career* (1928), A. C. Baugh's

details of Malory's life and times – where he lived, his criminal activity, his involvement in the Wars of the Roses – Steinbeck constructs Malory-the-author based on his own experience of mid-twentieth-century authorship, largely eschewing the practical details in favour of subjective speculation regarding the complex nature of the authorial psyche and the creative process. His insights into Malory are predominantly emotional and psychological, based very loosely on known biographical detail and mostly on Steinbeck's own intuition. 'The revolts of the subhuman serfs must have caused consternation in his mind', he postulates; 'the whisperings of religious schism were all around him so that the unthinkable chaos of ecclesiastical uncertainty must have haunted him', he ventures, the repeated 'must have' indicating the speculative nature of these judgements.[23] Examining Malory through the lens of his own experience as a novelist, Steinbeck proposed that he deployed a 'self-character' in the *Morte*:

> It is nearly always true that a novelist, perhaps unconsciously, identifies himself with one chief or central character in his novel. Into this character he puts not only what he thinks he is but what he hopes to be. We can call this spokesman the self-character. You will find one in every one of my books and in the novels of everyone I can remember.[24]

He concludes that Malory's self-character was Lancelot, into whom he placed all his own perfections and flaws, and that the true reason Lancelot could not achieve the Grail was because of 'the faults and sins of Malory himself'.[25] Steinbeck, too, came to perceive his self-character as Lancelot: in a letter to his friend Shirley Fisher he remarked, 'I *like* Lancelot. I recognise him because in some ways he is me'.[26] He also remarked

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'Documenting Sir Thomas Malory' (1933) and William Matthews's *The Ill-Framed Knight: A Skeptical Enquiry into the Identity of Sir Thomas Malory* (1968).

[23] Letter from Steinbeck to Otis and Horton, 14 Mar 1958, cited in appendix to *Acts*, 315. Steinbeck's reference to 'revolts of subhuman serfs' perhaps alludes to the Jack Cade rebellion against Henry VI, the largest popular uprising in fifteenth-century England, and his mention of 'religious schism' could be linked to the Lollard movement of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. However, these speculations are very vague and illustrate Steinbeck's predominantly emotional, rather than objective or historical, interest in Malory.

[24] Letter from Steinbeck to Otis and Horton, 26 Apr 1957. Cited in appendix to *Acts*, 304.

[25] Letter from Steinbeck to Otis and Horton, 26 Apr 1957. Cited in Steinbeck (ed.), *Letters*, 553-54.

[26] Letter from Steinbeck to Shirley Fisher, 10 Aug 1959. Cited in Steinbeck (ed.), *Letters*, 647.

affectionately, 'He's my boy. I can feel him'.[27] He terms this speculation about Malory's 'self-character' a 'dizzying inductive leap', and claims, 'this can *for me* wipe out all the inconsistencies and obscurities scholars have found in the story'.[28] 'For me' is telling: Steinbeck intimates that his personal, authorial identification with Malory is capable of providing something that scholarship cannot. As this chapter will establish, what Steinbeck perceived as his unique contribution to interpretation of the *Morte* can be most closely explicated through examination of his Lancelot, and the relationship between this character and what Steinbeck 'hoped to be'. It is also the figure of Lancelot that most clearly elucidates the complex connection between the child and the adult self within Steinbeck's text.

In 1959, Steinbeck wrote to Otis, concluding that his work 'is no more a translation than Malory's was. I am keeping it all but it is mine as much as it was his'.[29] He noted 'a sense of freedom in this material I never had before'.[30] This sense of ownership is clear in the liberties Steinbeck took with Malory's text. From the tale of 'Gawain, Ewain and Marhalt' onwards, *Acts* rapidly diverges from Malory's account, with the creation of new characters and the attribution of detailed past lives, anxieties and personalities to Malory's existing characters. Laura Hodges, in a line-by-line comparison of *Acts* with the Winchester text, notes that Steinbeck's additions only constitute 2-5% of the text in the first 35% of the work. He retains the framework of Malory's syntax and narrative, modernising certain phrases; for example, Uther's declaration that 'I am seke for angre and for love of fayre Igrayne, that I may not be hool' becomes 'I am sick from anger and from love and there are no medicines for those'.[31] Steinbeck does add the occasional interpretive flourish to the story, often to suggest the 'timelessness' of certain human traits within the legend. For example, when Arthur refuses to believe Merlin's prediction that Guinevere will be unfaithful, the wizard notes sadly, 'Every man who has ever lived holds tight to the belief that for him alone the laws of probability are canceled out by love'.[32] Similarly, the narrator

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[27] Letter from Steinbeck to Otis, 25 Jul 1959. Cited in appendix to *Acts,* 356.
[28] Letter from Steinbeck to Otis and Horton, 26 Apr 1957. Cited in appendix to *Acts,* 305 (my italics).
[29] Letter from Steinbeck to Otis, 30 Mar 1959. Cited in appendix to *Acts,* 331.
[30] Letter from Steinbeck to Horton, 20 Apr 1959. Cited in appendix to *Acts,* 336.
[31] Steinbeck, *Acts,* 4.
[32] Steinbeck, *Acts,* 77.

observes that 'Merlin knew the winding channels of the human mind, and also he was aware that a simple open man is most receptive when he is mystified', emphasising the enigmatic, dream-like quality that Steinbeck identifies in the story and which permeates his adaptation. These alterations clarify and explicate Malory's original, but are minor interventions. In the next 5% of *Acts*, however, his additions increase dramatically to 25-35%, and in the final 60% of the text, Steinbeck's additions constitute 85-95% of the total material.[33] Roy Simmonds calculates, based on the percentage of addition to Malory's text, that Steinbeck's completed typescript would have exceeded 2000 pages, had he finished rewriting the entire *Morte*.[34] His sense of ownership and increasing artistic license stem from two interrelated connections with the *Morte*: firstly, his identification, as 'novelist', with Thomas Malory, who also took original liberties with the material; secondly, his childhood identification with Malory's text and characters.

In 1965, following a five-year hiatus from his Arthurian project, Steinbeck wrote to Vinaver:

> I come back again and again to one thought, planted perhaps when I was nine years old and never far away from me. And that thought is that the Matter of Arthur is essentially a subjective matter. Geoffrey [of Monmouth] knew Arthur as belonging to his time or shortly before. Malory writes and thinks of a 15th century Arthur – Chrétien [de Troyes] speaks of his time and I, heaven help me, can only think of the Round Table as having existed in Salinas, California around the turn of the 20th century.

Steinbeck's observation that the 'Matter of Arthur is essentially a subjective matter' lies at the heart of his analysis and exegesis of Malory's text, shaped by his own emotional connection to the *Morte* from an early age (Steinbeck was born in 1902; his comment 'around the turn of the 20th century' presumably alludes to his reading of the *Morte* at the

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[33] Laura F. Hodges, 'Steinbeck's Adaptation of Malory's Launcelot: A Triumph of Realism over Supernaturalism', *Quondam et Futurus*, 2.1 (1992), 78.
[34] Roy S. Simmonds, 'A Note on Steinbeck's Unpublished Arthurian Stories' in *Steinbeck and the Arthurian Theme*, ed. Tetsumaro Hayashi (Indiana: John Steinbeck Society of America, 1975), 26.

age of nine). It rests on an assumption that the characters of the legend all demonstrate timeless personality traits and predicaments:

> Mordred, Gawain, Arthur, Guinevere, Galahad, Lancelot – all have faults, all except Galahad, and they are faults we find in ourselves […] it may be that those earnest scholars who search so diligently for some kind of objective reality for Arthur are trying to divest themselves of the responsibility of *being* Arthur.[35]

Steinbeck's rhetoric constructs scholarship as a search for 'objective reality'. His other references to scholarship as 'diggings and scramblings' and an ignorance of 'what Malory meant' condemn this search for objectivity as implicitly dry and lifeless, petty and ultimately futile. It appears to reference trends in contemporaneous Malory criticism, which sought to locate the author's source texts and to uncover the historical, 'objective' details of his life. Steinbeck suggests that this search lacks key elements – empathy and emotional intuition – which he, as a novelist deeply interested in the minutiae and subtleties of human feeling, can bring to the debate. He implies that true understanding of Malory can be achieved only through emotional engagement with his characters, that a comprehensive knowledge of the *Morte* must be one that is grounded in empathy and affinity with the flaws of Mordred, Gawain and Arthur.

In many ways, Steinbeck's stance echoes the rhetoric underlying the rise of English Studies discussed in Chapter One, in which literary texts were increasingly venerated not for teaching practical, objective details such as grammar and metre, but for inculcating a nebulous form of 'feeling' through empathy and consideration. However, while such rhetoric was largely associated with scholars and educationalists during the early twentieth century, Steinbeck deliberately differentiates himself from what he perceives to be the dry, soulless enquiries of academia. By referring to his own 'subjective' method as a 'responsibility' and suggesting that earnest scholars are attempting to shirk it, intimidated by its magnitude, Steinbeck in fact posits his reading of Malory and the *Morte* as more important than that offered by existing scholarship. Significantly, this 'subjective' reading is deeply rooted in Steinbeck's childhood, 'planted perhaps when I was nine years old and

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[35] Letter from Steinbeck to Vinaver, 6 Jul 1965. Cited in Mitchell, 'Steinbeck and Malory', 78.

never far away from me'. This formative fascination manifests itself in his complex construction of childhood throughout *Acts*. Similar to White's *Once and Future King, Acts* reads as an introspective literary exercise in which Steinbeck 'writes back' to his childhood self, complicating the implied reader of the text. However, the child of *Acts* is a very different creature from the malformed, damaged child of *The Once and Future King*. Steinbeck's text privileges the power of the imaginative child, allocating quasi-magical potency to the childhood mind in ways that are particularly visible in the depiction of Lancelot, Steinbeck's 'self-character'.

II. Secret books and magic buttons: the power of childish dreams

Steinbeck's *Acts* is dedicated to his younger sister, Mary. Wishing to reproduce the style of the Winchester Manuscript for this important page, he embarked upon a self-proclaimed 'queste' to London, where he purchased sheets of vellum. Vinaver helped him to locate a scribe capable of copying the fifteenth-century hand and replicating the embellishments of the original. Steinbeck's dedication is written in the style of the *Morte Darthur,* incorporating phrases from Malory's text ('wyntre age', 'gyff hir londis', 'worshyppful as ony on lyve') and visually resembles the opening page of the manuscript in its elaborate flourishes and script. It is reproduced at the beginning of Horton's edition (fig. 10), which also provides a modern translation:

> When I was nine, I took siege with King Arthur's fellowship of knights most proud and worshipful as any alive. In those days there was a great lack of hardy and noble-hearted squires to bear shield and sword, to buckle harness, and to succor wounded knights. Then it chanced that squire-like duties fell to my sister of six years, who for gentle prowess had no peer living. It sometimes happens in sadness and pity that faithful service is not appreciated, so my fair and loyal sister remained unrecognized as squire. Where this day I make amends within my power and raise her to knighthood and give her praise. And from this hour she shall be called Sir Marie Steinbeck of Salinas Valley. God give her worship without peril.
>
> John Steinbeck of Monterey, Knight.[36]

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[36] Steinbeck, preface to *Acts*, vi.
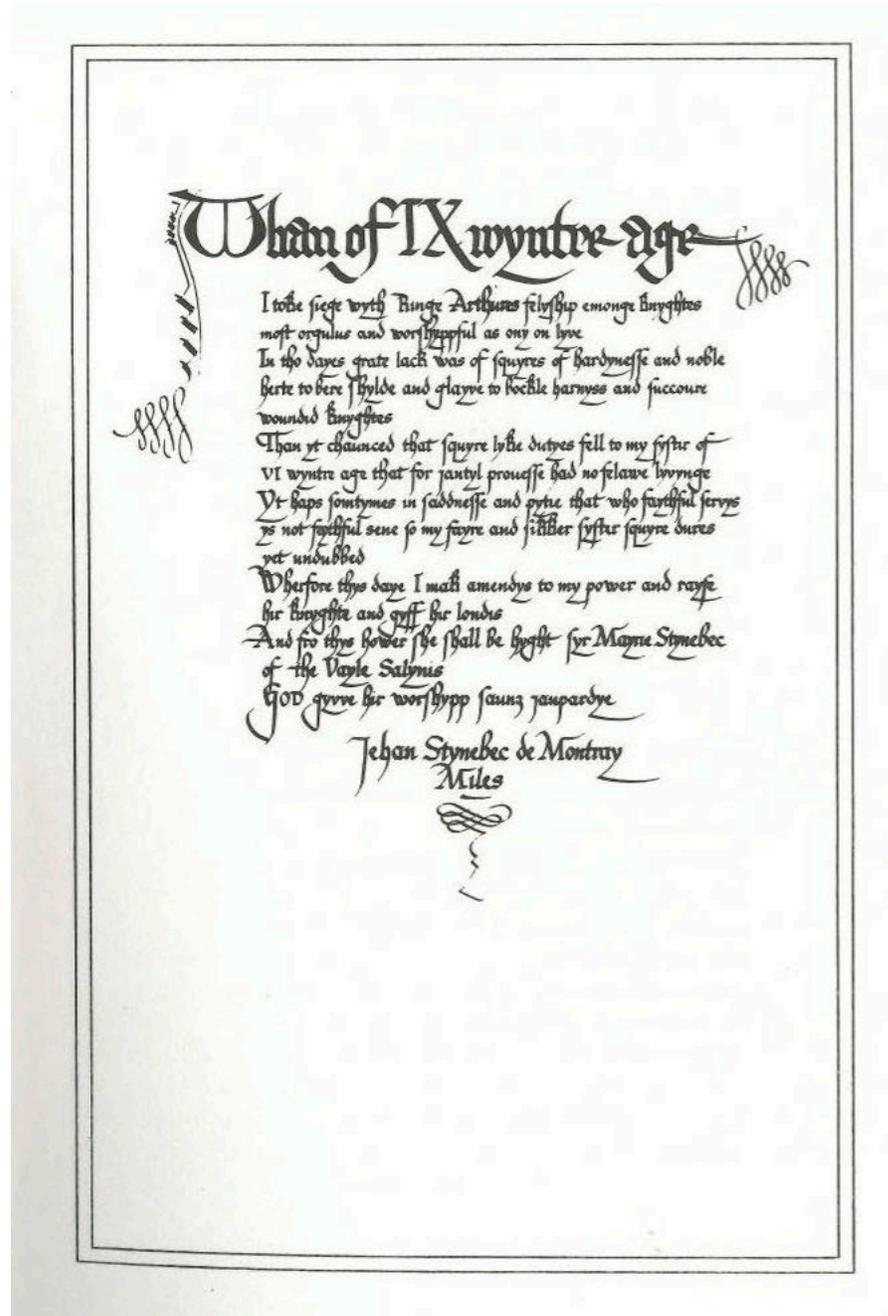
Figure 10. Dedication to Mary Steinbeck in John Steinbeck, *The Acts of King Arthur and his Noble Knights* (London: Penguin Classics, 2001), vii.

Steinbeck reveals his emotional involvement with the story as a child, placing himself and his sister within Malory's narrative. He not only recalls that they enjoyed 'playing at' King

Arthur as children, but by signing the dedication 'John Steinbeck of Monterey, Knight', implies that they still inhabit the world of the *Morte*. He assigns knightly accolades from the original text – 'noble herte', 'prouesse', 'worshyp' – to Mary, and relocates the Arthurian narrative from Camelot to the Salinas Valley, where he and his sister grew up. His extensive efforts in procuring the medieval accoutrements for his dedication attest to the strength of his personal identification with the material and the continuing importance of this childhood attachment. Furthermore, by using medieval methods of production for this part of his text, Steinbeck simultaneously identifies himself with Malory the writer, and with the characters of his fictional medieval world. He positions himself as both adult writer of *Acts* in twentieth-century America, adult medieval 'knight' reflecting upon his childhood at Arthur's court, and child character within the Arthurian story, along with his sister. His dedication suggests that *Acts* exists, at least in part, as a sort of nostalgic 'wish-fulfilment', similar to White's vision of *The Sword in the Stone*.

These desires are realised in Steinbeck's construction of an original character, the lady Lyne. She appears as an apprentice figure to the young, untried knight Ewain. Having spent her childhood 'hating [her] limiting sex', watching the young boys practicing knightly manoeuvres in the knowledge that she was 'a better rider […] a better hunter' and better with a spear, she sometimes dressed in boys' clothes and waited in a forest glade to do combat with unsuspecting knights. 'I beat them wrestling and with quarter stave, stood against them with sword and shield', Lyne recalls, until one day she killed a young knight in a fair fight. Fearful of the consequences, she hid his body and 'crept back to the protection of [her] needlework', forced thereafter only to observe knightly interactions, noting the common mistakes made by knights but unable to correct them, studying battle until 'I knew possibly more than any knight living about the art of war'. 'There I sat,' she recalls, 'loaded with lore and no way to use it until […] when middle age came to me, I found an outlet for my knowledge', training young knights in secret to become 'perfect fighting instruments'.[37] Although this could be viewed as part of Steinbeck's attempt to develop Malory's female characters (he noted in his correspondence that Malory 'doesn't like [women] much unless they are sticks'), a more personal connection is suggested when

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[37] Steinbeck, *Acts*, 175-76.

one compares this passage with an interesting recollection by the narrator in *East of Eden* (1952), Steinbeck's semi-autobiographical novel:

> My sister Mary did not want to be a girl. It was a misfortune she could not get used to. She was an athlete, a marble player, a pitcher of one-o'-cat, and the trappings of a girl inhibited her. Of course this was long before the compensations of being a girl were apparent to her. Just as we knew that somewhere on our bodies, probably under the arm, there was a button which if pressed just right would permit us to fly, so Mary had worked out a magic for herself to change her over into the tough little boy she wanted to be. If she went to sleep in a magical position, knees crooked just right, head at a magical angle, fingers all crossed one over the other, in the morning she would be a boy.[38]

Lyne, too, was inhibited by the 'trappings of a girl': she recalls herself as 'a little girl, hating embroidery […] hat[ing] the hobbles of a gown'.[39] The clear links between Lyne and Mary indicate that Lyne is Steinbeck's way of incorporating his sister into his Arthurian narrative, mirroring the ways in which the siblings used to immerse themselves in the world of Malory through make-believe as children. If Steinbeck's dedication implies that he still envisages himself as a 'self-character' within the world of the *Morte*, Lyne is both a way of including his sister – previously 'unrecognised as squire' – in that world, and of engaging in a process of vicarious wish-fulfilment, whereby she might achieve her desires. *Acts* is inspired by, and grounded in, Steinbeck's own experience of Malory and the Arthurian world at nine years old, and writes back to its author's childhood self. Central to this approach is Steinbeck and his sister's shared belief in magic: a secret, personal magic that could create, through fantasy, the power and 'toughness' so coveted in reality.

During Marhalt's quest in *Acts*, he encounters a 'dark man' who mocks the concept of knight errantry. 'I know your kind,' he tells Marhalt, 'a childish dream world resting on the shoulders of less fortunate men'.[40] Although here it reads as a scathing condemnation of the elitist, exclusive system of knighthood, this identification of chivalry with a 'childish

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[38] John Steinbeck, *East of Eden* (New York: Penguin, 1992), 338-39. First published 1952.
[39] Steinbeck, *Acts*, 175.
[40] Steinbeck, *Acts*, 156.

dream world' is a recurring motif in Steinbeck's text and is central to his construction of the child. He had expressed dissatisfaction with the concept of knighthood during the production of *Acts*, writing in a letter to Horton:

> As I go along, I am constantly jiggled by the arrant nonsense of a great deal of the material. Two-thirds of it is the vain dreaming of children talking in the dark. And then when you are about to throw it out in disgust, you remember that knight errantry is no more crazy than our present day group thinking and activity. Then when I am properly satiric about the matter I think of my own life and how I have handled it and it isn't any different. I am brother to the nonsense and there's no escaping it.[41]

Steinbeck's 'disgust' is reflected in the dark man's comment, alluding to the self-indulgent, exclusive and frequently cruel world of chivalry. It echoes White's focus on the sufferings of those 'who had no armour' in *The Once and Future King,* and Malory's famous scene of carnage in which Merlin asks Arthur, 'Thou has never done! Hast thou nat done inow?'[42] This is depicted in Steinbeck's gruesome portrayal of the realities of knighthood: Arthur, 'fearful to see', his sword 'caked and dripping with blood and brains' during the battle with the five kings.[43] However, Steinbeck's comment also indicates that he views modern society as similarly enmeshed in a process of childish dreaming, and, furthermore, that he too is 'brother' to such 'nonsense'. Although there is certainly something critical and even satirical about Steinbeck's identification of the Arthurian world with childish dreaming, *Acts* is also underpinned by faith in the positive, constructive power of such dreaming, alongside a personal connection with, and respect for, this 'nonsense'.

Steinbeck's Merlin reprimands Arthur, sulking after losing his sword in battle with King Pellinore, by likening him to a child: 'It is a child speaking […] not a king and not a knight, but a hurt and angry child, or you would know, my lord, that there is more to a king

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[41] Letter from Steinbeck to Horton, 8 Jun 1959. Cited in Steinbeck (ed.), *Letters*, 642.

[42] T. H. White, *The Once and Future King* (London: Harper Collins, 1996), 238; Eugène Vinaver (ed.), *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory,* 2nd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 36.

[43] Steinbeck, *Acts,* 28.

than a crown, and far more to a knight than a sword'.[44] The episode echoes Antonia
Fraser's likening of the ageing Arthur, desperate to prove himself in a risky battle, to a
truant child. The 'hurt and angry child' recurs at several points throughout Steinbeck's
adaptation; however, this figure is used in a more complex way than in Fraser's text, not
simply a representation of immature petulance but instead one of latent imaginative power.
In one of his most elaborated sections of the text, Steinbeck retells Malory's tale of the four
witch queens and their capture of Lancelot. Locked in a dungeon until he agrees to take one
of them for his lover, Lancelot delivers a calm yet defiant speech to the queens:

> You know how children, when they are forbidden something they want, sometimes
> scream and storm and sometimes even hurt themselves in rage. Then they grow
> quiet and vengeful. But they are not strong enough to revenge themselves on the one
> they consider their oppressor. Such a one sometimes stamps on an ant, saying,
> 'That's for you, Nursie,' or kicks a dog and calls him brother, or pulls the wings
> from a fly and destroys his father. And then, because his world has disappointed
> him, he builds his own world where he is king, where he rules not only men and
> women and animals but clouds and stars and sky. He is invisible, he flies. No
> authority can keep him in or out. In his dreams he builds not only a world but
> remakes himself as he would wish to be […] Usually he makes peace with the world
> and works out compromises so that the two will not hurt each other badly.[45]

The 'hurt and angry child' in this passage adopts two strategies of self-defence against a
world perceived to be unfair. The first – to scream and storm, stamp and kick – is
destructive and futile, simply a temper tantrum. The second, however, is identified with
dreaming. It is constructive, the building of a magical world in which the child is king,
expressed in poetic terms: 'clouds and stars and sky'. This contrasts markedly with the
childish screaming and storming, and suggests a more positive, creative power inherent in
the child's imagination, one by which he may reconcile himself to the harshness of the
external world. Lancelot's understanding of the witch queens and their magic stems from a
recollection from his own childhood. He remembers an accident during which he was

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[44] Steinbeck, *Acts,* 43-44.
[45] Steinbeck, *Acts,* 242.

knocked off a horse by a larger boy and imagined, drifting in and out of consciousness, a 'secret knob' under his left arm, which he could turn in a variety of ways to enable himself to fly, become invisible and grow to a 'black cloud' in order to overwhelm the other boy. So powerful was this fantasy that Lancelot 'would wait anxiously to be alone in the sandbags to bring out his dream'.[46] This description almost directly replicates Steinbeck's recollection in *East of Eden* of his and Mary's belief in childhood 'magic': the button, 'somewhere on our bodies, probably under the arm' that 'would permit us to fly'. Just as Steinbeck and his sister looked to this mental magic to abolish their feelings of inferiority and inadequacy and, in Mary's case, to turn her into the 'tough little boy she wanted to be', Steinbeck's child in this passage also draws upon this imaginative power to 'make peace' with the world. Diverging from previous adaptations of the *Morte* for children, in which the child had often been a figure of helplessness or ignorance, or a passive object of didacticism, Steinbeck uses Arthurian magic to symbolise the ingenuity and energy he identifies in the childhood psyche.

Steinbeck had considered his creative relationship with childhood on several occasions. While writing *East of Eden*, he mused, 'I think adults forget about children. They just literally do not remember how it was. *I think I do remember* and I am going to try very hard to remember more'. By delving into memories of his youth, Steinbeck aimed to create a 'unique record of the thinking of children'.[47] In 1936, while planning his novel *The Red Pony* (based upon a real pony he owned in his youth), he emphasised the importance of connecting, via memory, with a childlike consciousness. 'I want to recreate a child's world', he declared, 'not of fairies and giants but of colors more clear than they are to adults, of tastes more sharp and of queer heart breaking feelings that overwhelm children in a moment'.[48] We sense this impression of being overwhelmed in the above description, of the child left with no choice but to resort to magic and make-believe to quell their 'queer heart breaking feelings' and tempestuous, vengeful rage. However, Steinbeck's 'hurt and angry' child is a very different construction to that of Fraser or White. Where White's traumatised Arthurian characters are Freudian constructions, plagued by conflicts from

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[46] Steinbeck, *Acts*, 232.

[47] John Steinbeck, *Journal of a Novel* (New York: Bantam, 1970), 198; 200.

[48] Cited in Peter Lisca, 'John Steinbeck: A Literary Biography' in *Steinbeck and his Critics: A Record of Twenty-Five Years*, ed. E. W. Tedlock and C. V. Wicker (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1957), 4.

their youth and unable to assimilate fully into society or follow normative developmental trajectories, Steinbeck offers something closer to the Jungian child archetype.[49] His child is a figure for whom the 'heart breaking feelings' of childhood can be manipulated and exploited as a source of imaginative magic within a mythological world. For White, a 'child's illusions' are dismissed as naive, meaningless and futile, associated with the collapse of Arthur's Round Table. For Steinbeck, a child's illusions are a source of emotional comfort, a survival mechanism in a harsh environment. Although he dismisses 'fairies and giants', Steinbeck's fictional landscape in *Acts* is inscribed with a different form of mythopoeia. It is a world of flying, invisible and kingly children, fantasy realms and magic buttons, in which the psychology of the child is delineated in terms of constructive imaginative play. It is rooted in the author's own experience, aged nine, of what he terms Malory's 'magic book', and the youthful daydreams of Steinbeck and his sister.[50] This child-centred mythopoeia emphasises the curious position of the *Morte* as a text read by children who grew up to adapt it for children, a fictional space within which adults dramatise their relationship with children and childhood, both real and imagined.

'What you say is true,' Morgan admits, responding to Lancelot's analysis of the hurt and vengeful child. 'But what then?' 'Well,' Lancelot continues,

> some few do not make peace. And some of these are locked away as hopelessly insane and full of fantasy. But there are others more clever who, through black arts, learn to make the dream substantial. This is enchantment and necromancy. Not being wise enough or kind enough, the magic manufactured world does not function and many are injured and many killed by its ill design. And then rage comes as to the child, destructive rage, vindictive hate. There lies the fear, for witches and wizards are children, living in a world they made without the leavening of pity or the mathematics of organisation. And what could be more frightening than a child

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[49] The Jungian *puer aeternus* archetype represents the infantile side of the human psyche. Dismissed by Freudian psychology as a regressive phenomenon, for Jung the *puer aeternus*, 'thanks to its naivete and unconsciousness […] sketches a more complete picture of the self, of the whole man in his pure individuality, than adulthood'. As Stephen Walker notes, for Jung, what is 'infantile, childish, too youthful in ourselves' is also what carries the promise of future development. See Steven F. Walker, *Jung and the Jungians on Myth* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 82-84.

[50] Steinbeck, preface to *Acts*, xii.

with total power? […] I am afraid, my ladies, for you are crippled, vengeful children with power. And I am your prisoner.[51]

The recollected magics of Steinbeck's childhood are here transformed and developed to explain the actions of Malory's witch queens. Laura Hodges suggests that Steinbeck's *Acts* demonstrates the 'triumph of realism over supernaturalism' in its treatment of magic. Unlike Malory's magic 'which is always supernatural', magic in Steinbeck's *Acts* may also represent 'immaturity, emotional inadequacy and ill health, as well as those darker streams within human beings that have great power to wreak destruction upon both individuals and entire civilisations'.[52] Hodges identifies this strategy as realism; however, there is another dimension to Steinbeck's linkage of magic with emotional struggle. Rather than serving simply as a metaphor for psychological or emotional damage, magic retains its supernatural mechanisms, used to express and articulate the potency of the childish imagination: within this realm, children really can fly, become invisible or crown themselves king. Although magic is ostensibly linked to the 'darker streams within human beings' in Lancelot's analysis of the witch queens, I would argue that even this is ambiguous. Although the witch queens are frightening and malevolent figures in Malory's *Morte*, Lancelot's analysis of their power here is not wholly censorious. The juxtaposition of 'black arts' with 'clever' and 'dream', and 'enchantment' with 'necromancy', suggests that although they are 'crippled, vengeful children', there is something undeniably impressive about their artistry and their power. The child may be selfish, primitive and unsocialised, but this state is one of strength and energy, and commands respect.

Thrown back into the dungeon for his outburst, Lancelot considers his fate. Once again, his memories turn to his childhood: 'He thought again of Merlin, whom he remembered prophesying about him as a little boy standing braced against his lady mother's knee […] He would become the best knight in the world, Merlin had said'. He had fulfilled that part of the prophecy. However, Lancelot recalls a second part: that he would die of love, after a long and lusty life. Aside from his 'formal knightly love for Guinevere, there was no love in Lancelot to break his heart,' we are told, and so he realises that his

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[51] Steinbeck, *Acts*, 242-43.
[52] Hodges, 'Steinbeck's Adaptation of Malory's Launcelot', 74.

death is not imminent. Lancelot's memories of his childhood 'made the dark less black and the cold less freezing', providing emotional solace that also manifests as physical comfort. In this, the most elaborated section of his adaptation, Steinbeck depicts Lancelot drawing on the resources of his childhood magic to overcome his entrapment by the witch queens. Laura Hodges concludes that 'Steinbeck's entire work is suffused with the dream-like quality that he finds in Malory', but particularly the tale of Lancelot. Where, in the *Morte*, Lancelot falls asleep under an apple tree and dreams of his sins, Steinbeck also has Lancelot falling asleep under the tree before being captured by the queens. Although Malory clarifies that 'the enchauntement was paste', and Lancelot regains consciousness before being captured, Steinbeck offers no such qualification: both the reader and Lancelot are unsure whether what follows is part of the dream or reality. This enigmatic dream sequence, Hodges suggests, 'exposes Lancelot's emotional war'.[53] A previous moment in which he used the metaphor of a castle to express his mental state – 'if weariness and cold, and hunger, yes, and fear, have found a roosting place in me, do you imagine I will open the gates to doubt and so lose the whole castle?' – can be linked with his entrapment in the witch queens' castle. This castle is similarly dream-like, appearing gradually out of thin air: 'a castle built itself on the southern point, rose course by course to battlements, and towers sprouted from the corners'. Once the queens and Lancelot are inside, it 'became insubstantial and then transparent like a thin cloud, and the wind dispersed the shreds, leaving a rock-strewn plateau with sheep grazing under the stars'.[54] When, later, Lancelot refers to the angry child building a world in which he is king, the episode recalls this gradual building of the fantastical castle, metaphorically posited as the product of the witch queens' imagination and Lancelot's dream. His entrapment within its dungeons, a metaphorical dungeon of the mind, suggests the potency of this mental magic, and also dramatises Lancelot's use of his imagination to win this particular emotional battle.

Lancelot frequently alternates between sleep and wakefulness during his incarceration: he 'crawled painfully awake out of unconsciousness' upon entering the dungeon, but later 'entered a dreamless rest' before awakening again.[55] This juxtaposition

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[53] Laura F. Hodges, 'Steinbeck's Dream Sequence in *The Acts of King Arthur and his Noble Knights*', *Arthurian Interpretations*, 4.2 (1990), 39.
[54] Steinbeck, *Acts*, 228-29.
[55] Steinbeck, *Acts*, 229; 233.

of sleep and wakefulness blurs the boundaries between dreaming and reality, particularly when Lancelot 'awakes' to watch the bare, slimy walls of his cell morph into patterns of 'rounded trees covered with golden fruit and curling vines with flowers as frankly invented as are those of an illuminated book', and to observe how 'a broad soft bed shivered and grew substantial in the corner of the cell', again alluding to the possibility of Lancelot's somnolent vision and the 'frank invention' of its contents, an 'illuminated book' of fiction upon the manuscript of Lancelot's mind.[56] This otherworldly environment sets the scene for Lancelot's imaginative magic. In returning, temporarily, to memories of himself as a little boy, and the mental spells he performed, Lancelot is able to understand and to outwit the witch queens, who, angered by his insightful observations, leave him to rot in the dungeon, allowing an opportunity for Sir Bagdemagus's daughter to rescue him. Hodges links this damsel with the 'illogical logic' of a dream: 'she, too, is a prisoner of the witch queens, one who knows how to escape but inexplicably remains'.[57] The connection between Lancelot's childhood and magic is explicit when he tells the queens, 'This morning in the cold and dark, waiting on the pleasure of your ladyships, a memory came to me of a time when as a child with an injured back I became for a little while a magician'.[58] Before this happened, the trapped Lancelot was afraid: he was 'a straightforward, simple man; the sword, not the mind, was the tool of his greatness'. As a result, 'the purposes and means of necromancy, demons and secrets he found foreign and fearful'.[59] Yet, ultimately, Lancelot's mind *does* prove to be the tool of his greatness, allowing him to outsmart the witch queens and to access this realm of 'necromancy, demons and secrets' for positive ends.

Remembering his childhood magic, Lancelot realises that 'he had forgotten all about it when his real ability began to grow', alluding to his physical strength and fighting prowess, which render him the 'best knight in the world'. Yet, Steinbeck seems to suggest, Lancelot's 'real ability' in fact lies in his power to access this childhood magic, to become 'for a little while a magician'. When he escapes the castle, he turns to wave farewell, but finds that 'no castle was there – only the star-girt sky and the east wind bowing the grasses

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[56] Steinbeck, *Acts*, 233.
[57] Hodges, 'Dream Sequence', 40.
[58] Steinbeck, *Acts*, 241.
[59] Steinbeck, *Acts*, 231.

on the embattled hill'.[60] The ambiguity suggests either that the entire episode existed in Lancelot's imagination, or that his mental magic was strong enough to dispel the castle created by the witch queens' emotional necromancy. Either way, the episode highlights the primacy of the childhood imagination, as a source of psychological resilience that enables the conquering of difficult emotional situations. Further confirmation of this power appears in Lancelot's subsequent dream of Guinevere and the bricks, in which he is able, mentally, to 'remake himself'.

In his preface to *Acts*, Steinbeck recalls the impact of reading Malory's *Morte Darthur* as a boy. The fact that the preface was written in full, presumably early on, but the actual text of *Acts* remains unfinished, indicates how important Steinbeck deemed its content to an understanding of the full work:

> I think my sense of right and wrong, my feeling of noblesse oblige, and any thought I may have against the oppressor and for the oppressed, came from this secret book […] In pain or sorrow or confusion, I went back to my magic book. Children are violent and cruel – and good – and I was all of these – and all of these were in the secret book. If I could not choose my way at the crossroads of love and loyalty, neither could Lancelot. I could understand the darkness of Mordred because he was in me too; and there was some Galahad in me, but perhaps not enough.[61]

The adaptations of the nineteenth century, which encouraged the child reader to identify with Malory's knights in order to experience vicariously their ethical predicaments and thereby learn moral lessons, appear to have worked on the young Steinbeck, who perceived himself in each of these knights and used their stories as a point of reference in times of emotional difficulty. They served as inspiration for imaginative fantasies that enabled him to cope with the pain, sorrow and confusion of growing up. Having stressed his identification with Lancelot, his 'self-character' within the *Morte*, it is no accident that Steinbeck uses Lancelot's story to dramatise his emotional connection with Malory's text, rooted in imaginative magic. Malory's favourite knight becomes, in *Acts*, a representation

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[60] Steinbeck, *Acts*, 247.
[61] Steinbeck, preface to *Acts*, xii.

of the young Steinbeck, using his imaginative powers to survive emotional struggle. His Lancelot is born out of an adult recollection of the intensity of the child's world, its sharp colours and heart-breaking feelings, and memories of the coping strategies used to deal with such a world. The supernatural magics of Malory's *Morte* are translated into the psychological magics of the growing child. Unlike White, who also identified himself with the tortured Lancelot, Steinbeck perceives something positive in Lancelot's emotional struggle: the potential to 'remake himself' through mental resilience drawn from the resources of his childhood fantasies. The observation that 'children are violent and cruel – and good – and I was all of these' encapsulates the nuanced portrayal of childhood in Steinbeck's reworking of the *Morte*. As he noted while writing *East of Eden*, 'children are no more alike than are adults'.[62] The child of *Acts* is not simply a vessel for ideological teaching, nor a socially fragile being damaged by youthful trauma; rather, the child is hurt, angry, vengeful, fallible, but also credited with constructive power and strength.

However, it is important to note that this power is explicitly gendered. Positive imaginative magic is attributed to Lancelot alone, offering him emotional support and enabling him to escape the powers of evil. The magic of the witch queens, although associated with childishness, is also aligned with a threatening feminine sexual allure. One of the queens, the lady of North Galys, approaches Lancelot 'like a lovely cat' so that he might smell 'the nerve-disturbing odor of her body', the scent of musk. She promises him 'sensations you are only dimly aware of – ecstasy, mounting, growing, swelling, bursting' while 'his senses stirred in a small agony, and his tongue felt the salt taste of rut'.[63] The descriptions – 'agony', 'disturbing', the linking of sex to the 'demonic' and 'rage of exulting and raging passion' – equate this sexuality explicitly with evil and with cruelty. In associating feminine magic with seduction intended to incapacitate knights and corrupt the noble aims of the Round Table, Steinbeck follows the *Morte*, in which women are either helpless damsels or allotted a supernatural agency that is explicitly identified as contrary to the harmony of Arthur's realm. Although Steinbeck introduces the lady Lyne as a form of 'wish-fulfilment' on behalf of his sister, her transgression of normative gender roles is punished with exile, and she must exercise her skills in secret. Imaginative female magic in

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[62] Steinbeck, *Journal of a Novel*, 200.
[63] Steinbeck, *Acts*, 235-36.

Acts still carries its Malorian associations with necromancy, evil and sexually beguiling women, a reading confirmed by one of the text's final scenes.

Lancelot, having escaped the witch queens, encounters Malory's sorceress Hallewes. He dismisses her magic, seeing instead 'a poor demented girl trying to move the world with a straw', and wonders 'if it would not be kind to agree with her, to get her to a priest to exorcise the demons of insanity'.[64] In the *Morte,* there is no doubt that the supernatural threat presented by Hallewes is genuine, and there is dramatic irony as Steinbeck's Lancelot ridicules the vision Hallewes presents, in which Guinevere is tied to the stake to be burned for treason, as 'silly pictures, foolish things'.[65] Yet although Hallewes's magic is real, she is dismissed as a foolish girl by Lancelot, whose reproof of her 'insanity' smacks of a parent dismissing a daydreaming child; it is no coincidence that he reprimands her by saying 'your spell was weak and staggering like a newborn colt' and sees grotesque figures on the wall painted by her 'childish hand'.[66] Her magic apparently impotent, Hallewes resorts to seduction. She tries to kiss Lancelot, who refuses, and she breaks down and cries, declaring 'I am lost'. Steinbeck includes a quotation from Malory, in the original Middle English: 'I had kepte no more joy in this worlde but to have thy body dede. Than wolde I have bawmed hit and sered hit, and so to have kepte hit my lyves dayes; and dayly I sholde have clypped the, and kyssed the to my heart's content dispyte of queen Gwenyvere'.[67] In one of the concluding episodes from *Acts,* feminine imaginative magic is both dismissed as foolish 'insanity', childish in a pejorative sense, and explicitly associated with dark arts: necromancy and even necrophilia. Steinbeck's novel representation of the magical child still places higher value on male subjectivity, a prevalent theme in the texts examined by this thesis. Furthermore, conflations of adult sexuality with childishness, as in these episodes, emphasise the instability of Steinbeck's implied reader, the frequent slippage between adult and child, within the 'wish-fulfilment' fantasy of *Acts*.

III. 'Other sons not so young': Steinbeck's elusive audience

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[64] Steinbeck, *Acts,* 283.
[65] Steinbeck, *Acts,* 284.
[66] Steinbeck, *Acts,* 284.
[67] Steinbeck, *Acts,* 285.

In a letter to Vinaver in June 1958, Steinbeck made a curious request:

> A long time ago I learned a trick – or perhaps it might be called a method for writing. I stopped addressing my work to a faceless reader and addressed one person as though I had only that one to talk to. I gave him a face and a personality. Sometimes I told a book to a real person […] *East of Eden* was addressed to my sons to try to tell them about their roots, both in a family sense and in a human sense. I should like to hold you in image in this new work. You would then be the focusing point, the court, the jury. Also the discipline of your great knowledge would forbid nonsense while the memory of excited exchanges would keep alive the joy and the explanations. This would be very valuable to me. And I hope you will not forbid it.[68]

Steinbeck's reference to Vinaver as 'the court, the jury' suggests that he offers his Arthurian work for judgement in a specifically scholarly capacity, seeking the authority of Vinaver's 'great knowledge'. The reference to Vinaver's 'discipline' and the invitation for him to 'forbid nonsense' intimates Steinbeck's desire for his text to be shaped and streamlined by the exacting standards of scholarship. However, it also situates Steinbeck in the position of errant child, in need of discipline: the double use of 'forbid' in association with Vinaver and references to his 'great knowledge' place him as the parental figure to Steinbeck's child. The request suggests that Steinbeck at one point envisaged his implied reader as a learned, scholarly figure, versed in the complexities of Malory's *Morte*. However, this apparently shifted as Steinbeck got to grips with his own personal approach to the material. He described *Acts* as having gone 'into scholarship and out again on the other side'.[69] On 'the other side', Steinbeck had become increasingly engaged with his highly personal construction of the imaginative child, whose existence gave momentum to the text until it became something very different from the adaptation 'leaving out nothing and adding nothing' that he originally intended. Far from wishing to be forbidden 'nonsense' in his adaptation, Steinbeck came to embrace it as a potent creative force.

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[68] Letter from Steinbeck to Eugène Vinaver, 22 Jun 1958. Cited in Mitchell, 'Steinbeck and Malory', 71.

[69] Letter from Steinbeck to Otis, 19 Nov 1956. Cited in appendix to *Acts*, 297.

Writing to Otis in June 1959, he considered the implications of ascribing 'childishness' to the characters and scenarios of Malory's text:

> the Arthurian cycle and indeed practically all lasting and deep-seated folklore is a mixture of profundity and childish nonsense. If you keep the profundity and throw out the nonsense, some essence is lost. These are dream stories, fixed and universal dreams, and they have the inconsistency of dreams. Very well, says I – if they are dreams, I will put in some of my own, and I did.[70]

Unlike White's dismissal of chivalry as a 'child's illusions', Steinbeck's use of 'childish' in *Acts* is largely positive, rather than derogatory. Although coupled with 'nonsense', his qualification that the 'essence' of the story is lost without its childish features suggests the importance of this aspect. The psychology of the child is essential for the story to retain what he later termed 'the remote feeling of the myth'. Rather than a Freudian interpretation of the damaged, regressive child, Steinbeck's text invokes the archetype of the Jungian child, the *puer aeternus,* a positive construction carrying the promise of future development and the establishment of a complete picture of the self. This archetypal child can access powers far exceeding those of ordinary humanity; in the case of Lancelot, such powers are couched as imaginative magics that aid his emotional development in testing circumstances. It is possible to read *Acts* as a form of Jungian myth-making, in which myth 'originates or takes on new life and meaning when an individual mind attempts, sometimes desperately, to respond adequately to pressures from the world and from the collective unconscious'.[71] As a child, Steinbeck used the *Morte Darthur,* Malory's 'magic book', as inspiration for a fantastical, mythological world of magic buttons, invisibility and flight, a world to which he could retreat when oppressed by an unfair reality. His resultant novel, increasingly diverging from Malory's own text, privileges this imaginative potency. Its originality lies in the figure of the imaginative child, a *puer aeternus* whose mental and emotional magics are integral to a process of self-realisation and identity construction, and whose fantastical dreams are thus inextricably linked to the deeply rooted, dreamlike 'nonsense' of the myth itself. Consequently, *Acts* complicates enquiries into its implied

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[70] Letter from Steinbeck to Otis, Jun 1959. Cited in appendix to *Acts*, 352.
[71] Walker, *Jung and the Jungians on Myth*, 95.

readership, existing as both a wish-fulfilment for the author, writing back to his own childhood, and as a text that privileges both the childlike point of view and that of the adult relating to the childlike point of view.

In his preface, Steinbeck indicates that he initially envisaged a child implied reader for *Acts*. However, this is swiftly qualified:

> My own first and continuing enchantment with these things is not generally shared. I wanted to set them down in plain present-day speech for my own young sons, and for other sons not so young – to set the stories down in meaning as they were written, leaving out nothing and adding nothing […] If I can do this and keep the wonder and the magic, I shall be pleased and gratified.[72]

Steinbeck's reference to 'other sons not so young' is telling. It echoes Alice Hadfield's reference to the 'older young' and Roger Lancelyn Green's construction of childhood as a state that can be temporarily accessed by nostalgic adults through fantastical, 'islanding' landscapes. *Acts* follows a trend within mid-twentieth century children's Arthuriana, positing the *Morte* as a means by which adults may access a lost, idealised state, characterised in emotional and even spiritual terms and focused through the concept of childhood. That *Acts* is motivated by Steinbeck's own enchantment with Malory, and is designed partly for these 'sons not so young', suggests that it is intended less for a child reader than for nostalgic adults wishing to relive the 'wonder and the magic' of childhood, to access this realm of 'enchantment'. It also foreshadows Steinbeck's bias towards the portrayal of male subjectivities. Both Steinbeck and Green identify childhood with the 'mythopoeic' or 'numinous', linking it to a mysterious, magical world that can be accessed through memory. However, Green's work is concerned with preserving the mystery of childhood, depicting it as a state of innocence and unknowing; the implied child reader of his *King Arthur* is largely passive in the face of higher forces. Steinbeck's child, however, actively participates in this mythopoeic world of magic books and buttons, constructing it through imaginative powers and exhibiting a fierce determination to 'remake' both himself

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[72] Steinbeck, preface to *Acts,* xiii. Although we cannot be sure when Steinbeck wrote his preface, if we assume it was written between 1958 and 1959, his main creative period for *Acts,* his two sons would have been aged between 12 and 15.

and the world. Yet like Green's text, Steinbeck's *Acts* contains no actual child characters. Rather, its children exist only in the form of adult recollections of the state of childhood (Lancelot) or as adults compared to children by other adults (the witch queens, Hallewes). Steinbeck situated himself as the 'child' to Vinaver's 'adult', but ultimately allocates power to that child. *Acts* holds a complicated relationship with children and childhood, and today is not identified as a text for child readers, despite Steinbeck's intentions as expressed in his preface. It is a text *about* the child rather than *for* the child; furthermore, it is a text that specifically privileges the male child: 'other sons not so young'. It illustrates the difficulty of the category 'children's literature' and the elusive nature of the child, a shifting, mutable figure that here serves to interrogate the connections between adulthood, memory, creativity and knowledge.

Had Steinbeck finished his great Arthurian work, he would perhaps have resolved these contradictions; he had intended eventually to return to and revise the original chapters. However, at the end of 1959 he suddenly stopped work on the project; there exists no correspondence on *Acts* between that date and 1965, when he wrote briefly to Horton and Vinaver about the work but produced no more text. Various theories have been put forward as to why *Acts* was abandoned: Vinaver suggests that Steinbeck's agents were too discouraging of his work, expecting something more similar to *The Once and Future King*; Michael Sundermeier opines that Steinbeck's artistic vision was too incoherent, while Jackson J. Benson posits that Steinbeck was unable to bring himself to narrate the betrayal of Lancelot.[73] I would suggest that Steinbeck was simply too ambitious, overwhelmed by the significance with which he himself had loaded his Arthurian project: at one point he likened the task to 'rewriting the Bible' and claimed it was 'destined to be the largest and I hope the most important work I have ever undertaken'.[74] Extensively wrapped up with his own childhood and even his entire identity as an author, *Acts* became a daunting and overwhelming *magnum opus* for the introspective Steinbeck. Perhaps the 'responsibility of

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[73] Vinaver blamed the foolishness of his agents, who 'discouraged him from going on' (cited in Hodges, 'Steinbeck's Adaptation of Malory's Launcelot', 77). For Sundermeier's hypothesis, including an outline of Benson's theory, see Michael Sundermeier, 'Why Steinbeck Didn't Finish His Arthur' in Tetsumaro Hayashi and Thomas J. Moore (eds), *Steinbeck's Posthumous Work: Essays in Criticism* (Indiana: Steinbeck Research Institute, 1989), 34-41.

[74] Letter from Steinbeck to Vinaver, 27 Aug 1959, cited in Mitchell, 73; letter from Steinbeck to Otis, 7 Aug 1957, cited in appendix to *Acts*, 310.

being Arthur' – or, more accurately, Lancelot – proved too great a burden. However, although *Acts* never became the staggeringly original, 'permanent' Malory adaptation that Steinbeck intended, it offered a novel intervention through its depiction of the powerful imaginative child, whose descendants survive and flourish in children's Arthuriana to the present day.

IV. Conclusion

'You must learn to listen to children,' Steinbeck's Merlin tells Arthur in an early scene from *Acts*.[75] Steinbeck was not the first adapter of Malory to give the child a prominent role; Howard Pyle and Henry Gilbert had created and extended childhoods for Malory's characters at the turn of the twentieth century, while T. H. White's unique retelling brought the Freudian child to the fore. However, Steinbeck made an important contribution to Malory adaptation for children, privileging the primacy of childhood imagination and placing the child at the centre of Arthurian magic. Although this new, magical child was left undeveloped, it enjoys a thriving afterlife in later children's Arthuriana. In 1965, the same year that Steinbeck wrote his last correspondence regarding *Acts*, English-born American children's author Susan Cooper published *Over Sea, Under Stone*, the first in a series of five Arthurian-inspired children's books that would become known as *The Dark is Rising* sequence. At the centre of this series is not Arthur, not Merlin, not Lancelot, but a group of children: eleven year-old Will Stanton and the three Drew siblings, who stumble upon an ancient Arthurian manuscript while on holiday with their parents in Cornwall. Stanton discovers that, as the seventh son of a seventh son, he has extraordinary magical powers: a member of the 'Old Ones', guardians of the Light, he is destined to combat the rising powers of evil. Together, the children are immersed in ancient magics and work towards a final battle against the Dark, accompanied by Arthurian characters who travel through time to assist them but whose agency is marginal compared to that of the children. The protagonist of Kevin Crossley-Holland's Arthurian trilogy (2000-2003), a child named Arthur living in the thirteenth century, possesses a magical seeing-stone whose knowledge is accessible to him alone. Through the stone, he watches the life of the historical King Arthur unfold in a series of parallels with his own as he learns to take control of his fate and

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[75] Steinbeck, *Acts,* 36.

deal with the harsh demands of adult life. The text explores the secret, private world of childhood knowledge and imagination, symbolised through the magical seeing-stone, and the ways in which childhood fantasies, as in *Acts*, can serve as valuable emotional cruxes through the difficulties of youth and adolescence.

Where Steinbeck's magical, imaginative child is still on the margins of his incomplete adaptation, his text addressing the nostalgic adult more than the child reader, the adaptations that followed *Acts* place this child at the centre of their reimagined Arthurian world. Although it is unlikely that Steinbeck directly inspired these works, they together prove that he had identified the potential of the active, creative child as a figure around which to reimagine the Arthurian legend in the second half of the twentieth century.[76] They illustrate the flexibility of Arthurian magic, and the magical child, as conduits for exploring the relationship between subjectivity, creativity, memory, and the *Morte Darthur*. Written and published explicitly as children's books, these texts depart dramatically from Malory, assigning the real power of the Arthurian myth to young child protagonists, who are actively involved in determining their fate and that of the worlds they inhabit. After Steinbeck, it would seem, adapters of the *Morte Darthur* – and their readers – had indeed learned to listen to children.

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[76] Cooper could not have read Steinbeck's *Acts* before writing *The Dark is Rising* sequence (1965-77), as *Acts* was not published until 1976.

Conclusion: at the crossing-places

Halfway through *Arthur: At the Crossing-Places* (2001), the second book of Kevin Crossley-Holland's Arthurian trilogy for children, the protagonist Arthur de Caldicot seeks counsel from Merlin. 'You remember we talked about crossing-places,' he reminds his mysterious guardian,

> and you told me they're never quite sure of themselves? Fords and bridges and the foreshore; the place where England ends and Wales begins; midnight, and New Year's Eve. You said they're places and times where changes can happen.

Several months previously, Merlin had given Arthur, a young squire living in the thirteenth century, a magical 'seeing stone'. The boy Arthur watches the life of his namesake, King Arthur, unfold within the portal of this mysterious stone as he himself faces the hardships of adolescence in a medieval world: falling in love, dealing with sibling rivalry, and witnessing the horrors of crusade warfare. The mystical realm of the Arthurian legend, revealed through the magic of the stone, at times mirrors the circumstances of his own life: Guinevere's infidelity is paralleled by the boy Arthur's love for Winnie, who cannot choose between him and another squire, while King Arthur's discovery of his true parentage precedes young Arthur's realisation that his father and mother are not his blood parents. Finally comprehending his connection with the legendary king, the boy Arthur remembers that he once heard Merlin, who exists both inside the world of the stone and in Arthur's own reality, telling King Uther that his newborn son 'was a child of the crossing-places'. 'Merlin!' the boy Arthur cries,

> 'I'm between my child-self and my man-self. My squire-self and my knight-self. Between Caldicot and Gortanore […] Between my life here and the world of the stone.'
> Merlin stared into the dark water. It seemed scarcely to be moving, though it was running fast. It looked like a mirror, slate shine, the same as Merlin's eyes.
> 'I'm at the crossing-places,' I said.

'On a quest,' Merlin replied, 'is there anywhere else to be?'[1]

The boy Arthur exists here in a liminal state that is both conceptual and spatial. Located between childhood and adulthood, between a state of servitude and honourable knighthood, between his own reality and a magical parallel universe, his current home and the home of his blood father, Crossley-Holland's Arthur is, like the king of legend, a child of the crossing-places. His 'quest' is linked specifically with this liminality: it is both physical, requiring his transition to a new home and a passage across Europe on a crusade, and figurative, a journey of self-discovery. The questing knight, for Crossley-Holland, is the perfect metaphor for the struggles of childhood and adolescence. Like crossing-places – fords and bridges, midnight, the spaces between nations – both Arthur de Caldicot and King Arthur are 'never quite sure of themselves'. Their stories are emblematic of a wider quest: to understand and conceptualise the nature of the self, its relationship to the liminal spaces of childhood and adolescence, to the 'places and times where changes can happen'.

It is King Arthur's location at the crossing-places that has inspired, and continues to inspire, adaptations of Malory's *Morte Darthur* for children. Existing at the boundary between myth and reality, legend and history, boy and king, Arthur provides an endlessly adaptable metaphor for the trials of human development. His quest to uncover his identity and gain recognition among his peers can be mapped onto the difficulties of childhood and adolescence, used either to advise and instruct the growing child or to explore the fragility of the developing self. Robert Dunbar, reviewing Crossley-Holland's trilogy, suggested that 'the colourful and complex trappings of medieval aristocratic life are rich background for a boy's search for the truth – about his parents, about the nature of love and, ultimately, about himself'.[2] As this study has demonstrated, no matter how vividly authors evoke the medieval 'trappings' of the *Morte Darthur* within their adaptations, King Arthur and his court ultimately serve as a background against which authors consider the protean, multifaceted existence of the child, and the relationship between this complex creature and the adult self. There are other issues at stake – this particular text is often enmeshed in

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[1] Kevin Crossley-Holland, *Arthur: At the Crossing-Places* (London: Orion Books, 2001), 191.
[2] Robert Dunbar, review of *Arthur: At the Crossing-Places, Irish Times* 20 Oct 2001. Accessed 20 Oct 2015: http://www.irishtimes.com/news/snares-and-disappointed-dreams-1.333282.

discussions of national identity, heritage and heroism – but these debates coalesce in the figure of the child, as both past and future, real and imagined.

Adults alter Malory's text to address, create or memorialise their own construct of the child, a complex amalgam of memory, projection and ideology. Their texts exist at the crossing-place between adulthood and childhood, depicting the mythical landscapes of the *Morte* as transitional spaces within which one can access, temporarily, a nostalgic world of lost dreams. Sarah Johnson, writing in *The Times,* described Crossley-Holland's *Arthur: The Seeing-Stone,* as 'truly a cross-over book, settling in the interesting space between children's and adult fiction'.[3] Many of the texts from this study also emerge at this crossing-place, presenting a complex form of childness that speaks both to the adult and the child reader, as the author 'writes back' to what they remember of their childhood self while simultaneously evoking an experienced adult consciousness. They illustrate the problem of the child behind children's literature, and the ways in which this mutable figure is continually invoked to focus adult enquiries about the self.

In 1963, literary scholar and children's writer C. S. Lewis produced an essay on 'The English Prose *Morte',* within which he considered Eugène Vinaver's decision to publish the Winchester Manuscript as separate works, and contemplated the enduring appeal of Malory's text. 'If you write fairy-tales and receive letters from your child readers,' he noted, 'you will find that children are always asking the sort of questions that Malory is always answering'.[4] The diversity of adaptations of the *Morte* for children during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries would suggest, however, that Malory did not always answer these questions. Questions remained that could only be answered through manipulation of Malory's work, through embellishment, elaboration or alteration: how is an Edwardian boy to follow the example of Arthur in removing a magical sword from a stone? How can Guinevere love both Arthur and Lancelot at the same time? Why do the evil witch queens wreak their havoc upon Camelot and its knights? Whether authors are ever answering these questions in response to real enquiries from actual children is, to a large extent, irrelevant: what this study has demonstrated is that these questions are used to

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[3] Kevin Crossley-Holland, *Arthur: The Seeing Stone* (London: Orion Books, 2000), front matter.
[4] C. S. Lewis, 'The English Prose *Morte'* in *Essays on Malory,* ed. J. A. W. Bennett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 12.

channel and drive adult enquiries about the self, its relationship to childhood past and future, idealised and real. Authors have returned to the *Morte Darthur* again and again because it exists at a series of crossing-places that enable us to contemplate the complexity of our existence, our multifaceted natures as older children, younger adults, inheritor of the legend of Arthur and a type of Arthur himself.

A century before Lewis published his essay, J. T. Knowles wrote that 'the story of King Arthur will never die while there are English men to study and English boys to devour its tales of adventure and daring and magic and conquest'.[5] This thesis has traced the fulfilment of Knowles's prediction, finding scholars, boys, magic, adventure and notions of the 'English' at the heart of Malory adaptation for children, partly responsible for its origins in the late nineteenth century and its continuation through to the present day. As I have demonstrated, the precise relationship between these aspects has shifted dramatically over time. The classroom adaptations of the early twentieth century capitalised upon the 'English' credentials of Malory's *Morte* in order to promote liberal educational values that centre around notions of heritage, character, morality and consideration. They are founded upon a construct of the child as receptive to lessons regarding its own self-development, and frequently disclose the gendered nature of this child and the assumption that Malory's heroic tales are primarily relevant for boy readers. These texts use their intended audience, the schoolboy, to focus a series of debates, and often anxieties, regarding the canonical value of Malory's text and his contribution to 'nation' and the national character. Coeval adaptations by Howard Pyle, Henry Gilbert and Alfred Pollard are similarly concerned with extracting moral messages from Malory's tale, but instead use the text to contemplate the role of chivalry and heroism in the twentieth century. They deploy Arthurian adventure to educate their 'red-blooded' boy reader in the importance of considered risk-taking and preparedness, reflecting a move towards practical, everyday heroism that was most explicitly formalised in the Boy Scout movement. Like the classroom texts, they evince a similar concern with consideration and moral development, emphasising the importance of social awareness in their presentation of a 'hypothetical masculinity', and through the

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[5] J. T. Knowles, *The Story of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table* (London: Griffith & Farrow, 1862), i.

figure of the child meditate upon the relevance of Arthurian chivalry in an increasingly mercantile, capitalist society.

The adaptations following the First and Second World Wars relinquished both this focus on physical adventure, and on boys: the childness of children's Arthuriana became increasingly gender-neutral as the twentieth century progressed, and the adventure of the body gradually gave way to the mental adventure of the childhood psyche and the nostalgic adult. T. H. White's reworking of the *Morte Darthur* was heavily influenced by the rise of childhood psychology and his own perceptions of personal Freudian trauma, and demonstrates the ways in which Malory's text could be deployed to channel adult anxieties regarding the integrity of the self and the fragile, volatile relationship between child and adult. It also indicates the increasing sophistication of Arthurian adaptation, as texts began to recognise their dual audience of children and adults and to adjust their construction of the implied reader accordingly. The mythopoeic landscape of Roger Lancelyn Green's adaptation and the spiritual, emotional magics of Alice Hadfield's overshadowed the physical adventure of earlier adaptations, suggesting the primarily emotional, numinous importance of the legend for both the child and the adult reader, while Antonia Fraser's adaptation blurred the boundaries between child and adult in its heavily psychologised, romantic and melodramatic refashioning of the legend. The multivalent 'child' envisaged and constructed by these texts reflects the instability of the Arthurian legend in a post-World War age and the vibrant nature of the burgeoning children's publishing industry. Authors used the *Morte* to consider the shape and significance of the child for whom they were writing, and what King Arthur could mean for this elusive child.

John Steinbeck placed magic at the forefront of Malory's tale, and in so doing crafted a new type of Arthurian child, influenced by the psychological interpretations of his predecessors but ultimately driven by his own childhood relationship with Malory's 'magic book'. No longer innocent or ignorant, an object of didacticism or a fragile, traumatised being, the child of Steinbeck's *Acts* is a powerful, resilient figure used to centre its author's enquiries into the nature of childhood, memory, creativity and fantasy. Steinbeck's adaptation marked a turning point in children's Arthuriana: thereafter, authors began to manipulate Malory's text in more creative ways, to depict the adventures of bold, intuitive

child protagonists in a manner that often draws heavily on White's *Sword in the Stone*, figuring the exploits of adventurous children as metaphorical journeys towards self-discovery. Rather than a series of tests to measure progression towards idealised masculinity, the adventures of later Arthuriana are the spontaneous products of childhood imagination and initiative, emphasising the quest for identity and belonging.

As Knowles foresaw, scholars have played a prominent role in the dissemination of the *Morte* for children. The inclusion of Malory in the emerging English Studies curriculum of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries involved close networks of academics, teachers, publishers and writers, and literary scholars continued to find inspiration in Malory, their academic enquiries prompting more creative endeavours as they considered the text's connection to children and childhood. Over time, this relationship became more complex, as authors such as White and Steinbeck consciously differentiated themselves from the objective enquiries of academia, focussing instead on something subjective, autobiographical and even magical that they located in the *Morte*. Crossley-Holland, a scholar of Anglo-Saxon, a children's writer and an editor of children's books for Macmillan, today exemplifies the enduring connection between academia and children's Arthuriana that has continued since the late nineteenth century. Rosemary Sutcliff is frequently praised for the meticulous historical accuracy of her children's fiction, including her Arthurian trilogy (1979-81), and contributed to conferences and publications on children's literary theory during her lifetime. Mary Stewart, author of several influential Arthurian novels in the 1970s, worked as a university lecturer in English Literature and as a primary teacher before becoming a novelist for both children and adults. These authors exemplify the continuing versatility of the Arthurian legend for children, existing at the crossing-places between scholarship, history, education and children's literature.

Crossley-Holland's boy Arthur observes that 'King Arthur is very strong, but he is surrounded by enemies and dangers. Sometimes he must feel half-naked. Inside his head he can still hear Merlin's voice, but he knows the time has come to listen to his own voice'.[6] The 'voice' of the boy Arthur is prominent in the trilogy, which employs a first-person narrative style and focalises events entirely through his point of view. The second half of

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[6] Crossley-Holland, *Crossing-Places,* 260.

the twentieth century witnessed the privileging of this childhood voice to a new extent. Texts were no longer simply addressed *to* children, but aimed at authentic representation of the child's consciousness. The 1950s and 1960s witnessed the origins of 'Young Adult' literature, which, as Kenneth Kidd notes, signified the increasing 'psychologisation' of children's literature, offering a 'literary-psychological-ethnographic framing of a problem interior in and around the notion of "identity"'.[7] Arthurian adaptations were not excluded from this trend: Andrew Lynch identifies the model for Rosemary Sutcliff's trilogy as 'the humanist psychological novel rather than the episodic romance of adventure'.[8] Sutcliff's inclusion of the perspectives of minor characters, such as Bagdemagus's daughter, is symptomatic of later children's Arthuriana, where authors departed from Malory's *Morte* in order to prioritise the inner lives of child or adolescent characters. They often focused on those figures marginalised by Malory's version of the legend, particularly Merlin, as in T. A. Barron's *Merlin* saga (1996-2000), or the women of the legend, as in Barbara Tepa Lupack's *The Girl's King Arthur* (2010). In this way, they have paralleled adult adaptations such as Marion Zimmer Bradley's feminist retelling, *The Mists of Avalon* (1982), which focused on the maligned sorceresses of the legend, or Persia Woolley's *Guinevere* trilogy (1987-93). Although this was hardly a new strategy – White had diverged from the *Morte* in order to foreground the inner lives of his tormented characters as early as the 1930s – what characterises these later texts is the tendency to explore not just the experience of Arthur's knights, but those characters at the periphery of the Round Table.

The shift in focus towards female characters and figures such as Merlin is symptomatic of changing notions of heroism: not as chivalric violence, but as the intelligence, ingenuity and imagination of the child, frequently conceptualised as a form of magic. The successful BBC TV series *Merlin* (2008-12), as its name suggests, places the wizard at the heart of the Arthurian story. Merlin, Arthur and Guinevere are all depicted as young adults, bastions of sense and reason against the bigoted, anti-magical views of the blinkered and ageing Uther Pendragon. It is Merlin's magic, rather than Arthur's physical prowess, that repeatedly saves the realm of Camelot from destruction by the agents of evil.

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[7] Kenneth Kidd, *Freud in Oz: At the Intersections of Psychoanalysis and Children's Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 139.

[8] Andrew Lynch, '*Le Morte Darthur* for Children: Malory's Third Tradition' in *Adapting the Arthurian Legends for Children: Essays on Arthurian Juvenilia*, ed. Barbara Tepa Lupack (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 33.

Each episode begins with the voiceover, 'In a land of myth and a time of magic, the destiny of a great kingdom rests on the shoulders of a young man', foregrounding both the magical element and its locus within an adolescent. A chosen one, destined to safeguard the kingdom of Arthur until he comes again, the BBC's Merlin has much in common with Susan Cooper's Will Stanton from *The Dark is Rising* sequence (1965-77), who is plucked dramatically from ordinary life and told of his momentous destiny in the battle against darkness. The agents of evil pursue Will and his companions, the Drew children, at one point cursing them as 'stupid children […] tampering with things you don't understand'.[9] Whilst the child who doesn't understand recurs throughout Arthurian adaptation before 1960, the recipient of moralising instruction or a nostalgic image of lost innocence, Cooper's children are far from stupid, ignorant or innocent. They are in fact a privileged elite, the last chance for the world to escape a pervasive and all-consuming evil.

In the first book of Crossley-Holland's trilogy, the boy Arthur receives the obsidian seeing stone from Merlin:

> When I stared at the stone, I could see myself inside it. It was black of black, and deep, and very still. Like an eye of deep water.
> 'A mirror,' I said.
> 'Not really,' said Merlin.
> 'What is it?'
> 'A gift.'
> 'I mean, what is it for?'
> […]
> 'That depends on you,' Merlin said. 'Only you can tell […] The stone is not what I say it is. It's what you see in it'.[10]

We can return, once again, to T. H. White's tormented Lancelot examining his twisted reflection in the surface of a helmet, 'afraid of what he would find'. Powerless to control his own development, burdened by his psychological struggles, White's Lancelot is at the

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[9] Susan Cooper, *The Dark is Rising Sequence* (London: Puffin Books, 1984), 78.
[10] Crossley-Holland, *Seeing Stone*, 53.

mercy of a cruel world, forced to dread passively his own reflection. Crossley-Holland's boy Arthur, however, does not look to the mirror-like stone for confirmation of his own identity. Rather, through Merlin's gift of the stone, Arthur is given the chance to forge his own selfhood and shape his own destiny. The stone is not Arthur's mirror, but a metaphor for the power of his creative imagination (it is significant that Crossley-Holland's boy Arthur is also a poet), a reminder of his resilience and ability to choose his own path. Later, in *At the Crossing-Places,* Arthur comes to realise the extent of this power, identifying true magic as 'when a person concentrates and finds a force inside himself or within an object, and releases it'.[11] We can read the process of adapting Malory for children in a similar way, as a form of creative magic that transforms personal questions of identity into literary artefacts that displace such enquiries onto an imagined child. These texts are, in many ways, not 'children's' literature at all, but invoke the child as an epistemological category through which to interrogate adult subjectivities.

The precursor to this thesis was an undergraduate essay on the *Morte Darthur* for children, for which I spent several weeks scouring Crossley-Holland's, Sutcliff's, Steinbeck's and White's texts in search of allusions to Malory, largely ignoring original material in my slavish quest for overlap with the medieval *Morte*. As I return to these versions (and their dog-eared pages) many years later, it becomes clear that it is not fidelity to the *Morte* that offers the key to the complex phenomenon of children's Arthuriana. C. S. Lewis concluded in 1963 that

> The choice we try to force upon Malory is really a choice for us. It is our imagination, not his, that makes the work one or eight or fifty. We can read it either way. We can read it now one way, now another. We partly make what we read.[12]

It is the adult impulse to make the work 'one or eight or fifty', to 'make what we read' with our imagination, that is most revelatory of how we conceptualise the child. The questions we ask of Malory's text are in fact questions we ask of our own selves and societies, the ever-changing child a magical 'seeing stone' through which we consider our past, present

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[11] Crossley-Holland, *Crossing-Places,* 203.
[12] Lewis, 'English Prose *Morte',* 22.

and future identities. Since 1862, authors have produced versions of Malory that exist at the enchanting crossing-places between adulthood and childhood, past and future, memory and imagination. Modern medievalist texts for children and young adults continue to feature in reception studies and work on children's adaptation, recently included in Anja Müller's *Adapting Canonical Texts in Children's Literature* (2013) and Gail Ashton's *Medieval Afterlives in Contemporary Culture* (2015). They flourish in a variety of forms, urging us to continue to contemplate the enduring connection between children and the Arthurian legend, to investigate the discursive construct of the child offered not only by book adaptations of the *Morte,* but by its manifestation in other forms: comics, theatre and, increasingly, interactive video games that prioritise the agency and initiative of the child. Why has the magical child become so central to adaptations of the *Morte* in recent decades? Can we trace its history back to the 'Golden Age' of children's literature? How do modern versions reformulate Arthurian gender roles, the notion of adventure, and the heritage value of Arthur? When considering the child of children's literature, we must continue to identify the questions that Malory is used to answer.

At the end of Crossley-Holland's trilogy, Merlin asks the boy Arthur to return the seeing stone. 'I thought it was mine,' Arthur says, sadly. 'It is yours,' said Merlin. 'Its story will never end in you, will it? But there's always someone else just ready for this stone'.[13] The story of King Arthur, he implies, is not a fixed entity, an authoritative narrative, but rather a source of inspiration. 'You've discovered the king in yourself,' Merlin tells the boy Arthur. 'You have grown into your name'. King Arthur and his knights are both a series of fictional characters, available to the young Arthur through the magic viewing portal of the stone, but, more importantly, they are also a metaphor for Arthur's self-discovery. The final scene of the trilogy sees him take possession of his inheritance, the manor house 'Catmole', where he stumbles upon a jewelled reading-pointer that he had seen used by King Arthur in the world of the stone. In this novel interpretation of the 'sword in the stone' scene, Arthur picks up the pointer: 'I planted it between my thumb and king-finger, and drew a loop around my people. I waved it like a wand. I made words out of air'.[14] Crossley-Holland's trilogy reworks the *Morte Darthur* to emphasise the creativity, agency and power of the

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[13] Kevin Crossley-Holland, *Arthur: King of the Middle March* (London: Orion Books, 2003), 386.
[14] Crossley-Holland, *Middle March*, 388.

individual child. We will all see something different in the 'seeing stone' of Malory's text, it implies, as we find emotional guidance in the tale of the king and his knights, their quests for honour, companionship, and self-recognition. Children's Arthuriana from 1862 to 1960 demonstrates that it is precisely this versatility of the legend, its existence at a variety of crossing-places, that enables it to endure within the realm of children's literature. As Crossley-Holland's Merlin wisely acknowledges, there is always someone else just ready for the story of Arthur.

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